

Dennis Schmatz: My best memories of JF After Fridays wonderful memorial service for John over at Immaculate Conception Church I felt like adding to all the great points made by father, and the two other gentlemen (his fellow classmate and the micro). I am very happy to have known John and his family, and to say that he left the world an order of magnitude better than before is an understatement. It was so good to see everyone come out for John at the funeral parlor, and then again for the mass. A good indication of just how special he was. This special bond carries over to his family too. They are as much a part of the club as was John.

How can we ever forget the club picnics, splashing around the pool, and followed up by the tour of his beloved shrine. I met him on the Frenchtown trail around Halloween time in 2002. I was about 17 miles into a 20 mile training run and not feeling too good. I heard a sound from behind me, it was John and Diane following close behind on her bicycle. She had water, gatorade, gels, towels in her basket. After a brief intro we decided to run together. he told me he was training for Phila. I was too. He said he had a goal of qualifying for Boston. He then said "hey what say we kick up this pace a notch". I said "I don't think I can", and he replied "sure ya can, its only another 2 miles or so". That's when I first saw Johns insight on goals. When we finished the run I asked if he ran with a club, and he responded that he did not, and that he was looking for one. I took his e-mail address, and handed it off to Bruce, and the rest is history (wonderful history).

Many folks (non runners, non athletes etc) do not understand about the bonds that occur, between folks that engage, in these events. Physically exhausting is mentally exhilarating, and in our circle of friends it is also 'Tres Chic' (a bit of french I picked up from John). Running is one of the more social sports around. I can remember running many miles with John. it gave us time to talk problems, tell a few jokes, or just idle chit chat. I can remember many late nights when I'd be up surfing the net. Around 2:30 AM I'd get ready to log off and up pops an e-mail from John. Something like this

Hi Dennis

It's JF. I've decided to run the Bronx Half Marathon. I've just signed up on line. Any chance you've got room for me in the HRH Van ??

Hi JF

Don't you ever sleep ??? Of course there is room for you, but it will cost you a good story after the race on the way home. (He knew my rules for riding in the HRH Van).

Just this past weekend was the annual running of the Bronx Half Marathon. A race that John has run many times. He wasn't with us for the race this year, but we did spend some time talking about John in past Bronx Half Marathons.

Absolutely no one in the HRH club had the wonderful & zany sense of humor that John had. My best memory is when he went nose to nose trying to out bark a dog up at The Bloomfield 5 miler one year. He stood about 1 foot away from the dog with an anchor fence between, and they just traded barks for a good 30 seconds. Afterward John remarked. "I guess I showed him". Then out came a big burley guy who said "Hey !! what do ya think your doing to my dog" ??

John was the person who taught us how to set goals. I previously had mentioned that he had told me, during our first meeting (on the Frenchtown Trail) that he had set the goal of qualifying for Boston. Well it didn't take him long to do that. Then came other goals. triathalons, half ironmans, ironmans, qualifying for Boston while running for Boston. Then came his last event "God's Marathon". There is

no medal or finishers certificate for this one. Just entrance into heaven. I do believe if there is such a thing as a marathon in heaven, then John is either training for it or has already run it. He is now on Gods team, and what a great a great addition he will make to that team. We won't see him biking on Spring Hill Rd, or running on Sidney School Road anymore. He is now biking on clouds and running on rainbows.

John thanx so much for being my friend, and sharing some wonderful times with me.

Cheers

DS