

The Road to Nantasket - Special Olympics Passion Plunge

By Mark Donnelly

When I first mentioned to Stacey that I was thinking of taking the “plunge”, after her initial look of disbelief, she asked if the life insurance policy was paid up to date. Her next question was, do you think John Duffill can get us a spare defibrillator from the Danvers Fire department for the day. With that strong vote of confidence from my wife, I assured her that way down south in Hull, the water is always warmer during the winter. That’s how the journey to Nantasket Beach began.

To join this endeavor I needed a strong training regiment. My initial training, upper body strength, started early in January with weight exercises. Heading towards the woodpile twice or three times a day to keep the wood stove humming during our arctic blast. I tend to wear shorts at night in the house, so the wood stove is usually stoked and fired up. Next came lower body and legwork. Dancing to the Baha Brothers at the holiday party helped with my old (39 yr old) leg muscles. I was also told eating plenty of fresh picked banana helps. But where do you find fresh picked bananas in January? After much thought and a few cocktails, an idea pops into my frozen brain cells. I ended up at Roots Bamboo in Negril. “It’s 83 down here, up there it’s 22(below)!!”

Yes, my loving spouse let me train for a week in Jamaica. Here the training stepped into high gear. Morning power walks of five miles helped this old body. Up the west end road to “Rick’s Café” and back to the beach gave me a panoramic look at Negril in the morning. Not to digress, but the “Pickled Parrot” really needs a loving proprietor. It’s for sale but needs a little tender attention to get it back into shape. A unique feature is the water slide off the 50-ft. cliffs. And fantastic sunsets are a daily item. Back down the hill to Roots and the morning dip into the Caribbean. The water was fairly warm, not as warm as Nantasket (ha,ha), but was tolerable. Afternoons found me working out the upper arms with continuous exercises tilting those cold Red Stripes(only 50J). “I’m chasing the sun and it never ends”.

On to Atlanta to combine my dancing and cocktail exercises for a mid winter sojourn to Margaritaville. Once again I’m amazed and delighted to see how much Jimmy enjoys being on stage. And to boot, he brought his Mom along to the show!

Now I’m ready to join my fellow Parrothead Plungers and take on the icy Atlantic Ocean in mid February. We hit Nantasket on a balmy Saturday morning , 20 degrees, wind chill -4 , with a water temp of 33 degrees. Never mind the foot of new snow. The Parrothead team led by Jen Lynch, Rick “The Pro Plunger” Werner, Chris Barry, Harold Silverman, Sandie Flathers, Nina Collins, Brian Pitreau, Charlie Budd and yours truly are ready and eager to battle mother nature. The bath house was filled with plungers from all over decked out in some pretty good outfits (With some helpful Parrothead attention, they might make it at the Greatwoods parking lot). After the pre plunge exercises, we headed to the beach. With over forty cheering Parrot Heads, and with Great Woods FINS playing in the background, the race was on to the water. And yes, my teammates were hitting the waves and actually diving into the water. Stronger and braver souls than I. HEY, the water was cold!! Yes, I admit it, I’m only a dipper not a plunger. A winter wimp. My long underwear goes on at Thanksgiving and stays on all winter. “I can’t stand the cold, It’s not where I want to grow old”. We raised over \$ 4,400. with Charlie Budd bringing in \$ 895. Way to go Charlie! With no heart attacks to boot! And yes, Rick, Sandie and