

Devoted: The Story of a Father's Love for His Son

Dick Hoyt with Don Yaeger

BY CALEB DANILOFF

IF YOU'VE EVER pinned on a bib number or cheered a loved one in a major road race, there's a good chance you've seen them on the course: a fireplug of a man pushing his disabled adult son in a customized wheelchair, tire covers emblazoned with the motto "It's a Good Life!"

Rick Hoyt (SED'92) and his father, Dick, better known as

Team Hoyt, have crossed more than 1,000 finish lines together, including 27 Boston Marathons, seven Ironman Triathlons, a coast-to-coast trek,

and countless shorter races. But their impact goes way beyond running. They've embodied the message that disability is not synonymous with limitation and that love can move mountains.

In *Devoted*, Massachusetts native Dick, with the help of sportswriter Don Yaeger, hones that message and details his journey from the young father of a spastic quadriplegic to an out-of-shape dad pushing his wheelchair-bound son in a 5K charity race to a YouTube phenomenon. A 2008 video depicting one of their Ironman triathlons, set to uplifting music, has been viewed more than nine million times.

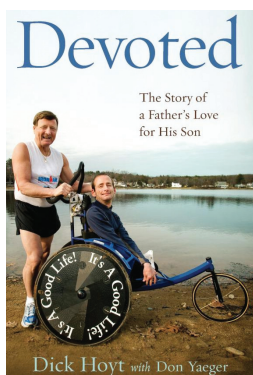
"I was running for Rick, who longed to be an athlete but had no way to pursue his passion," Dick writes. "I wasn't running for

my own pleasure. I was simply loaning my arms and legs to my son."

Written in appropriately quick and efficient prose, what Dick, a retired lieutenant colonel in the Air National Guard, pens is, in essence, an unconditional-love letter to his firstborn. Rick entered the world in 1962 with cerebral palsy after the umbilical cord had choked off oxygen to his brain. At the time, disabled children were routinely sent to institutions. But Dick and Judy Hoyt were determined to give their son the same opportunities as able-bodied kids. Judy fought to enroll Rick in public school and helped pass Massachusetts' Chapter 766, the first special-education reform law in the country. Rick, who can communicate with a computer aid, later graduated from BU, where he lived on campus, posted solid grades, and socialized with the best of them, even worrying at one point that he'd developed a drinking problem. With a degree in special education, Rick now works at Boston College, helping develop computer-aided mechanical systems. Father and son still race and give motivational talks.

"I have a list of things I would do for you if I was not disabled," Rick writes to his dad in the book's final chapter. "Tops on that list: I would do my best to race the World Championship Ironman pulling, pushing and pedaling you. Then I would push you in the Boston Marathon...Thanks may be shallow. But I have to thank you for being so devoted to me. I am just as devoted to you."

A good life, indeed. And an inspirational read.



REVIEWS

Fiction

The Ghost of Milagro Creek

Melanie Sumner (GRS'87)

Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill

DEATH IN ALL its varieties—natural, accidental, self-inflicted, and ultimately, homicidal—drives the interconnected narratives in Sumner's novel. Set in the barrio of Taos, N.M., a community that blurs the boundaries among Latino, Native American, and Catholic cultures, the book inhabits a forgotten world of drunk mothers, absentee fathers, and the occasional suspicious gringo.

"The danger out there," one priest warns another, "is that you will fall into their beliefs...At first it will jump right out at you—sun gods, saints dressed up like dolls, peyote buttons, nudity... After a while, you start to see it how they see it."

This cultural confusion suits town oddball and Apache healer Ignacia, who narrates much of the book from beyond a fresh grave, just fine. Less well adjusted is Ignacia's charge and teenaged grandson, Mister, who is trying to heal the scars of abuse and abandonment.

When Ignacia dies, a grief-stricken Mister invokes the childhood suicide pact he formed with his best friend, Tomás, who has hidden motivations of his own. Their botched attempt leaves a man dead and allows Mister an opportunity to reflect on



the values of the cultures that produced him. A confessional box becomes "a coffin. That was the shape of religion."

Given a chance to redeem himself, Mister re-

members Ignacia's words: that despite the four corners of "the white man's church," "life is a circle." *Katie Koch*

High Before Homeroom

Maya Sloan (CFA'99, GRS'07)

Gallery Books

DOUG SCHAFFER, A smart, sexually frustrated 16-year-old, is desperate for