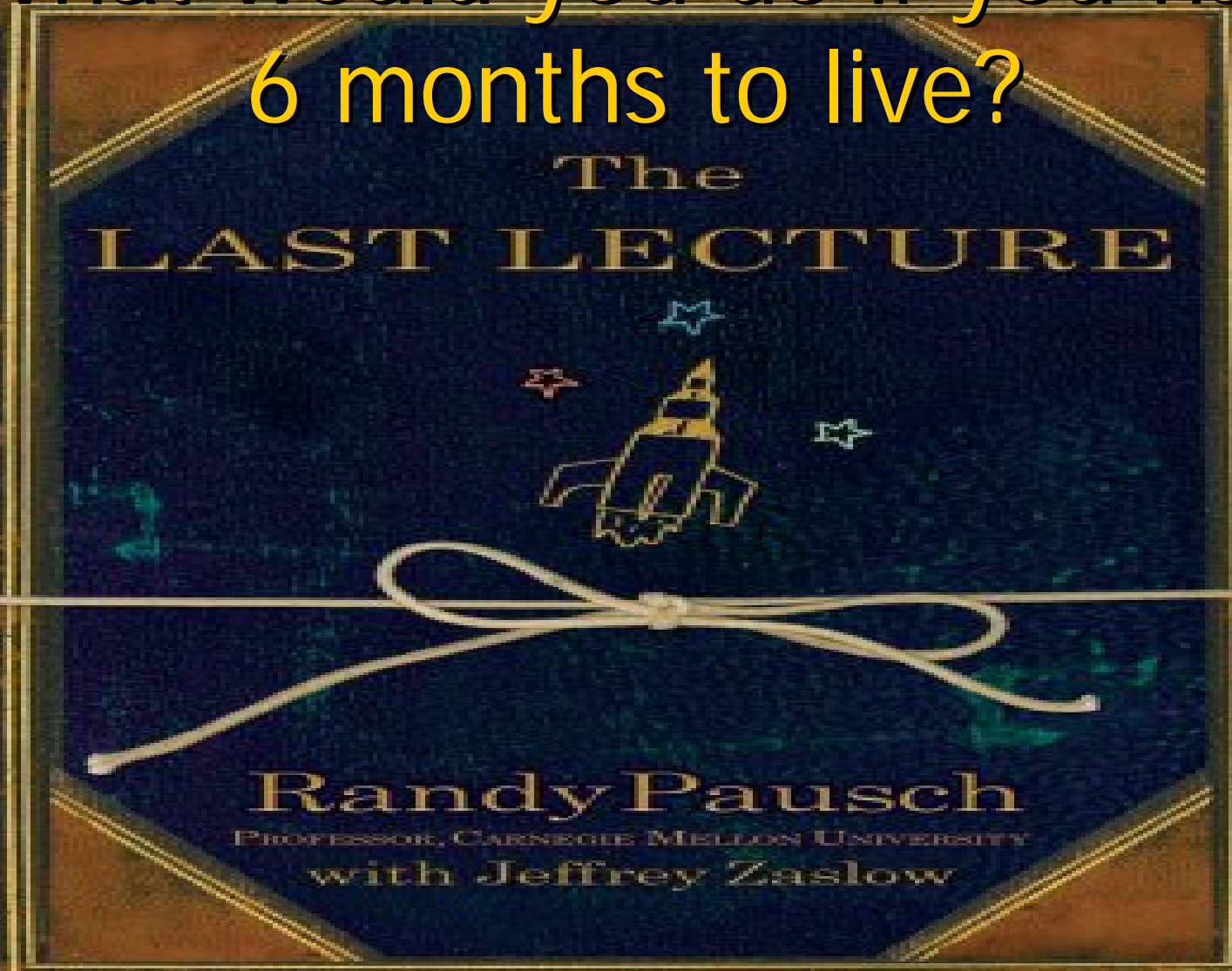


What would you do if you had
6 months to live?



