

I'd like to begin by sharing with you our family mantra that my wife Colleen, son Michael and daughters Kaitryn and Shannon grew up with, it is **WORK HARD and PLAY EVEN HARDER!! CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY!**

750 that's the number! 750 give or take a few, by my calculations, averaging 2 or 3 times a day just this one week every year, I've sung "*Roll Out the Barrel*" approximately 750 times in my life. I only sing it this one week. In fact the other 51 weeks of the year I hate that song. But up here...greatest song EVA!

In 1973 a couple of chubby kids from Jamaica Plain came to EC Week along with some of their brothers, and then to be joined up with a skinny loud-mouthed kid from Dorchester.

1973, that's a long time ago. As a young waiter and punk kid from JP, I witnessed people doing the kindest acts of humanity and generosity like I'd never seen before. Even at such a young age I saw this incredible bond happening between Camper and Counselor. I was jealous. I wanted to be a part of that.

So I spent the next few years as a waiter, running back and forth in the Dining Hall, taking crap from the Kitchen Boys. But again I found myself envious. Envious of the "shows" the Kitchen Boys put on. Amazed at the level of commitment and work ethic this group of worn out old men brought to every meal every day, year in and year out. No matter how much the workload or how silly the act they were putting on. They were relentless!

Early on as a Waiter I also encountered the "West Roxbury Tabernacle Choir." This group of Counselors, young men and women that made it look so easy. The amount of care and tenderness, their work ethic second to none and high level of professionalism was unmatched. How it really was "**all about the Camper and the Camper's happiness.**" They'd dress up, made signs and were the first to decorate their cabins. Be damned their own pride and vanity. There was nothing they wouldn't do for their Camper. On top of all that, they'd be leading songs in the Dining Hall or creating subplots that the entire Camp would engage in during the day. Some might remember "Son of Sam" or the first time we had an "election for Mayor of Camp." They'd party and carry on at night like there was no tomorrow. Yet every morning they answered the bell. Every minute of every day they were making it happen for their Camper. There was an **unmistakable, indescribable, unselfish dedication** to their actions. Once again I found myself jealous. I wanted that. I'm proud to tell you, they, as well as many others up here, and you know who you are, are some of my dearest and best friends.

**WORK HARD and PLAY EVEN HARDER!! CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY!**

So what did I do? At 16 I lied about my age so I could be a Counselor. After all, my best friend, who's much older than me, was to become a Counselor and that would have been just way too much jealousy and envy for my fragile ego to take.

Jim Valvano was a very successful college basketball coach in the 1980's and early 90's. Coach V died very young from cancer at the age of 37. In 1993, the last speech he ever gave, he said, "I have 3 wishes for you. 3. What I wish for you is that every day you laugh, you think and you have something that brings your emotions to tears! Laugh, think and cry ... now that's a full day!"

Well at 16 years old in 1976, without realizing it I began to be exposed to Coach Valvano's wishes. My first year as a Counselor my Camper was affectionately known as Big Al. Big Al and I wore beach towels around our necks as capes like superheroes, the entire week! From when he awoke until he went to bed, we were super heroes! We had more fun than anyone that year. Boy could Big Al make me laugh! He was a SUPER-hero! He didn't care if anyone else believed it...he did. I did! I swear we laughed non-stop that entire week. Laughter. Wish number 1!

Now this is one of hundreds of stories I could share but I promise I'll keep it to just a few.

Wish # 2; THINK. Dickie Sexton. I'm proud to say that Dickie Sexton is a dear close friend. Dickie is one of the most thoughtful, kindest and considerate people I've ever known. So many times in our lives we're all in such a big hurry. Life's got us on that proverbial treadmill. Work is out of control. People pulling at us from all directions. Want to put all that aside? Have a deep meaningful experience? Have a conversation with Dick Sexton! Dickie's taught me patience. Unlike his brother. Dickie's taught me to "be in the moment." Focus and think only on who and what's in front of you right now. The rest can wait. Hang out with Dick Sexton for a while. You'll feel better! Dickie makes me think. Wish #2!

Finally Wish # 3; have something that brings your emotions to tears! One year more recently, my Camper Devon and I spent every night in the Infirmary because Devon wasn't comfortable sleeping in the Cabin. Mary Ann and the wonderful Nursing Staff never gave it a second thought. We stayed up most nights. But during the day to hear Devon laugh or to get a sloppy wet kiss from Devon or a big hug ... nothing better! Devon, on a daily occurrence would bring my emotions to joyous tears. Wish #3!

Laugh, think and cry ... a typical day at EC Week!

Over the years I've seen and been part of, nothing short of miraculous acts and moments. More than I could count. In my extended career here at EC Week I've learned so much about the caring and well-being of others.

As the years evolved I became a part of a band of characters affectionately known as the Cabin 30 Boys. Loud, in your face, unapologetic, always pushing the envelope, especially Cash, Tug and Lou ... some might even say bordering on the obnoxious. A band of misfits from Jamaica Plain to East Boston to West Roxbury to Revere and yes even Dorchester, that always **WORKED HARD and PLAYED EVEN HARDER!!** That **ALWAYS CHOSE TO BE HAPPY!** They showed me once again that with all their foolishness it really is all about the Camper. Do what you gotta do to answer the bell and always be there for your Camper.

But at the core of it all, you know what truly excites me? What's truly inspires me? **It's you!** It's all of you out there listening to me tonight. I see you every day. I see groups of friends coming together. I see great Counselors and Staff people doing whatever it takes! From my dear friends in 13, to the knuckleheads in 25 ½, to all the great Counselors in Shady Pines, to the old guys in 23, 24, 27 and 31, to the band of crazies in the Condos and of course the next generation of Cabin 30 Boys.

I see my best friends' kids stepping up to the plate! And it's AWESOME!

And closest to my heart, I see my own family; my daughters Kaitryn, Shannon and more recently Stevie. I get to see them as great Counselors. As well as in previous years, my wife Colleen, son Michael and his wife Alison. I've been blessed to witness this very special part of their lives. And it **FILLS MY HEART!**

I get to witness all of you! Daring to be great! Just like it was for me the first time 44 years ago. TODAY all of you giving an **unmistakable, indescribable, unselfish dedication** to your Camper. And because of you I'm a better person!

People ask me, and trust me soon enough in your EC Week career, if it hasn't been happening already, people will be asking you too; "After all this time, what makes you go back every year?" It's simple, because every day I get to witness people doing the kindest, gentlest acts of humanity and generosity. Every day I see this incredible bond happening between Camper and Counselor. Every day I see people doing whatever it takes.

I believe that there are unique opportunities in life to participate in something that's bigger. Bigger than me and bigger than you. I also believe that only a very select few recognize those opportunities and are lucky to take advantage. EC Week for most of us has been one of those life changing opportunities!

So my wish, my wish for all of you is that you continue to **WORK HARD and PLAY EVEN HARDER!!** That you continue **CHOOSING TO BE HAPPY! EVERYDAY!!** God bless you all and thank you.