

## **Hooked On Recovery**

October 26, 2006

*The Knob*

I returned to the scene where I spent the final years of my addiction career. Taking the turn off Route 83, some old feelings came back. I became a little nervous wondering who I might run into. Sure enough, a guy I used to play golf with was behind the counter. I wasn't greeted with a lot of warmth. It could have been my imagination or maybe this guy was having a bad day, but I felt this was some lingering "wreckage of the past". In my prior life, I used to be a golf professional. I wasn't a tour player or a "card-carrying" club professional, but I ran the Knob, Cedar Knob Golf Course, for 4 years as the head golf professional. I collected greens fees, ran the pro shop and gave a lot of lessons. I remember one lady was taking up golf to please her new boyfriend. After an hour of watching her awkwardly swing and miss, almost hurt herself (and me) several times, I gave her some sage advice. "Take three weeks off and then quit." She agreed. In spite of this last incident, I had some success as a golf professional. Until the day a well known media personality offered me some cocaine. That started a two year downhill run that ended in a dive off a precipice. The birth of my daughter combined with a divine intervention saved me soon after getting mercifully fired from that job.

That was 19 years ago; sometimes it seems a long time ago and at other times, like this glorious fall day, it seemed just like yesterday. This was one reason I chose to play the COW at the Knob. This was my year to pick the site (and the guest) for the 2006 COW, the Championship Of the World! The COW started many years ago. Two of my bestest friends Jon, best man at both my weddings, and Dan, who I've known since third grade and I agreed that we would play one 18-hole round of golf each and every year 'til death do us part. We've played about 12 years now, I'm not sure. I lost track when I stopped having any chance of winning. Low score wins the Championship Of the World. My good buddy Arno, aka Shortcast, was our guest this year. Jon, Dan and I have been through a lot, elementary school, middle school, high school, college and many other escapades to numerous to discuss here. They are the kind of friends that I might not talk to for several weeks, but when I do, we pick up right where we left off. I am blessed to have friends like these. They have put up with me for all these years. And we have never missed a COW. Someone recently saw us interacting as adults and thought the three of us resembled 6-year olds in a sand box. I'm insulted, but she's right, when we're together, maturity is not on the top of the list, especially when we get together to play golf.

No mercy, verbal taunts fly. For the last several years Jon has had the unfair advantage, he plays more than three times a year. Dan can still give him a run. You usually have to break 80 to win. I used to shoot in the 70's, but now with 17 kids, a full time job, I hardly ever play. My expectations when I step on the tee are a lot, lot lower. This year, I was on the first tee and literally praying to just hit the ball. "Lord, please let me use the club face. Please Lord!" One COW I took a 10 on the first hole. I didn't want a repeat of that. As I stood on our first hole, the tenth at the Knob, I gazed at an intimidating tee shot over water. My prayer became so fervent and audible that Jon firmly stated that "God doesn't give a crap about your golf game or your tee shot for that matter!" "Au contraire, mon ami. God cares about everything I do including my golf game AND this tee shot". I promptly stepped up and ripped it right down the middle. That proved to be one of the best shots I hit all day on my way to a 92. I was happy with 92, I didn't lose a ball and I finished every hole. However I did finish last. Again.

I hit some great shots. I hit some magnificently funny shots as well. I survived a barrage of loving insults and I dished out my share. I had a great day. I also had a day full of reflection and triggered emotions. It was good for me to go back to the Knob; I could not hide from the way I used to be. I saw the trees I used to duck behind to do drugs, taller now, but still there. I stood in the pro shop – a place that became both a sanctuary and a prison. I saw people I used to converse with when high. I ran into the guy cutting the greens that I knew from 20 years ago. He showed me his Koi fish in the 13<sup>th</sup> hole pond. It was good to see him. When we made the turn, I ran into another guy who I played and practiced with and his reception was even cooler than the guy who ran the cash register. Maybe they were both having bad days, but probably not. I was pretty much an arrogant ass back then, what did I expect? And around my bestest friends, I'm still pretty much an arrogant ass. In an odd way, I was grateful for those cool receptions. It kept it green for me. They helped me recall how dead I felt inside, how confusing, dark and awful my life had become.

Jon won with an 82, Dan finished second with 87. Arno finished. We were all impressed with the condition of the course and very happy with the wonderful autumn day. As we sat in the restaurant having lunch, I recalled more scenes of active drug addiction and not one was pretty. I also reflected on my life today, on my friends that have always stood by me. Here they were eating french fries, giving me a hard time, and it was all OK. In fact it was one of those moments that near perfection. My life has turned out better than I could have ever planned.

Sometimes it takes a trip back to the Knob to remember.

*Hooked on Recovery* is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at [phillip@ccar.us](mailto:phillip@ccar.us). Visit the website at [www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us) to read the entire series.