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# Building a 'Golden' legacy



## Livin' Up to Golden

Co-written with Mark Elliott

He had it first in another time  
 Gave it to my dad and now it's mine  
 They didn't know what they had  
 But I do, yea I do

It's the way I want to live my life  
 Raise my kids, love my wife  
 you ask me how it feels inside  
 I'll tell you, I'll tell you.

It's more than a last name  
 A word on some page  
 A carving on a cold and lonely grave  
 It's an honor and a callin'  
 And I'm goin' all in  
 Doin' the very best I can  
 Livin' up to Golden

The evening sun in those big pine trees  
 Singin' songs, grandmam and me  
 That color is like a melody in my soul, in  
 my soul

It's more than a last name  
 A word on some page  
 A carving on a cold and lonely grave  
 It's an honor and a callin'  
 And I'm goin' all in  
 Doin' the very best I can  
 Livin' up to Golden

(Bridge)  
 It goes back generations endlessly  
 But it's a legacy that begins with me

It's more than a last name  
 A word on some page  
 A carving on a cold and lonely grave  
 It's an honor and a callin'  
 And I'm goin' all in  
 Doin' the very best I can  
 Livin' up to Golden

'Cause my name is Golden

## Jason Golden: songwriter, musician

By Joy Beamer  
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Last spring Jason Golden had the opportunity of a lifetime when he spent a week's retreat at Amy Grant's farm near Nashville. Music Therapy of the Rockies organized the veterans' retreat, where they paired veterans with a writer with similar backgrounds. Golden paired with Mark Elliott, a songwriter. Elliott wrote "Every Man for Himself" for Neal McCoy. The two writers got to know each other over the week, and Elliott listened to Golden's story and life.

Through that collaboration, together they wrote "Livin' Up to Golden." He has spent a lifetime with the last name that caught comments such as "Do you live by the Golden Rule?" or "Are you golden?" Jason had a lot to live up to with a name like Golden.

Golden said to himself, "Do you want to live up to the cliché, or do you want to be a success? Then, people can look at him and say that he chose a better way to live."

He didn't know which story to tell when he went to Nashville. "Livin' Up to Golden" is what came out. His grandfather was an abusive man, and his father did not leave a positive legacy. He said he feels his father was more a brother than a father. Golden wants to live up to the word Golden and leave a legacy.

Golden is married to Alyssa, and they reside in the Bennett Spring area. He came home from the war in Afghanistan and Iraq after four deployments. He is 100 percent disabled and medically retired. Like many war soldiers, Golden came home dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He struggled when he came home and found comfort in songwriting. Finally, he could put his emotions down on paper and create music.

Today, the warrior is buying pink Carhartt overalls for a little girl arriving in January. Magnolia Faye will be their first child, with two songs waiting for her arrival. She will take a name from her great-grandmother Margaret Faye, his father's mother.

Margaret Faye raised Golden beginning at 7 weeks old. In addition, while he was young, she took him around to

various churches where she sang special music. African-American churches invited her to sing at revivals, singings and gatherings. As a result, the love of music was instilled at an early age.

Lots of changes are coming in 2023. Golden said he believes his songwriting will change, too, with many children's songs on the horizon.



GOLDEN

He is a substitute teacher at the high school and finds the work rewarding. After he was discharged from the military, he lost his purpose. In the military, he was climbing the career ladder and qualified for promotion in the military. Working at the school helps with a sense of purpose and belonging.

He returned from the Middle East to an empty house with no love or purpose. Then, he was angry and felt hollow. He was living in a dark world, having nightmares and paranoia. So, he started writing songs, getting emotions out of his head and heart, and onto paper and his guitar.

A real key to recovery was his dog — Tank. The Missouri Patriot Paws program gave him a constant companion, a Victorian bulldog. So many times, he wouldn't sleep for three to four days and would get lost in a liquor bottle. Tank was there for those empty days, along with the guitar. Tank is now retired, but he saved Golden through companionship and unconditional love. Tank loved Golden through it all until Golden could feel good again.

Songs evoke memories and tell stories. But, Golden said, "They (songs) also give credibility and a certain level of clout when those who struggle after us need a hand-up, not a handout."

Often, Golden might wake in the middle of the night with a song ready to come onto paper. Tank is there as always, and the late-night hours continue to help him heal.

PTSD is complex, causing an array of symptoms, including flashbacks, panic attacks and anxiety. For Golden, smells are a big trigger. PTSD patients often place themselves in isolation, feeling terminal aloneness and trusting no one. The constant fight-or-flight emotions wear them down.

Before the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) became a part of his life, everything seemed unfair. Then, in 2016, he joined the group, where they gave him tools to succeed and support him. Finally, someone was there to listen and help figure it all out. They continue to follow up with him.

He was plugged into the WWP program and took the training to become a

peer leader. Now, he has a new purpose for his life and with other veterans.

Golden made better decisions than the men in his family before him. He grew up and did something about it by joining the military and succeeding. Today, he keeps moving forward and pulling himself up from his medical disability.

Before COVID-19, he was active in the music jams at the Leaky Roof Meadery. Writing songs has provided an emotional and social outlet for him. He is a self-taught guitarist who doesn't read music and plays by ear. He learned from a book, "Mel Bay's Easiest Chords."

PTSD symptoms creep up today, but now he has the tools to succeed. At the end of the interview, Golden started writing a new song:

### There's beauty in scars

There's a beauty in scars — they're protectors of our hearts

To remind us of where we've been and the lessons of fresh starts.

But they also give credibility and a certain level of clout when those who struggle after us need a hand-up, not a handout.

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