

Dick's Words at Donnie Gallimore's Memorial

I fortunately had the opportunity to know Donnie during his career with General Motors and as a golfing friend. I want to say a few words about his career before talking about his love for golf. Donnie was dedicated, energetic and a proud planner/supervisor and engineer. He was one of the best metal finishers I knew and helped establish processes that were best for the customer. Whoever Donnie worked with the common description of Donnie was that he had integrity and honesty. As a planner you could always count on Donnie to do the right thing for the customer, he was a good teammate. Donnie was very hard working and you can't say that about everyone. He was always honest, I didn't always like what he had to say, but he was always honest.

The Fitton Follies is a group of golfers who go north every spring – the last ten years we have averaged eighty golfers per year, historically about 90% return so it is something like a family reunion. We have had almost 300 different golfers attend the Follies over the best twenty years.

Donnie has attended the Follies for sixteen years and has always been one of the first to pay. Donnie never thought three days of golf was enough – he usually went up a day or two early just to warm up. Donnie always enjoyed every shot he took on the golf course and also enjoyed everyone else's shot. He always kept the game in perspective – every shot makes someone happy and I think Donnie was that guy.

Over the year's Donnie became a well respected designated driver. He would always join us for some fun and laughs but helped bring many of us back, whom many of us are indebted to him for that. Rumor has it he set the land speed record with an Aurora on the Boyne Mountain air strip one night. We can't talk about too much as we believe "what happens at the Follies stays at the Follies".

The last three years have been tough for Donnie, his family and his friends, but these years have been so inspirational for me and many others. Beginning with my visit to the hospital in December of 06 after his stroke he was more upbeat than expected and already thinking about therapy and working on his golf swing and his putting stroke – the anticipation for improvement was exciting to be around.

He did make it to the Follies in May of 07 because he did not want to miss the fun – thanks to Sandi's wonderful touch of love. He had a goal to play and sure enough he did. He met my group on the Cedar River course and ended up playing around 15 holes and had some great shots. He continuously was talking during the round how he could have done better and those "what ifs" we all use on the course. On one hole it was a difficult downhill Par 3, his tee shot was short and with an extreme side hill lie. You know Donnie, no sympathy and no giving up, he started to descend down the hill before we grabbed him – if we hadn't he probably would still be rolling. At the end of the round on the 18th hole Donnie chipped in, for our foursome and about forty

others who were harassing us from above the green it was a very emotional moment we won't forget.

Again this past May Donnie returned stronger and with a much improved golf game, in fact he played all three days and played pretty good. I know he was proud of his golf game as he always remembered his good shots as we all do. He talked about his shot on number nine at the Tribute that Saturday over a bunch of heather hitting it close to the hole and then paring it. That evening at our final banquet he came to the front to explain what the Follies and brotherhood meant to him. It drove a standing ovation with not many dry eyes. As someone stated later Donnie is a great example of what the Brotherhood of the Follies stands for.

These last few months Donnie and I have met for lunch a number of times. Once again against all odds somehow he continued to be positive, always upbeat and always looking ahead. Even the week before he passed away he was talking about the Follies this coming May. When he asked me at lunch one day to speak at his memorial it was a very emotional moment. He wanted me to talk about the friendship, the love, the games, the golf, the camaraderie and the Brotherhood of the Follies. He also wanted me to be upbeat while doing it. He spoke of his love for Sandi and his entire family. He knew the odds were against him but he was going to stay positive, everything was in god's hands and he was ok with that. Donnie's inspiration has been nothing but unbelievable, a true lesson for all of us – that is Donnie's Legacy!

As a result of Donnie's legacy and his love for the Fitton Follies the Follies will establish a "Donnie Gallimore Inspirational Award" to be given when appropriate to one of our Follies Brothers for examples of above and beyond recognition.

A Poem for Donnie from the Fitton Follie Brotherhood

It all started twenty years ago as a way to play some golf
A great opportunity to go north and let some steam off
The numbers were small but only for a few years
As more Follie Brothers heard about the fun, the golf and the beers

The Fitton Follies was born back in 1988
As we traveled north each May it was always a date
Our family included guys from as far away as St Louis and Atlanta
It was eighty brothers playing in the World's Best Golf Extravaganza

The Follies is so much more than golf and games
If fact almost 300 guys over the years are glad they have done the same
The majority keep coming back to this family reunion
Everyone admits sadness when the weekend is all done

Donnie began playing in the Follies' sixteen years ago
He was even with us when we had one round in the snow
He enjoyed the brotherhood from all the golf and the games
But come next May for all of us it will never be the same

Donnie always stretched the weekend to play more golf
He didn't know what it was to take a day off
He seemed to enjoy every swing that he took
Even if his shot went straight, a slice or a hook

Now is the time to celebrate Donnie's life on earth
He can feel good for what he accomplished between his death and his birth
He loved every minute of the Follies and had no regret
His inspiration these past two years we will never forget

Each year the Follies will gather in May for another time to tee it up
We know you will be there to help guide our ball to the cup
You will help us remember there is never a bad golf shot
And be appreciative of everything we have got

So keep smiling and enjoy the Follies from high in the sky
That is why your Follie Brothers will never say to you "Goodbye"