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MART 120

The Last Lecture

The last lecture was an incredibly moving lecture by Randy Pausch, in which he talked about the life he led and how he achieved his dreams. He introduces the lecture by saying he has one foot in the grave, with 10 tumors in his liver and approximately 5 months of good health left. This would be a depressing start, but Pausch delivered a more upbeat speech than anyone I’ve ever heard. His goal was to entertain, to motivate, and to inspire people to reach for their dreams.

What affected me the most was Pausch’s breakdown of his dreams and how he achieved them. Granted it felt like he was more academically inclined than most people and that got him to where he wanted to be, but regardless it is still inspiring to see how he grows and achieves what he wants. You can see his path from a student at CMU to an incredibly respected professor revolutionizing VR throughout the world.

Pausch had many memorable quotes, but there were two that stuck with me more than the others. The first was when he was describing his football coach riding his ass the entire practice, and how the other coaches consoled him afterwards. “When you’re screwing up and nobody’s saying anything to you anymore, that means they gave up”. This is a very powerful message that is easy to forget; your teachers or mentors may come off as rude or pushy, but that’s only because they want to you improve and be the best you can be. The second thing that stuck with me was his final, “double head fake” that he described at the very end of the lecture. The lecture was for Pausch’s kids the entire time. This was so powerful and so sad considering the condition of his liver at the time, and it made me realize something about this lecture that I hadn’t considered at the beginning. Pausch has a very limited amount of time left on this planet, and he has a wife that loves him more than anything and an obviously strong bond with his kids. In a way, this lecture was an autobiography written to them. Like a video recording or a will, they will be left with an hour and sixteen minutes of their father that wanted nothing more than to encourage his kids to be the best they can be.