



## **John Ball's Remarks at the Carbo-Loading Dinner of the 20th Team Parkinson at the Skechers Performance Los Angeles Marathon and LA BIG 5K Held on Saturday, March 23, 2019**

*John Ball, the co-chair of Team Parkinson, addressed fellow runners, team members, and supporters at our 2019 Carbo-Loading Dinner and here is the text of his speech*

Michael J. Fox and I have a lot in common. Now I'm not suggesting that the scale of our two efforts is quite the same, but there are a lot of parallels. We were both diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in our 30s yet were able to pursue successful careers long after diagnosis. We've both written a couple of books about our lives, and we're both still married to our first wives. In addition, we both started our public efforts to support the Parkinson's community about the same time 20 years ago.

I recognize that Team Parkinson and The Michael J. Fox Foundation have significantly different spheres of influence, yet I would suggest that we've each done the best we could with what was available to us in the community. We've each been able to contribute something to the field of Parkinson's research because we've personally been blessed with tremendous support from our families, our friends and the strength of the organizations that support us. Michael was extremely fortunate to team up with Debbie Brooks to start his foundation, and Mary Yost was extremely fortunate to tie Team Parkinson to Carol Walton and the newly-formed Parkinson Alliance.

Like I said before, I know that the scale of things is not quite in balance, because Michael's foundation has influenced the course of research on a global scale, but -- on a personal level -- I feel that Team Parkinson has given hope and direction to many people living with Parkinson's, including patients, caregivers, and families, and demonstrated to the medical community that Parkinson's can be better-managed through patient advocacy, self-reliance, diligent exercise, and ambitious goal setting.

Here in our midst tonight, the Wong family have shared with you the difference Team Parkinson made in Tim Wong's life. I can look around the room and see many other families that have benefitted from Team Parkinson's efforts through the years. It has been a wonderful gift to be part of this team. I know that I have received a far greater blessing than I've been able to give. I treasure these blessings, your love and friendship, your care and concerns, and the joy I get from watching each of you take charge of your own lives despite PD.

And there's at least one more thing that Michael and I have in common... each of us had kind of a tough year last year. Early in the year, Michael had spinal surgery and spent time in a wheelchair, then six months later fell hard and fractured his arm. In a recent interview, he says, "What was it that made me skip down the hallway in the kitchen thinking I was fine when I was in a wheelchair six months earlier? It's because I had certain optimistic expectations of myself, and I'd had results to bear out those expectations, but I'd had failures too. And I hadn't

given the failures equal weight.” Later in the same interview, he says, “I realized that the understanding I’d reached with Parkinson’s was sincere but risked being glib. I’d made peace with the disease but presumed others had the same relationship when they didn’t. Then when I started to deal with the effects from the spinal surgery, I realized: Wow it can get a lot worse ... Was I still prepared to say, ‘Hey, chin up!’ Parkinson’ is just a test.”

I know how Michael feels, and I’ve had similar considerations. Have I been too glib about my own success managing PD? Have I presumed that others can do the same when their challenges are very different from mine? I know I can’t do now what I used to do with ease, and yet I’m not ready to throw in the towel. I’ve got such a wonderful team surrounding me, my wife and dearest friend, Edna, my kids, David and Sarah and their spouses, my running partners Mark and Doug and Mimi, my doctors at USC, UCLA and the VA, my physical therapist Didi, my trainer Amber, and my coaches Steve and Andrew. You are all there for me and I want to be there for you. I want to be able to share the joy and the blessings I have received with all of you.

So, I’m going to take this moment to thank all of you for the success Team Parkinson has enjoyed, and I’m going to step back a moment after this weekend and assess where we go from here. We may not be able to do what we once did, but we can still move forward. We can still make a difference, so see you next year.