

'THE BEST IS YET TO COME'

By Fritz Klumpp

"If I am going to keep my head above water I need to hear everything the professor is saying." Those were my thoughts as I struggled in an engineering class I was taking decades ago at the U.S. Naval Academy. I do not recall which class it was, but do remember having a difficult time. Looking to my left, however, I noticed my friend Paul was not struggling at all. He was sitting there...writing music! It was then I realized he was operating on a very different plane of performance than most of us.

Paul Robert Kleindorfer, affectionately known by his U.S. Naval Academy classmates as "Moose," is one of the brightest men I have ever known. Upon arriving at the Naval Academy from North Judson, Indiana, U.S.A., Moose distinguished himself not only in academics, but also on the athletic field, the glee club, choir, and concert band. In spite of his accomplishments, many of us remember him best for his good nature and outstanding sense of humor.

Following graduation, Moose took an officer's commission in the Army. My wife, Ann, and I enjoyed visiting with him in Pensacola, Florida where I was going through Naval Flight Training while he was going through Special Forces training at Eglin Air Force Base. That was the last time I would see Moose for many years.

Today Moose, or more appropriately Dr. Kleindorfer, is a distinguished research professor in technology and operations management at INSEAD, the Business School for the World. He also is professor emeritus of management science at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, and has held university appointments at Carnegie Mellon University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Wharton School, and several universities and international research institutes. He has published more than 25 books and numerous research papers.

The last time I saw Moose was at the 50th reunion of our Naval Academy class. It was then that Moose informed us he has what is commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS), a disease of the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord that control voluntary muscle movement.

Since he and his wife are living in Paris, France, it is not easy to keep up with the state of his health, but recently Moose gave us an update on his condition via e-mail. The terrible disease has taken such a toll he is now dependent on others for his most basic needs.

He ended his update by simply saying, "The best is yet to come." I do not know if I have ever been more deeply moved or inspired than I was by those words of hope written by my friend Moose. Only a man that knows God can speak of his future with such certainty.

The Bible makes this statement: *"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life: he who does not have the Son of God does not have life"* (1 John 5:11,12). What this passage says to me is that in God's eternal plan, there are really only two kinds of people, and in the end it is not our accomplishments but only our relationship with Christ that matters.

If you were in Paul's situation, could you also say, "The best is yet to come"?

Fritz Klumpp and his wife, Ann, live in Ashland, Virginia, U.S.A. nHe was a U.S. Navy pilot, having served during the Vietnam War, retired after a career as a jet pilot for Delta Air Lines, served several years as executive director for CBMC-USA, and has been in the real estate business. He has a website, <http://fritzklumpp.com>.

