



Devotion Backstory

The doctors told Dick Hoyt that his infant son Rick should be institutionalized. There was no hope, they said, of Rick being anything more than a vegetable.

Four decades later, Rick and Dick Hoyt have competed over 65 marathons, 206 triathlons and hundreds of other events as a father-son team. Rick, whose father was told he was incapable of intellectual activity, graduated from Boston University in 1993. The devotion of this remarkable pair to each other and their goals has enabled them both to accomplish things that neither would have done alone.

During Rick's birth in 1962, the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck, cutting off oxygen to his brain. Rick is a spastic quadriplegic, has cerebral palsy, and is unable to speak. Despite the doctors' grim prognosis, Dick and his wife Judy raised him at home and struggled to get him admitted to public schools.

Though Rick could not speak, his parents knew that he was just as intelligent as his siblings. Dick convinced a group of engineers from Tufts University to build a "communicator" for his son. By hitting a switch with the side of his head, Rick selects letters to form words and sentences.

Rick was attending public school two years later, when a five-mile benefit run was held for a local lacrosse player who had been paralyzed in an accident. Rick wanted to participate. Dick was not a runner, but agreed to push Rick in his wheelchair. During the run, Rick felt as though he simply wasn't handicapped anymore - he was just one of the runners. Wanting to give Rick this feeling as often as possible, Dick ran in an increasing number of events with his son.

As "Team Hoyt" began competing in earnest in the late 1970s, they were often treated as outsiders and avoided by other competitors. What began as a way for Rick Hoyt to experience inclusion and equality broadened. It became a way to send a message that, as Rick said, "everybody should be included in everyday life." The duo's first Boston Marathon in 1981 yielded a finish in the top quarter of the field, and attitudes began changing. "In the beginning no one would come up to me," recalled Rick. Now, he says, "many athletes will come up to me before the race or triathlon to wish me luck."

Dick has ran, ridden and swam literally thousands of miles to be with and support his son. This has enabled Rick to live a full and purposeful life - but it turns out that, in a way, Rick has saved his father's life as well. After a mild heart attack, Dick's doctors told him that he may have died 15 years ago if he weren't in such good shape.

Team Hoyt's total commitment to each other and to what they do ensures that they are constantly challenging themselves. In addition to their athletic events, the Hoyts tour the country to speak about their experiences. They have also established the Hoyt Fund, which is supports educational and technological efforts surrounding persons with disabilities. They anticipate running their 26th Boston Marathon in April.

Pass It On.

VALUES.COM THE FOUNDATION
FOR A BETTER LIFE

www.values.com