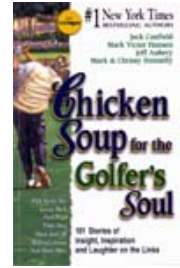


The Collection Basket

By Jan K. Collins

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My mother was my dad's grand passion in life. One of my fondest childhood memories was watching my father flip on the radio each morning before he left for work, then whirl my mother around the kitchen floor in a joyous dance.

But second only to my mother in the love department was my father's adoration of golf. My dad, a Michigan dentist named Cy Collins, cherished the game. He was a deft player, regularly shooting in the low seventies for eighteen holes. He played whenever he could, at home and on vacation in Hawaii, Scotland, and other locales. Golf was truly his nectar of the gods.

In the early 1980s, we began noticing the early signs of the Alzheimer's disease that eventually took his life. Dad became confused and forgetful. Though he had paid the family bills for decades, numbers now mystified him. Once he took the family car out for a drive and became lost, stopping only when he ran out of gas many miles from home. But Dad's love of golf lived on. He couldn't remember many things, but he remembered perfectly how to play the game. His drives and his putts were as good as ever.

And this is the part of the story where Dad's love of golf and generosity of spirit converged in the most touching way. A few years before he died in the small northern Michigan town where they had a summer home, Mom and Dad went to Sunday Mass as usual. Dad smiled and shook hands with friends and neighbors, then listened attentively to the priest's sermon. And when the collection basket was passed down his pew, Dad very deliberately reached into his pocket and placed in the basket the most precious gift he could imagine: three golf balls.