

A Tribute to Pete

April 24, 2010

Dear Chris, Donovan, Shauna and family,

I write this as but one member of Pete's running community, which includes a grieving team, his last running coach and one of his best friends as we suffer our loss. We are all so saddened that you, and we, will no longer have Pete's physical presence with us. My deepest condolences go to all of you. Simultaneously, we are relieved for Pete. He is finally at peace and in a safe place with his Lord.

Pete was an amazing man who had an inexhaustible zest for all of his life. He was a great husband, father, brother, relative, neighbor, volunteer and friend. He shared that zest for living with you and each of us in unique ways. I thank you for sharing him with us. Most of all we know that Pete loved you, Chris, and adored his children, Donovan and Shauna. It was evident that the three of you were always foremost in his life. As Pete's coach, I know that because he mostly "missed" GVH workouts because he wanted to be with you. It was a wise choice and one I'm sure he never regretted.

We all know Pete developed a bond with running at a very early age. He told me often that as a child he had Mendon Ponds Park in his back yard and loved running the trails. He created such a strong bond and love for running that he embraced it in everything he did. He shared his love for running in so many different ways and it was contagious. No doubt, outside of his family, it was his life. He made running his great adventure and purpose for living and he dragged most of us along with him . . . for which we are forever grateful. Indeed he was our "Pied Piper."

We are all united in our desire to pay our respects to Pete and we have a need to do so. Pete was such an extraordinary person that thousands of people across the nation are mourning his loss and some have never met him. They know of his great deeds and the impact that he has had on so many people. I have read the Caringbridge entries and there are so many remarkable tributes to Pete it is amazing. I am sure that we are all thankful to so many for sharing with you, Pete, and all of us, many wonderful words, prayers and stories.

Pete helped to lead and revitalize running in Rochester and was part of a national movement to have Clubs develop our next generation of Olympians. He set the standard high as an accomplished runner himself and organized many events that people still rave about. His humor enamored us, his tireless energy and work ethic just made things happen. Today we need committees to do what he did. Often he organized things single handedly with little or any fanfare.

I have two stories of my own about Pete that I would like to share.

Pete began our club, the Genesee Valley Harriers, (GVH) in 1996. One of our first goals was to win the National Master's 5K Cross Country Championship. We did so in 1998 at Genesee Valley Park on our own turf and we were elated. But to win it two years in a row and on someone else's turf would make it very special. I will never forget the look Pete and I gave each other and the "high five" we exchanged as they announced the winning teams at the 1999 USA Track and Field Masters 5K Cross Country Championship at Holmdel, New Jersey. Reaching the highest standards possible, working as a team, making sacrifices to get there and relishing the camaraderie with other great runners is what Pete wanted us to experience and achieve . . . and we did. This time we felt it was the real deal and we knew at that instant that all our hard work, all our planning and "dreaming" had paid off. It was Pete's vision, his leadership and persuasion that allowed us to be a part of something so very special in our world of running. With inspiration from that race GVH went on to win over 25

additional National Masters team championships, develop numerous individual age group National Champions with several athletes breaking World and American age group records.

We hosted the 2005 USATF Club National Championships, which they still talk about today as the best Cross Country Club Nationals ever held. It was Pete's vision, dedication and ability to mobilize a community and his teammates that made these things happen. I want you to know that that vision and determination remains with our club members today. Thanks to Pete we will go on to accomplish much, much more with his spirit with us.

I saw Pete for the last time this past Monday, twice actually. In the morning he was asleep. In the afternoon he was awake and I came in with Dr. Dave Valvo and his wife Leah. Dave had brought a rock with him. It was a rock that he had dug out of the ground from the top of Cardiac Hill in Mendon Ponds Park. Dave told Pete that he just knew that he had stepped on that rock many, many times and he wanted him to have it. What was amazing was that Pete grasped the rock with all his might and waved it around . . . a final victory lap of sorts. The ground he had run on so many times as a kid and as an adult was with him. He did not want to let go. He could feel his beloved Mendon Ponds Park in his hand one last time and he was at home and loving it. I told him he could let go now and it would still be with him.

The "Run for Pete's Sake" organized by Roger Janezic and friends was so very special for Pete and for all of us. I was glad that everyone was so gracious in letting us do it. I am so glad that Pete was able to see and hear directly from so many friends about the impact he had on their lives. I will always remember that day.

So, this is but one more chance to say thank you to Pete for the way he brightened our lives. We all feel cheated that he was taken from us so young and yet we are grateful for having had the opportunity to share so much with him and be influenced by him. Now that he is gone we truly appreciate what we are without and know that life without him is going to be very difficult. I know we are all in despair at the loss of Pete but I also know he would want us to be strong and move forward with his spirit guiding us.

We will miss Pete's sense of humor but will laugh as we tell stories about him. We will see and feel his smile and boundless energy as we plan our next big event. We will keep him in our hearts and make him proud of our future accomplishments as we race the good race knowing he is watching. We will host the Inaugural Pete Glavin Upstate Cross Country Series Race on September 26, 2010 at Mendon Ponds Park and make him proud as we take stock of the man who has meant so much to so many. Pete gave me the opportunity to be the coach of this awesome group of runners and I will be forever grateful. Indeed, I will honor Pete forever.

Sincerely,

Mike Reif
Coach,
Genesee Valley Harriers Running Club