By: S. Geddes and L. Oswin

About Randy Pausch

- **He was first and foremost a family man**

Randy married and had 3 kids in his late 30s/early 40s and put his priorities with his family first, above all else.

- **He was a scientist**

He approached his diagnosis and subsequent treatments for his cancer through a scientific lens of data-seeking questions and hypothesis. As a patient he remained engaged beyond the level of an average patient.

- **He was a professor**

Of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University with a specialty in human-computer interaction. He built a course there called Building Virtual Worlds (BVW) that was for students from all different majors who could collaborate on virtual reality projects, with incredible results.

- **He enjoyed life**

Randy lived everyday of his life to the fullest, before and after his diagnosis. He thought that life was for living and had realized his list of childhood dreams he had maintained throughout his life.

- **He never really grew up**

A self-professed child at heart, he was fun, and held onto his childhood dreams throughout adulthood, making others realize their potential to do the same.

- **He had a passion for time management**

A self-professed efficiency freak, he once bought an item from the self-serve Home Depot checkout twice by mistake, calculated the approximate time it would take to get his refund against the amount of time he had left to live, and didn't return the item.

- **He was a team player**

Randy required this from all of his students and they often learned about themselves from the ways in which others (who had to work with them), viewed them.

- **He had a terminal illness**

There was his cancer, although Randy refused to be defined by it and largely focused on the good from each day he had left with his family – his kids and wife were the most important to him.

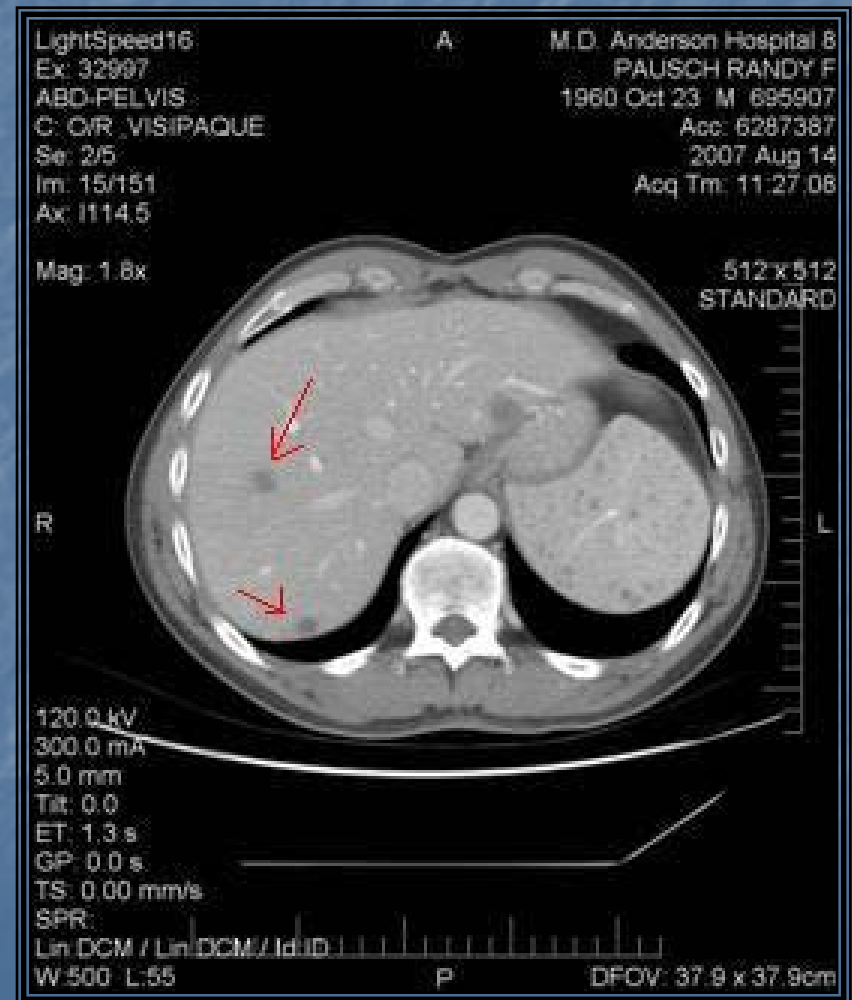
What is the Last Lecture?

