

Chasing the Dream

When folks would call me on our home telephone (Which we no longer have), and I would be working in the yard, Ruth would say that “He’s outside digging holes.” I’m an avid gardener and golfer and spend many hours mowing, weeding and planting. When I’m not gardening I try to play golf several times each week with Jim Myers and Henry Halem at golf courses all around Northeastern Ohio. My golf schedule is: Monday with the Jim and Henry; Wednesday playing a match in the Stow Seniors; and, Thursday playing a match with Jim in the Summit Seniors on courses usually in Summit County. I try to practice on Saturdays...on the shots that need the most work (and always putting).

When I leave to practice, I always say, “Ruth, I’m going to deliver Meals on Wheels,” and she says, “Still Chasing the Dream?” “The Dream” is that at 82 I still believe I’m going to get better. You see, I never hit a golf ball until I retired at age sixty and I still hold the belief that I can get better. I have taken numerous lessons and have already shot my age three times (81, 82 and 79). Three times is a small accomplishment compared to my 87 year old partner, Jim, who at this date has shot his age or lower sixty-six times!! (Yesterday, he shot an 81!).



When I couldn’t keep my drive on the fairway, I use to think that once I accomplished hitting straight drives, I would become a ten or twelve handicap. But once I was able to keep my drives on the fairway, I could no longer putt! (In a match Wednesday, I had an awful 92, with seven three putts. Until the ninety-two, I hadn’t had a score over ninety all this year!

Is the dream fading? No, No, **NO!** I am like Boxer, the naive and ignorant horse in the book **Animal Farm** by George Orwell (The dedicated and loyal farm worker, an allegory for the Russian working class who were betrayed in the Russian Revolution). When Boxer did something wrong, He would say, "I will work harder, I will try harder." (Boxer's final reward was being sent to the "Glue Factory," but let's not go there! Let's stick with Boxer's attitude of never giving up.) When I started playing golf, I was advised to take lessons by folks who had played golf for years but never taken any lessons. They were correct! Lessons are important. As the years have passed, twenty-one to be exact, the lessons have helped, but lessons can't resolve my inconsistent swing caused by muscle memory (and/or diminished talent). I think I can still throw a baseball, without having to remember to "grip the ball, draw my arm back, flex my wrist, shift my weight, etc., etc.,..." but I have to do that while playing golf because I learned this new skill so late in life that it does not appear to come with muscle memory. But, overall, I'm still improving, even if it is only for 16 of the 18 holes! I will work harder because it is fun to learn a new (or twenty-one year old) skill. There is also another factor to consider (which I have expounded on in an earlier story (Bad Golf Shots: Opportunities for Gratefulness). Each time I hit a bad shot, I look skyward and revisit how grateful I am to be playing golf on a beautiful day, on a beautiful course, with wonderful friends at age eighty-two! Many eighty year olds don't get to do what I am doing, and to become angry when I hit a bad shot just doesn't make sense. I don't think any friend of mine can say that they have ever seen me get angry after hitting a bad shot. I don't like hitting bad shots, but I love being able to hit them. My lowest handicap has been in the Stow Seniors (13) and my current USGA handicap is 17 (Caused in part by Jim and I being promoted to a more difficult division this year after winning several events last year. Now, we are not permitted to play from the senior tees...my excuse is that when playing from the back tees, I try to hit shots I shouldn't try to hit and get in

trouble...maybe we will be demoted next year!!! Excuses, excuses...and, I didn't even mention my shoulder!).

When this saga is all boiled down to the nitty-gritty...I need to work harder, since getting more talent is out of the question. I have always been a little like Boxer...more hard work than talent, more perspiration than inspiration, more never-give-up than let's quit and try something else. My work history shouts that because I was usually surrounded by people smarter than me but too often less willing to work harder.

I will work harder, try harder, at improving my game, never forgetting to be thankful that I am still able to enjoy a game that came to me late in life, for which I am very grateful. It is important to have dreams of all types... for those you love, for self improvement, for the future, **for improved putting!** My **purpose** in life is not to be a better golfer, but to help others realize their dreams, to live altruistic lives...but along the way, one **goal** in my life will be "working harder/trying harder" as I continue to Chase **"The Dream."**

I shot 85 yesterday...no gimmes, no mulligans! The dream is alive!

July 2018