

I wanted to start by describing a moment for you that occurred just shortly after dad passed away in the late afternoon of March 17th, just over two months ago now –we were with him when he passed, and all four of us had been there with him for many many days – day and night– and needless to say it was a difficult time and I won't try to describe it; but most importantly, we *were.all.together* which dad was aware of and was comforted by–as were we– and when he passed we took some time alone with him as a family and then we called the nurses in, and then we went outside. and when we did the sky was doing something pretty breathtaking. which was surprising because earlier in the day, when i had gone out to get lunch for us, for example, it had been stormy and raining sideways and then actually started hailing, big marble-sized hailstones; it was just a tumultuous, swaying-between-the-extremes sort of a March day, St. Patrick's Day; but the second we walked outside after dad passed, the sun in the west broke through all that gray that had gotten all bunched up along the horizon and these vast semi-transparent vertical veils of mist and wisps of cloud that were lined up almost in parallel with one another just sort of lit up one after the next like wildfire, and within a couple seconds there was a glowing.orange.mist fountaining all around us, encircling the sky, and the quality of the light at that moment: it just took our breath away. And then I had what I can best describe as the opposite of an out of body experience – I just felt myself so intensely within myself, within my own body, and I just felt so unbelievably tiny in the world. Like a speck; which was very disorienting and dizzying and something I'd never felt before. And it lasted maybe 60 seconds. And I'm sharing it with you because I just think I was processing–on a subconscious level, in the core of my being–the fact that I had just lost the person in my life who made me feel so much bigger than I was. It's something I'll never forget. It's not that I didn't realize before that moment how incredibly fortunate I was to have had him as a father. It's that I had not felt until that moment what it was like to *not* have my father in the world anymore.

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My dad had a tradition of writing us sons letters every christmas for as long as I can remember. They were often multiple-page, hand-written (which made them very hard to read!), but always heartfelt letters. Our Christmases were pretty casual affairs otherwise. We weren't a family very big on presents. I remember the only present dad ever wanted for xmas when we were growing up – was a can of cashews. So for like ten christmases in a row, there'd just be four cans of Planters cashews in dad's stocking on xmas morning. And maybe a bag of peanut m&ms and a pack of white athletic socks from Santa. Which still always made him somehow. so. damn happy. "I'm one happy camper," I can still hear him saying. I don't know how he was always such a happy camper. It's one of the mysteries I've been trying to figure out. For instance, he wrote in his memoir. "I *loved* going to work every day, and that passion never ended in my fifty years in education." Which is something that if anyone else wrote would come across as wild hyperbole. But when he writes it you just kinda nod your head because you know it's true. Another mystery I can't figure out is how he got so much work done when (1) his office door was always open and (2) he never stopped talking. The guy would just tell stories and jokes all day long. He had so many stories, and he could just recall all the details of every experience in his life, so his stories would go on and on in really rich detail he was like a savant when it came to memory, which is why his book is so good, which is another thing I'll never understand: how he

managed to write a 300 page book about his life without any of us knowing it, including my mom. Anyway... So, he wrote us these letters every christmas, and he never missed one – and they always had cash in them too, by the way, I'd be remiss not to mention that, since cash was probably more meaningful to us than the actual letter when we were younger. But as we got older those things flipped and the letters started to take on much more value than the cash (though the cash was always handy). The point is, I haven't felt able to go back and read through those letters yet. I know I have them stashed away but I just can't bring myself to read them. But I did by accident read his most recent one a month or so ago, the one I got this xmas. I was looking for money to pay the babysitter so I went to get cash that I stash in my underwear drawer (which is also something I learned from my dad) – and of course the cash was in an envelope with the letter and before I knew it I was reading it, which was a big mistake, because it just completely devastated me. But. Two things I'll say about it. One, it was not in any way obvious that he thought it was going to be his last letter—which was just an observation I had at the time. The second thing was the last line, which read: "Continue to take care of yourself, always find time to relax, and continue to enjoy life – it flies by!" And then: "We love you very much and you make us proud every day. Love, Dad."

I've been thinking a lot about those words. "You make us proud every day." And just knowing that I'm not going to hear them from him anymore—that's been one of the hardest things for me. It's a phrase that was just so full of transformative power when he said it to you. It was his real-life super power. And he used that superpower not just on me and my brothers, but on so many countless others over his lifetime; especially students, especially those students who, for one reason or another at that point in their lives, needed to feel special the most. He had the ability – and this is really what separates him from so many other people in positions of authority or leadership these days – to not only express and communicate how special he thought you were, but to do it in a way that convinced you that it was true. That was key. He had an easy way about him of convincing you—by relying on his sense of humor and familial kindness – that you were important. "Help me understand." He would always say. That was one of his favorite openers. Especially if you had just recently made a bad decision which brought you face to face with him in the first place. "Help me understand." Because he really wanted to understand first and foremost. He was absolutely committed to understanding who you were and where you came from and what brought you to behave the way you did, or make the decision you did. Because if you could help him understand all that, then he could help *you* understand how special and different all of those things made you; for he knew that if he could convince you to believe that you were special, then he'd be able to hold you to a higher standard, and that you'd allow yourself to be held to a higher standard. Because then you'd start making the right decisions for yourself based on what it was *you* wanted (and not what others wanted, or what others wanted for you), and doing so would help you start to define *your* version of what a happy and successful life would look like, and start you on a path toward achieving it. To him, that's all that mattered.