"Under the ruse of giving an academic lecture, I was trying to put myself in a bottle that would one day wash up on the beach for my children. If I were a painter, I would have painted for them. If I were a musician, I would have composed music. But I am a lecturer. So I lectured." (p. 1)

- The Last Lecture is a common exercise on college campuses. Professors are asked to consider their demise and to ruminate on what matters most to them, forcing the audience to ponder the same question:
- **What wisdom would you impart to the world if you knew it was your last chance? What would you want as your legacy?**
- In Randy Pausch's case, as he learned of his terminal diagnosis in the months leading up to his September slot in the lecture series; he found it timely and was energized by the idea of delivering a last lecture *that really was* a last lecture. He could have easily cancelled it, with so many other more important things now to be done before his death, but this became a need he had to fulfill as a part of his journey, and he could have something for his kids to know him by in the years proceeding at the same time. It was Randy's hope that his last lecture could also help others find a path toward the fulfillment their own dreams.

**“...When there’s an elephant in the room,
introduce it.” (p. 16)**

- Randy had 10 malignant tumors on his liver (see his scan at right) that returned after incredibly risky surgery to remove his pancreatic cancer
- But the surgery didn’t work, and he learned that his cancer was terminal. He was told he would have 6 months to live.



The Elephant in the Room

"We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand." (p. 17)

- Randy was never in denial about his illness. He had accepted that the cancer was beyond his control and he must live life to the fullest.
- He always lived with this philosophy of life even before he was ever diagnosed with a terminal disease.
- How do you think you would choose to live your life if the finite amount of time we have on earth was reduced to months?
- Why does it make a difference what the duration of that time is?





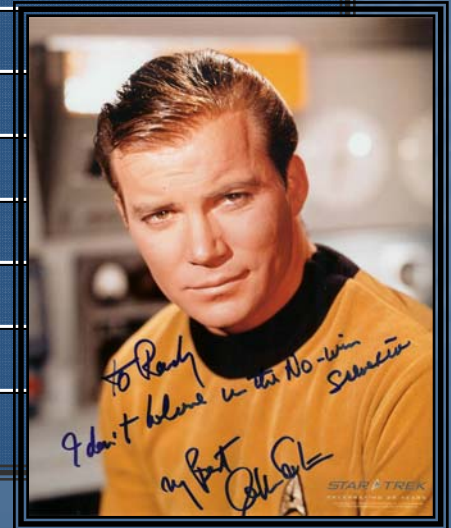
LIVING YOUR DREAMS

A list of Randy's childhood dreams:

- Being in zero gravity
- Playing in the NFL
- Authoring an article in the World Book encyclopedia
- Being Captain Kirk
- Winning stuffed animals
- Being a Disney Imagineer

- Write your list of dreams here, from your childhood or otherwise.....

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



"Give yourself permission to dream. Fuel your kids' dreams, too. Once in a while, that might even mean letting them stay up past their bedtimes." (p. 133)

- Do you have a particular memory of a time that you were allowed to participate in something that was so special that your parents let you stay up really late? These are the types of moments that fuel lifelong memories.
- As parents we want to encourage our kids dreams as well, and hope that their minds are filled with these kinds of special moments.



Brick Walls

“ The brick walls are there for a reason. They’re not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something.” (p. 52)

- You can achieve any goal if you really want it badly enough. It could mean navigating the system to accomplish your goals and dreams or figuring out an alternative means that will still arrive you at your destination
- Randy achieved his childhood dreams through determination and perseverance. His most formidable brick wall to scale was the woman who would eventually become his wife; her name is *Jai*.
 - What have been your brick walls?
 - Have you overcome them?



