

**SOUTH DAKOTA
FALLEN HERO**



*Your
Memory
lives on in
our hearts.*



*In Loving Memory
CPL Tanner J. O'Leary*



Eagle Butte, SD

US Army

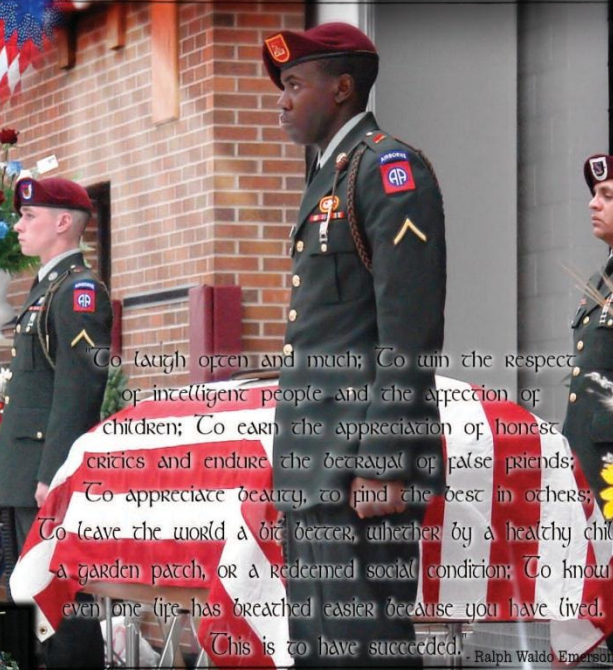
9-29-1984 to 12-12-2007

Afghanistan

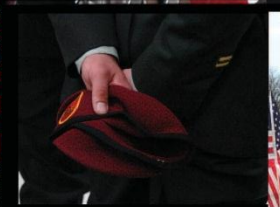
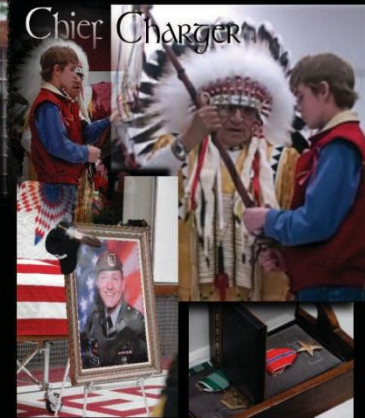
Gov. Rounds

Sen. Thune

Greg Bourland



To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded. - Ralph Waldo Emerson



My Sunshine...

*Hey there Alexis
What's it like in the big city?
Ten thousand miles away
But just tonight you look so pretty
Yes you do
Time Square can't shine as bright as you
I swear it's true*

*A thousand miles seems pretty far
But they've got planes and trains and cars
I'd walk to you if I had no other way
Our friends would all make fun of us
And we'll just laugh along because we know
That none of them have felt this way
Alexis I can promise you
That by the time we get through
The world will never ever be the same
And you're to blame*

*Hey there Alexis
Don't you worry about the distance
I'm right there if you get lonely
Give this song another listen
Close your eyes
Listen to my voice it's my disguise
I'm by your side*

*Hey there Alexis
You be good and don't you miss me
Two more years and you'll be going to school
And I'll be making history like I do
You know it's all because of you
We can do whatever we want to
Hey there Alexis here's to you
This ones for you*

*Oh it's what you do
What you do to me*

We wish to express our deepest appreciation for the honor and respect which you have shown in bringing our son, brother, nephew and relative home to rest. As only a community such as ours can do, you have opened your arms and supported us with gifts of your time and talent, food, music, memorials, quilts and prayer.

We pray that each of you will reflect on the privileges we enjoy and will consider deeply the obligation each of us as Americans bear for these privileges. Cherish your freedom, your family and your responsibility. We thank you for taking time from your busy lives to be God's hands and heart to this family in our time of need.

The O'Leary Family

*I am now at rest beneath the
sky covering the prairie that is
near all I love...*



My Home...

Tanner James O'Leary
1984-2007

And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count.

It's the life in your years - Abraham Lincoln

Thank You

My Family...