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I remember a conversation we had with dad in mid-February; I was driving over from Vermont a lot and Nick and I were trying to help him and my mom and take him to appointments and such and move the living room up to the bedroom because it was on the second floor and he just couldn't manage the stairs anymore and anyway he'd started to feel better this particular week and he wanted us to come sit down and talk through he and my mom's will and get everything in order, get us all on the same page, and he was cogent and we talked for a while, and it was a little hard because by this time he'd lost his hearing almost entirely, but it really went fine and he had already prepared everything so beautifully anyway (he was always so prepared), he'd even finished his taxes and submitted them for god's sakes, even though he'd been so sick, and when we got toward the end of the talk, I remember him saying, "I've had a great life. I have no regrets." And then he said, "You know, [raising his hand up above his head] I never wanted to be up here. I've always been happiest right here [lowers his hand to heart-level]." And then he repeated it. He was tired after that and didn't extrapolate and we adjourned and then I went back to Vermont and a few days later things went downhill again pretty quickly, very sadly, and we all came back and in those final couple weeks I just never got the chance to ask him what he meant; and so I've been returning to that conversation in my mind these last couple of months. And then when going through some old footage the other day that Nick had digitized for the video you're going to see here in a few minutes, there's one of dad's graduation speech in Skowhegan in the spring of 1988, right after the school was given a very distinguished award, and the governor of Maine was there and Senator Margaret Chase Smith was there—who was just such an important mentor for my father, a leader he looked up to and learned so much from (a really important leader in the history of this State, one of the best), by then she had become such a close mentor and friend that she had become like a grandmother to us kids that's how often we saw her at her house and exchanged letters with her; come to think of it, she used us send us kids letters on our birthdays with 10 dollar bills tucked inside, so I guess now I've figured out where he got that idea from – Anyway, it was a big deal because Skowhegan had just been named a "School of Excellence" by the Dept of Education and my dad was the principal. And in the speech he talks about that incredible achievement in terms of just how collaborative the effort was, how proud he was of the students, the teachers, all working together, everybody holding each other up to a higher standard. To the students he says: "We gave you leadership and you led." Which I love. This is 1988, remember. He was 42 years old. Same age as I am now. And already he understood leadership as something you should share, something you give. And then he quotes Elbert Hubbard: "There was one who thought himself above me, and he was above me until he had that thought." And that's when I realized what he had meant by "Happiest right here":

Because in our society we tend to think of leaders up here [raises hand above head], conceptually. And all the rest of us are down here [heart-level], looking up, following their lead. I'm not sure if that hierarchy is a carryover from religious traditions or political traditions or both, but it's just the way it is. We think of leaders up here. And unfortunately that's how many of our leaders think of themselves. But dad didn't believe that to be true at all. For dad, true leadership could only happen right here [heart-level], on the same level as everybody else, arm-in-arm. Because a true leader empowers all those around them to be leaders themselves. "We gave you leadership and you led." A true leader builds up those around them by helping them

understand just how special and capable they are, which makes them want to be better, which in turn makes them want to build up those around them, and on and on it goes, because that kind of leadership is contagious – until pretty soon, because everyone's holding each other to a higher standard, that community– collectively and collaboratively–can begin to envision what a better future looks like and, more importantly, how to help each other get there. That's when real positive change and progress occurs communally, societally. And true excellence can be achieved. *That* kind of leadership, *Tom Farrell's* kind of leadership: that all happens right here [heart-level]. It's the truest and most effective form of leadership there is, and he knew it, and he gifted that kind of leadership to all of us who knew him, and he modeled it, day in and day out, all his life. For it's a kind of leadership the world really, really needs. Especially now. Which is why the Future Leaders of Maine Foundation is so very important.

My whole life dad's been teaching me and my brothers – and not just us, but all of us – all the lessons one needs to be an effective leader, and also how to be truly happy. For happiness, You just need to have my mom around. We all know that; that's Number one. Number two: And This part he circles around and phrases and rephrases so many times and in so many ways in his book, I look forward to you all reading it: *The more you give, the happier you will be. Only those who serve will be truly happy. What you give away you will receive back with interest. What you give away, you keep forever.* Happiness.

It is one of the simplest ideas and the simplest things to believe and yet it's one of the hardest things to enact, day in and day out. But dad mastered it. And because of him, I know exactly how to do it, too. We all do.

So dad, thank you. We'll miss you. And I'll end now the same way you always did: *We love you very much and you make us proud every day.*