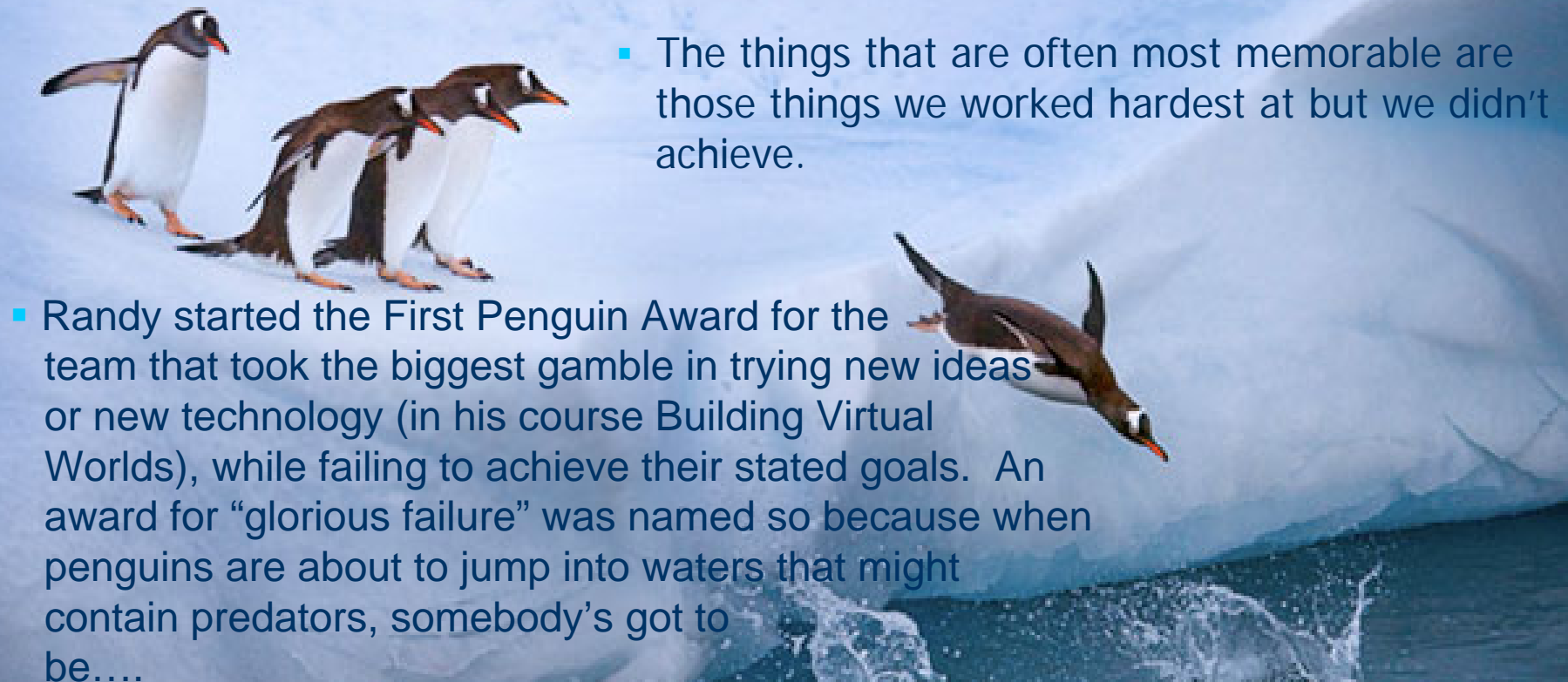


"Complaining does not work as a strategy.....Any time we spend whining is unlikely to help us achieve our goals. And it won't make us happier." (p. 139)

