

James L. Holly, M.D.

The Moment of Avoidance

August 25, 2017

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By James L. Holly, MD

Yesterday, I read this letter again, it has been sitting on my desk for 49 years. It is my letter of acceptance to medical school dated November 22, 1968. I read it to one of my associates and said, "On the day I received this letter, my life changed forever."

Today, I saw five minutes of Field of Dreams. In that movie, Burt Lancaster plays the role of Moonlight Graham. In a dream-like moment, his character is offered an opportunity to fulfill his childhood dream. He says, "No.". He is told, "It would kill some men to be so close to their dream and not touch it. They would consider it a tragedy. "

Lancaster's character, Dr. Graham, who had been a general practitioner for fifty years in a small town, responded, "Son, if I had only been a doctor for five minutes that would have been a tragedy."

As I read that . I realized again how deeply grateful I am to have been given the privilege of being a doctor.

Being a doctor is not the technology, the science, the honor, the success, the prosperity; it is the people, who one by one, day by day, make me a doctor every day. It is the people that make me a doctor and who have filled my life with joy, happiness and significance.

Of course, the most important people are Carolyn, Carrie, Sam, Richmond, Jennifer, Beau, Hannah, Holly, Elizabeth, Emma, Kate, Richmond Everett, Wyatt and tens of thousands more.

It is this that prevented my life from being a tragedy.

Every person must discover their "moment of avoidance," their moment of avoiding turning their life into a tragedy.

Another Response

Paul Grundy

August 25, 2017 at 4:06:39 PM CDT

To: "James L. Holly"

The Moment of Avoidance

Larry You are such an amazing inspiration to so many of us thank you and thanks to the UTSA for accepting you.

Paul Grundy, MD, MPH

Chief Medical Officer

Global Director of Healthcare Transformation IBM Healthcare and Life Sciences

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This statement is from a fellow physician who is one of the finest I know

I often think the same. How crucial moments in our lives can change everything including the very course of our lives. I went straight from high school to six years of medical school in 1965. My high school principal was not very helpful and indicated, in his letter of recommendation, that he thought my stutter would be an insurmountable problem to a medical career. I had an interview with the vice dean of Glasgow school of medicine and fortunately I had a good speech day and was accepted. Who knows what would have happened if I had a bad day!

Sent from my iPhone

Another response

An Experience with a moment of avoidance

I wish to respond only to the statement, "I know that you have accomplished much more in your life than I ever will." I understand why this was said but it is not absolutely true.

Each of us is a collage of influences, some good and some bad. There is no doubt in my mind that today I could not and would not be accepted to medical school. I was at the right place at the right time.

Depending upon your philosophy that is good fortune or providence; I choose providence.

When I was in the eighth grade – I was twelve years old – a coach went around the class telling each of us, publicly, what he thought of us. Of me he said, and I remember his words precisely and I hear them in my mind in his voice, "Larry, you are a follower; you will never amount to much and will only do what others tell you to do."

Philmore Evans, African American who lived across the road from us, told my father in my presence, “I have never seen the boys do as much as their father.”

This is not an epistle but the summary is that with the grace and empowerment of God, I Have taken full advantage of the opportunities given to me.

You have earned and been given an opportunity. What you do with it will determine not only your future but that of others. If you are wise and learn from our discussion today, This can become your legacy. I expect that to be the case. It will require hard work and long hours.

Your response is your decision. Your outcome will be yours to have, but never imagine that you can not be as great as anyone, including and especially me.

You may decide that you don't want to pay the price in effort and energy required to put your Imprimatur upon your future. Only you can decide that.

I believe you can and hope that you do. But never think that you can't because you are not as good as someone else. If you become a great team; you will do just that.

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