CPL Tanner J. O'Leary

TIMBER LAKE - On a day when racial lines seemed nonexistent, the people of the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation - Native American and white - came together to mourn Cpl. Tanner O'Leary.

The 23-year-old native of Timber Lake and Eagle Butte was laid to rest Thursday afternoon in a private cemetery on the family ranch south of Timber Lake. But family, friends and others - who in some cases traveled across the nation and world to get here - celebrated O'Leary's life in a much more public way during an honor march on Main Street and a memorial service at the school gymnasium that attracted more than 500.

From tribal officials and close friends to national politicians and U.S. Army brass, speakers praised O'Leary, who died Dec. 9 from injuries sustained in a bomb explosion in Afghanistan, as a good-hearted ranch kid who grew naturally into a soldier determined to serve his people.

Former Cheyenne River Tribe Chairman Greg Bourland said O'Leary represented the best of the warrior culture in a Native American society that enlists and serves in the military at five times the national average.

"They're the first to step forward in war time, the first to step forward in the defense of their nation," Bourland said during the memorial service.

O'Leary, a member of the Cheyenne River Tribe, was honored in ways that blended the Native American and non-Native cultures of his birth. His mother, Carmen, and sister, Tully, received an assortment of military medals that Tanner earned, including the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, from Brig. Gen. Keith Walker, who represented Gen. George W. Casey, U.S. Army chief of staff.

A 19-member honor guard from the 82nd Airborne Division accompanied O'Leary's remains home and through the ceremonies and onto the burial. O'Leary's cousin, Capt. Brian O'Leary, who is serving in Afghanistan, escorted O'Leary's body home from the East Coast.

Yellow ribbons were tied on roadside reflectors for miles along the highway into Timber Lake. U.S. flags flew at rural intersections and in driveways to farms along the road.

The family attended a funeral Mass at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Timber Lake on Wednesday, followed by an all-night vigil in the school gymnasium.

In that same gymnasium a few hours later, Tanner O'Leary was adopted into the Fool Soldiers, a Lakota warrior society. The adoption ceremony was led by Harry Charger, the great-grandson of Chief Charger, whose heroic leadership in saving a group of non-Native American women and children in 1862 gave the Fool Soldiers their name.

But they were anything but fools, Charger said. They were heroes who secured the release of the captives by negotiating with the Dakota warriors who had captured them in southwest Minnesota. They traded away horses and other belongings, including the moccasins being worn by Chief Charger, Harry Charger said.

They also helped the Dakotas themselves "from being annihilated" by government soldiers had the captives been kept and harmed, Harry Charger said.

"They were not fools. They were warriors," he said.

Like the Fool Soldiers society he joined Thursday, O'Leary was a warrior who served on behalf of others, Charger said.

"I look at this as a great day of healing among our people," Charger said. "Our young warrior has once more done this for us. He has done his greatest deed of all."

In an extended honoring ceremony that included song and drum and a ritual in which the entire audience joined Charger in turning to face the west, north, east and south, Charger presented a sacred lance to O'Leary's 14-year-old cousin, Jim.

Jim O'Leary will keep the lance and bear Tanner O'Leary's Lakota name, "Lance Warrior," for a year, upholding the honorable behavior of the society.

After the ceremony, Bourland noted that Natives and non-Natives had joined in seamless unity in the ceremony, moving in unison as they showed love and respect for O'Leary.

"It would be so wonderful, as God has intended us to live on this earth together, if we could do that every single day," Bourland said.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said he had met O'Leary several years ago when the teenager stopped to help the senator and his staff after they ran out of gas near Timber Lake. O'Leary gave Thune a ride to a speaking engagement in Timber Lake, then helped Thune's staffer take gas back to the car and get it running again.

Thune said O'Leary's willingness to serve others that day was a small example of his much greater service to come. The enduring strength of the United States is in that type of selfless commitment, Thune said.

"As long as there are young soldiers like Tanner O'Leary in this great nation and this great state, this will always be the land of the free and home of the brave," Thune said.

Gov. Mike Rounds said that in giving his life for his country and people, O'Leary emphasized the cost connected to the freedoms that every U.S. citizen enjoys.

"Let us never forget that," Rounds said. "Let us never forget that these freedoms come with a price." Contact Kevin Woster