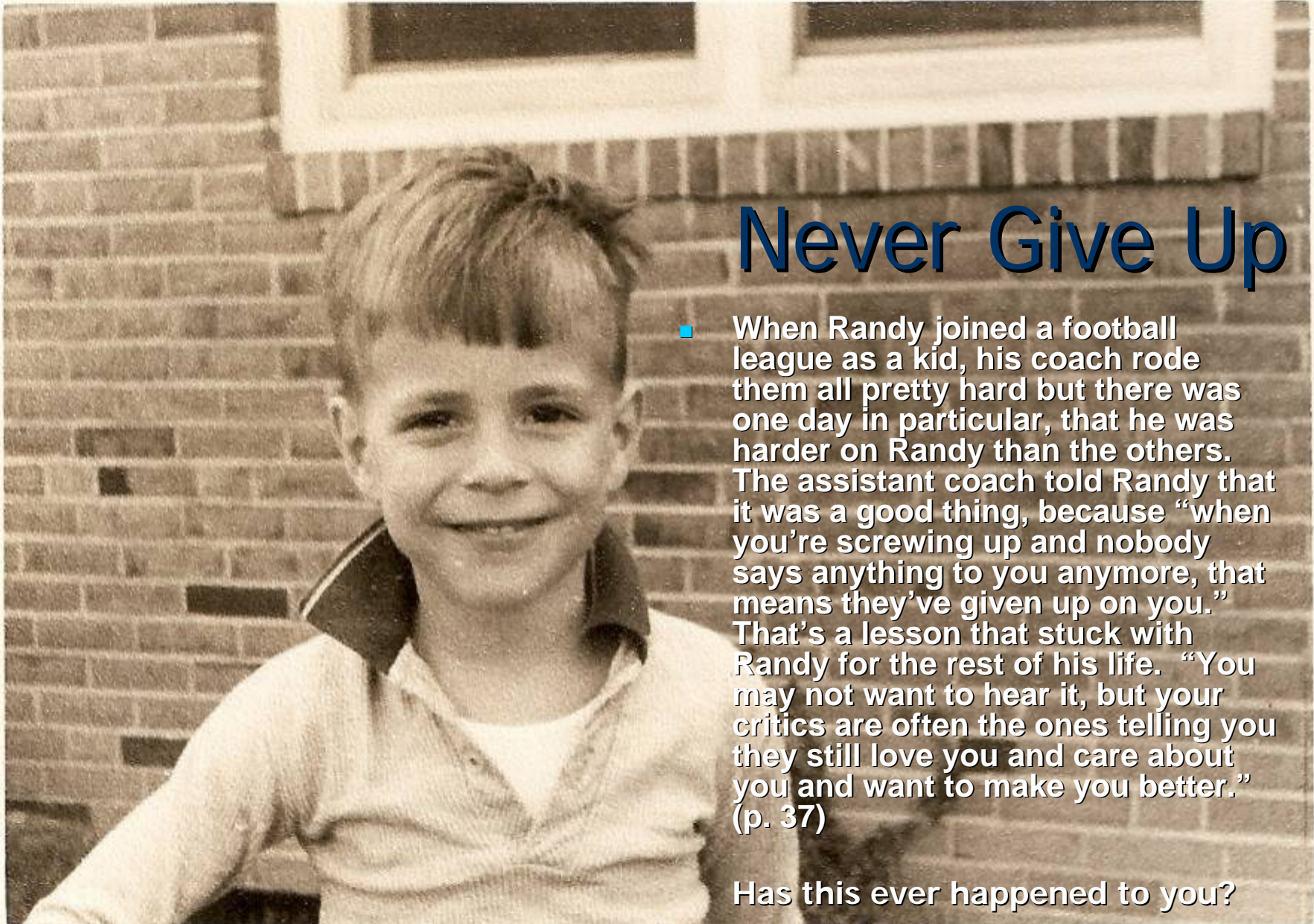
- We're almost all guilty of complaining.
- It seems like such obvious advice so why don't we all follow it?



"Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted...failure is not just acceptable, it's often essential." (p. 148)

- 
- The things that are often most memorable are those things we worked hardest at but we didn't achieve.
 - Randy started the First Penguin Award for the team that took the biggest gamble in trying new ideas or new technology (in his course Building Virtual Worlds), while failing to achieve their stated goals. An award for "glorious failure" was named so because when penguins are about to jump into waters that might contain predators, somebody's got to be....

