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MART120

Last Lecture Reflection

As a highly competitive athlete in my younger years, Randy Pausch’s Last Lecture is something that I am quite familiar with. His seemingly effortless grace, nuanced oratorial skill, and overwhelmingly positive outlook are all incredibly infectious. As a younger man, I stood in awe of Pausch’s ability to quickly look past the “easy way out”, the cynical outlook of his situation, and how it effected his health outcomes and general outlook on life. As an adult, I marvel at his selflessness, his clarity of thought in a time of travesty and chaos, and his overarching need to tell his own truths before his death.

I, unfortunately, am all too familiar with the anonymous evils of cancer, the ignobility of death, and the need for those soon to pass to relay forward their most essential truths. I have watched in the last five years the death of a parent and four other family members, all from cancer. I have attended three funerals for friends that have committed suicide or overdosed. Simply put, my life has been saturated with the death of those around me, far surpassing the average 25 year-old’s understanding of death. One of the most poignant parts of Pausch’s lecture I have seen in both the passing of loved ones, and even pop culture figures: at a moment at which the precipice of impending death has been crossed, an outpouring of knowledge, love, and advice flows forth. I have found, in my own experience, that this could be of a varied nature, sometimes profound, often essential to the speaker. Pausch’s ability to express to his children the need to, and the path to achieving their dreams, is equivalent to my Mom asking me to finish college or Bill Hicks’ “buy the ticket, take the ride” monologue. There is little in life stronger than your own realized mortality to make vital the passing of information and encouragement.

Frankly, I think my greatest takeaway from re watching the Last Lecture is keying in on Pausch’s “brick walls are there for a reason”. What once stood as encouragement to push through an overtime period in a wrestling match has become an entirely different interpretation: that nothing worth having comes easy. I apply this mentality all the time, whether it be grinding out the last few miles of an elk hunt, doing homework with honest attention, even for piddly assignments, and generally trying not to half-ass anything in my life worth doing.