

Do Great Things

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Karl Gehsmann, Sr. Was the father of two of my best friends in high school, twins Kurt and Karl. I don't know where he is today, or even whether he's dead or alive. But I will always remember his favorite saying: "You've got one life to live, kid. Live it!"

His sons—and their friends, I must admit—were chronically mischievous. So what he usually meant was "I don't want any calls from jail, the hospital, or the morgue at three in the morning, but otherwise have fun, guys." But I've always interpreted his words to mean you never know when your number is up, so leave your mark. Do Great Things.

Recent events have brought home anew the importance of living for today and making each and every day worthwhile.

David Kimani left his mark. Like Steve Prefontaine before him, David was a great champion who left this world far too soon. He left his name in the record books, to be sure, but he also left his mark with his 1,000-watt smile and the kind words he had to say about his competitors and teammates. Charlie Spencer left his mark. I'm sure he'll always be remembered as the little guy who used to tag along with his dad at Lonn's ACTC races. More recently, Charlie was just coming into his own as a runner, and as a young adult, when the hand of fate took him from us far too early. His passing, too, leaves us with heavy hearts, but also with the fondest of memories.

Soon Dawn McEnery will step down as president of the Port City Pacers. How will she be remembered? For the Great Things like leading the club through four years of ups and downs, taking over the reigns of the Azalea Trail Run, her clowning on the sidelines of the ATR and other races? Or, maybe, for the innumerable "little" things like answering frantic phone calls from Pacers; picking up and folding fliers for the newsletter; representing the club at board meetings of Penelope house, other organizations, and at the RRCA Convention? The list goes on and on, and all will be remembered.

I like to look back and think of people who have had an influence on my life: Friends, family, teachers. During a recent workout I thought wistfully about Mo's mother, Marsha Roberts, who died a few years back. She's immortalized in the state record books as the pre-eminent javelin thrower in her age-group, but I'll remember her more for her infectious smile and her prize-winning chicken soup than for her exploits as one of the Alabama State Games' Travelin' Javelin Girls."

In my own life I try to do what I can to leave my mark. Will I be remembered for races I've won? Books I've written? Athletes I've coached? Or will others look back on words I've uttered in anger? I hope more people recall the former rather than the later after I'm gone.

We can all think of those among us who leave their marks in less- than-positive ways. They live to taunt and criticize others; to denigrate; to futilely try to lift themselves up by knocking others down. How will they be remembered a year from now, or five, or ten, if today was their last? Not very fondly—or, perhaps a worse fate, not at all.

We're all in this together, friends. It can be a tough world, and we can either help each other through it, or step on each others' backs to try to get ahead. We are all free to choose, but I can't think of a time when the energy spent on a smile, a kind word, or a helping hand to a friend in need wasn't repaid ten- fold. So in my daily comings and goings, I try to imagine how my words and actions affect others, and try to make the right

choices. And, to the extent that I can, I endeavor always to do Great Things.

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