...the **first penguin.**



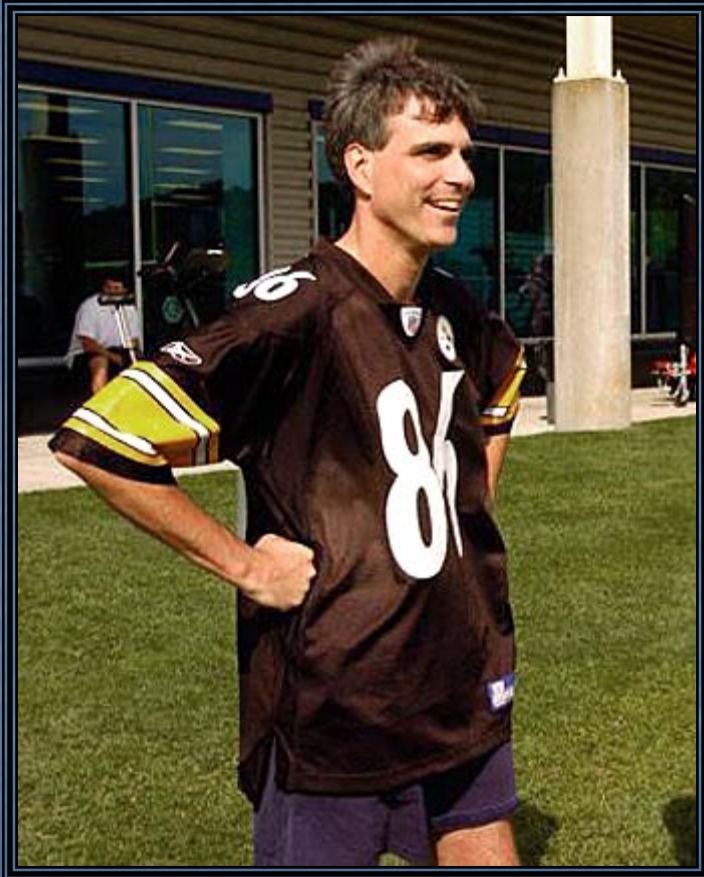
Never Give Up

- When Randy joined a football league as a kid, his coach rode them all pretty hard but there was one day in particular, that he was harder on Randy than the others. The assistant coach told Randy that it was a good thing, because “when you’re screwing up and nobody says anything to you anymore, that means they’ve given up on you.” That’s a lesson that stuck with Randy for the rest of his life. “You may not want to hear it, but your critics are often the ones telling you they still love you and care about you and want to make you better.” (p. 37)

Has this ever happened to you?

RANDOLPH June 1965 #AUSCH

A great way to teach



- Randy's notion of "the head fake" is getting people to learn something that they didn't even know they were learning until well into the process. A headfake specialist's objective is to get students to learn something you want them to learn. (p. 39)
- Motivates and excites students about learning and can be put into practice in sports, schools and work.

"There's a lot of talk these days about giving kids self esteem. It's not something that you can give; it's something that they have to build." (p. 37)



