

Years of remembering, sometimes as a family and some of it alone. Thinking back on the games and laughter, crying and forgiveness. Someone important in your life leaves memories behind him for you to cherish and hopefully for you to share. My father died in the line of duty in August of 2008 as a volunteer for the Scappoose Rural Fire Department. A man, who was selfless, gave his everything to help others, including his family. Robert Arnold Hales, a husband, father and son, a family larger than life who became a hero to many. A family man who could eat chili everyday and still make it again and again, someone who worked a full time job and still made time to get certified as an EMT and firefighter, as well as make time for family helping at the Columbia County fair every summer. Showing up to his kid's track meets, cheering on his cheerleaders and so much more, a hero at every turn.

Remembering someone who was your hero hurts, but it is something my family and I do every single day, but when you encounter people who don't know the true hero you cherish it makes remembering harder. How do you share these memories with others but not create an atmosphere that is saddening. How do you share memories of Halloween costumes of a man who played country music while alone or who's favorite ice cream was mint chocolate chip? A man who struggled to read a bedtime story, but was able to pursue a (associate's?) degree to become an EMT in his hometown? Someone who helped balance your family, to be the one to sing Achy Breaky Heart by Billy Ray Cyrus at the top of his lungs and throw himself to the floor with his kids while his wife sat in tears from laughter? How do you share that person with others to help cherish and remember someone who was truly a hero, not just saving lives as a volunteer but who continues in memory to support and save his family?

Being able to pass this bill, to have signs up along Highway 30 to honor fallen fire fighters is huge to my family. However, my father is not the only hero in Oregon, and as such I hope me sharing my memories today will help remind people about the hero's who don't wear capes, but who spend their free time saving people even after they have left us. Please remember our hero's, as they should be honored everyday.