

P4P-2018

07.13.2018

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank everyone who made this day another great success. Thanks to the golfers, thanks to Dan Schlarman and the awesome staff at this great Highland Country Club, and thanks to Jay Lumpkin and the young guys in the Pro Shop who hustled to get everyone's golf bags onto the correct cart. Our attendance numbers were a bit down this year compared to the past, but the folks who golfed, came for dinner, or just came to socialize did so with passion, and we will do our best to not let you down.

Golf Committee Members, please stand and be recognized. As much as I am able to do, this great event could not be pulled off without your help. I love you for your support and friendship.

Thank you *First Watch* for the great breakfast, and thank you *City Barbeque* for the great lunch. Year after year, your two companies continue to deliver an exceptional product, and it does not go unnoticed. And how about dinner? Chef Chris Smithson and the staff at HCC have outdone themselves again.

I want to extend a special Thanks to all of our volunteers, many of whom have been here all day. Thank you for giving us this day out of your life to help in a cause so important to millions of Americans.

I also want to recognize someone very special to a lot of people here. The last time I saw him alive was when he played in this outing last year. A moment of silence please, for Bob Guthier, a great friend, who is greatly missed by many.

A lot of people ask me how I am doing with everything. I smile and say "great," "pretty darn good, all things considered," or my favorite, "good enough." While these replies are mostly accurate, the truth of the matter is that I am struggling with communicating. Obviously, I have problems projecting my voice. I have lost my volume. Speech therapy will help this. Something I am not so certain that speech therapy will help with, though, is the speaking of words that I have in my

brain. They get stuck in my head, and when folks engage me in conversation, I often stare like a deer in the headlights, hoping the words will find their way to my tongue. Very frustrating.

How many people with Parkinson's Disease does it take to screw in a light bulb? Just one, but it takes him all damn day to do it.

We have heard a lot about people writing letters to their younger selves. In this same talk in 2012, I read the letter that Michael J. Fox had written to himself. Not to be out-foxed, I thought I'd give it a try, so here goes.

*Dear Scooter,*

*You are 13 years old, and you are starting to find yourself as an individual. You had a decent run on your first 12 years of life, and you have great things ahead of you.*

*The next 5 years will do a lot to define the man who you will grow up to be. You will experience much success, and some failure, in the classroom and in athletics. Your stubbornness will turn out to be an asset, as you will find that persistence will outweigh natural abilities of the body and mind – something that will greatly help you in your adult life. The friends you had from your youth, and ones you make in high school, will continue to be your friends for the rest of your life and support you in your endeavors. Listen carefully to everything your teachers and coaches tell you and others, for their words carry wisdom and a wealth of lessons in life ahead of you.*

*You will graduate with honors from high school, and smile proudly as the principal, who happens to be your own dad, pats you on the back as he hands you your diploma. You will graduate from Virginia Tech (Go Hokies!), not with honors, but you complete a 5-year program in, yes, 5 consecutive calendar years. In college, you will make more friends, and those bonds continue to this day. You will find yourself looking forward to annual golf and beach trips with your college fraternity brothers.*

*You will fall in love in college and marry a wonderful woman the year after you graduate. Fast forward 12 years, and you will be down on love and out of a marriage, but you find, after a while, that you're OK with things because your persistence for life kicks in and you further define yourself as an individual. You will find comfort, at times, in solitude, and realize that it is totally OK to see movies or dine out by yourself – this will help you later in your career as you hop around the country from one Home Depot store to the next.*

*But, do not despair, because you will soon meet a beautiful young woman, a single mom with 3 boys, who will fill the void of parenthood you had never experienced until then, and who will love the living heck out of you. And then, the amazing birth of your own son happens, which will truly change your life. You will hear a lot of people say they don't want their children to ever grow up, but you will cherish each day in amazement of the accomplishments of all of the children in your house, and you be looking forward to tomorrow to see what it has in store for each of them.*

*You will make more friends than you can count in your home town of Fort Thomas, KY, and living in the Bluegrass State will make you feel back home in Virginia because of the rolling hills and the genuine kindness that people show you every single day.*

*You will become a partner in a successful design firm, but two years later, an unthinkable thing happens – you are handed a diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease after some problems with your speech, handwriting, and other fine motor skills.*

*The Parkinson's Disease will take a toll on you, physically and emotionally, but you will prevail with your persistence and optimistic attitude. Daily struggles with buttons, opening milk jugs, or simply speaking fail in comparison to hardships of so many others, and yet you will constantly carry them with you, if nothing else, as a reminder of the person you are evolving into. You will refuse to idly sit by and deteriorate, finding yourself pushing through each day, regardless of what you, or others in your life, have planned.*

*And your wife, whom you can honestly say you love more after 14 years of marriage than you loved on day-one, will provide you with so much love and support of everything in your life. She will endure your outbursts of frustration from trying to communicate the thoughts that will get stuck in your head, to failed attempts at addressing an envelope. She will put up with these and so much more, with patience, grace and understanding that make you so grateful that she is in your life.*

*You will be 52 years old when you write this, and you are hopeful for another 52 years, although you do not expect the second half to be overly graceful on your ageing. You will get through those days as you have the first 52, through your conviction, your faith in a higher purpose, and your optimistic attitude.*

*I love you,  
Your older self.*

That letter to me was easier to write than I thought it would be, but I do apologize for the length of it. You should have read the first draft! Upon reflection, I'm really glad I wrote that letter, because it has been a long time since I felt comfort in the kid I was at age 13. Being the youngest child of three, I remember always looking for attention and acceptance growing up, which often caused me to act out or cut up in class, leading to quite a few disciplinary actions ... not the kind of attention I was looking for. If I could turn back the clock, I'd give my 13-year old self a hug, and tell me that no matter how gloomy things may seem to get, everything will be alright. Why? ... because **Optimism Always Prevails**.

By now, most of you know about Putting for Parkinson's *People Helping People* campaign, where we take 20% of the net proceeds from each golf outing and grant it to deserving individuals suffering from Parkinson's Disease who might need a special type of therapy, a medical device, DBS surgery, a home handicap alteration, a piece of equipment, or financial help with insurance or medication, but might not otherwise be able to afford it.

While we are still evaluating applications for this year, I want to introduce the 2017 recipient of the *People Helping People* award, and tonight's Guest of Honor, Carmel Manor. Carmel Manor has numerous resident patients who have Parkinson's Disease, and they will apply our \$5,000 donation to programs specifically for these residents, in particular speech therapy. Sister Diane and Tony Bonomini, on behalf of Carmel Manor, please accept this small memento in your honor. It reads, ...

Now it's time for that rally cheer:

Give me an **O!**

Give me an **A!**

Give me a **P!**

What does that stands for?

**Optimism**

**Always**

**Prevails.**

Have a great time tonight. Be safe, and don't forget to check out the great silent auction items!

Thank you, and God Bless everyone one of you. **I LOVE YOU ALL!!!**