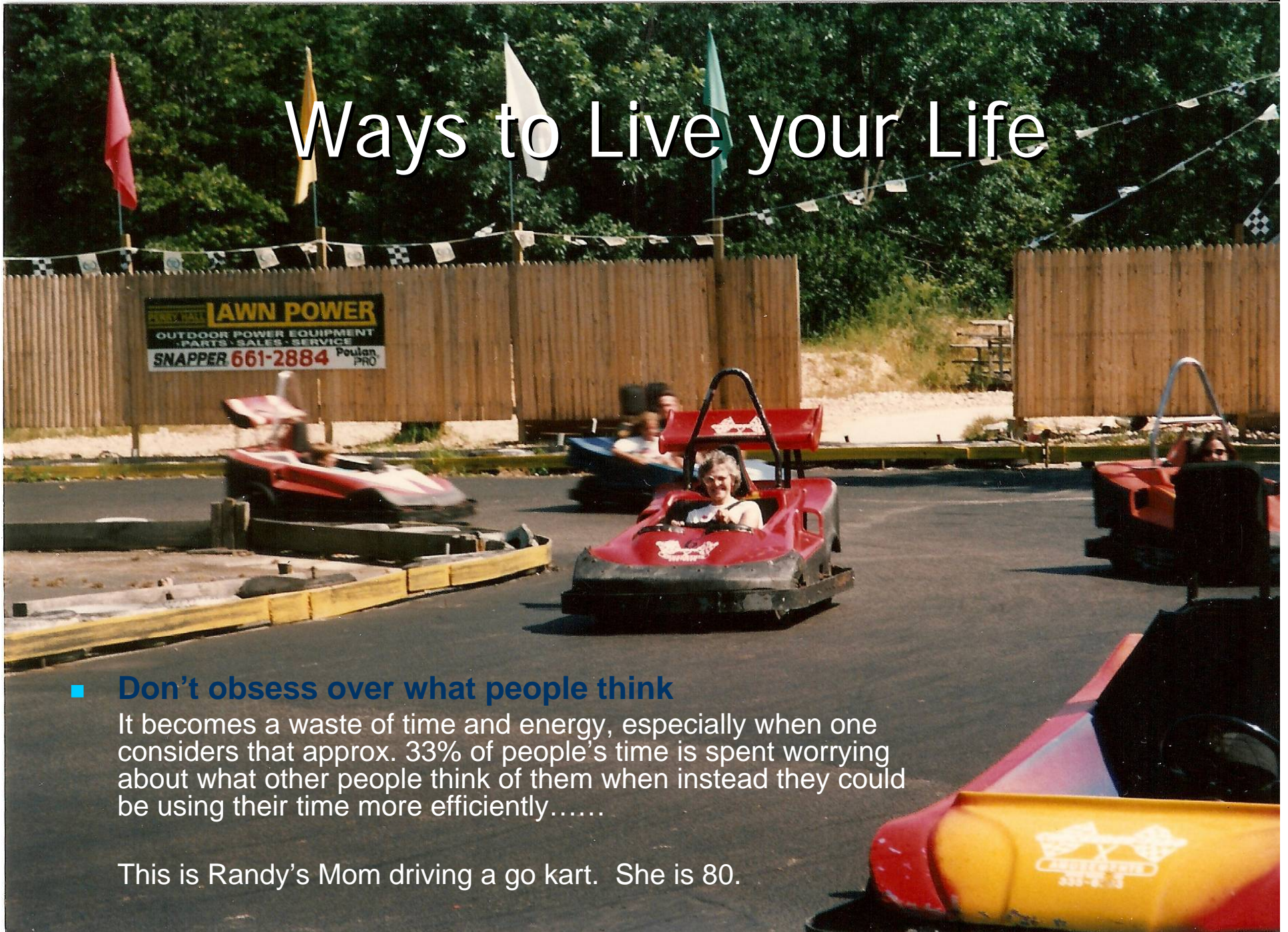
- As teachers, we're playing a key role in the success or failure of this process.
- We have to provide the tools for children to learn and to discover the world around them.
- How does this resonate with you as a teacher?
- What meta-orientation do you see this most strongly identifying with?

Ways to Live your Life

- **Don't obsess over what people think**

It becomes a waste of time and energy, especially when one considers that approx. 33% of people's time is spent worrying about what other people think of them when instead they could be using their time more efficiently.....

This is Randy's Mom driving a go kart. She is 80.





"If you wait long enough...people will show you their good side." (p. 145)

- **Does everyone have a good side?**
- **Will they always show it to you?**
- **Do you share Randy's optimism about people?**

A Bad Apology Is Worse Than No Apology (p.162)

Randy's perfect apology:

- What I did was wrong
- I feel badly that I hurt you
- How do I make this better?



"If you lead your life the right way, the karma will take care of itself. The dreams will come to you."

(p.206)

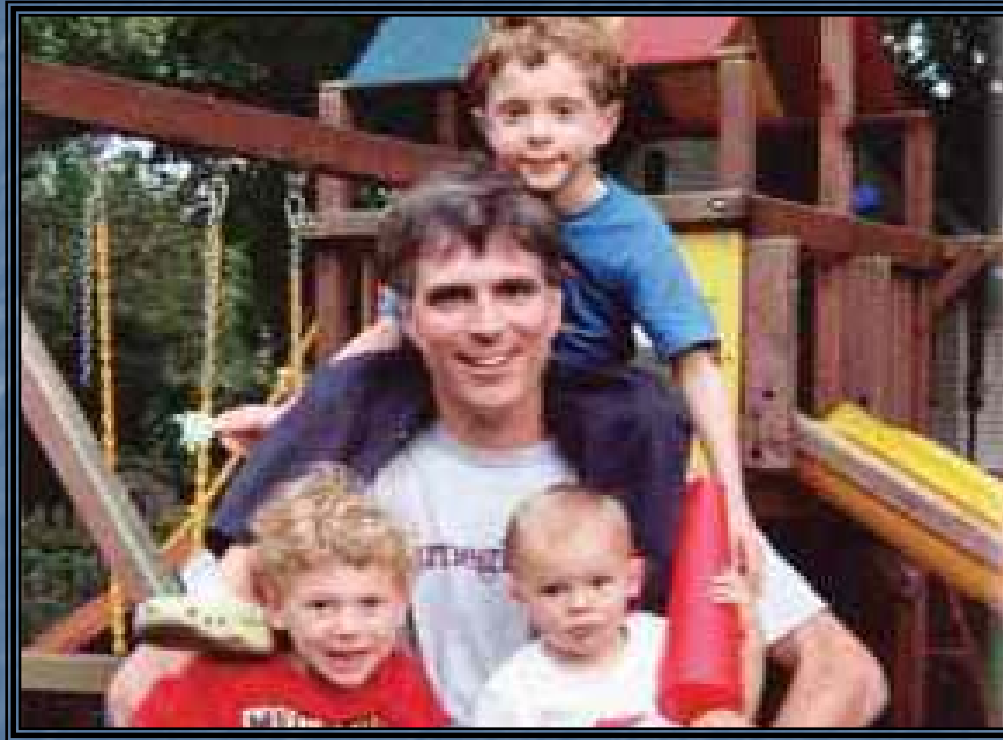
- This was Randy's view on life despite his prognosis
- Consider: Does "right" = virtuous?
- Must we strive for our goals or will things just *happen* because they are predestined?

"I don't know how NOT to have fun. I'm dying and I'm having fun... Because there's no other way to play it." (p.179)



- What assumption do we find ourselves making about people who live in less than ideal situations?
- All around us we see examples everyday about how powerful the human spirit is.

"A parent's job is to encourage kids to develop a joy for life and a great urge to follow their own dreams." (p. 198)



- Randy felt he “won the parent lottery” which helped him achieve so many of his childhood dreams.
- He sets a tone for us all to help our children and our students by providing them with “the tools” they’ll need to achieve *their* dreams.

So Did Randy Achieve all of his Childhood Dreams?

A list of Randy's childhood dreams:

- **Being in zero gravity** – Yes, through his work with NASA
- **Playing in the NFL** -- No, but he got more out of pursuing this dream and not accomplishing it, than he did from many of the others that he did succeed at – this dream brought him Coach Graham, who never gave up on him
- **Authoring an article in the World Book encyclopedia** – Yes, for his pioneering work on virtual reality software
- **Being Captain Kirk** – No, but he met him and simulated a virtual environment of the Starship Enterprise, which William Shatner viewed
- **Winning stuffed animals** – Always, no matter how much it cost him to win them – he always wanted to be the coolest guy at the amusement park
- **Being a Disney Imagineer** – Yes, Randy worked for Disney during a sabbatical, in their top secret virtual reality project

Randy ultimately did the last lecture....

For his kids - Dylan, Logan, and Chloe



July 25th, 2008 - Randy died of complications from pancreatic cancer.

