

## Remember the Past with Thankfulness - Enliven the Future!

By Olympic Champion Ben Peterson & his brother Phil

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Saturday November 14, 2009 was a special day for wrestling in Cumberland, Wisconsin. Cumberland did what I urge others to do - create a setting to remember the past. Chad Olson, a former Cumberland wrestler and now local bank president, took the leadership role and gathered several others to plan, communicate and carry out the event.

The day began with a clinic for the younger wrestlers. Techniques were shown by wrestlers of all 5 decades of the program. For the evening banquet over 300 attended the meal with several more joining for the program. A high light of the evening was the showing of a PowerPoint highlighting each of the 50 teams and each of the 6 State Champions.

My oldest brother Phil was asked to MC and speak on "Why We Wrestle". Phil has spent most of his working career as an attorney for the state of Wisconsin. Phil wrestled for Cumberland from 1961 to 1963. Here are some of his comments.

*To begin tonight, three points need some emphasis —*

- 1) Cumberland Wrestling is special. It's about wrestling, for sure, but about a lot more too. It's taught us a lot about life. So I urge you to listen carefully tonight during this anniversary program, and count the ways that Cumberland Wrestling benefited so many, not just while they wrestled for Cumberland, but long after they left the wrestling mat for the last time. While we were still students, Cumberland Wrestling made us better students by helping us set academic goals and helping us work hard and smart to try and reach them. Cumberland Wrestling gave us an approach to life and an attitude about life that helped us greatly over our lifetimes.*
- 2) Tonight we'll talk a lot about coaches and wrestlers who've had particular success during the 50 years of Cumberland Wrestling. But all that talk may fail fully to recognize many other coaches, assistant coaches, wrestlers, managers, and fans who've contributed so much to Cumberland Wrestling. So congratulations to you all. And please, if somehow your name isn't specifically or prominently mentioned tonight, don't feel left out. Know that you too are greatly appreciated! You too get full credit for building and maintaining Cumberland Wrestling. And thank you so much for all you've done over all the years for Cumberland Wrestling.*
- 3) And then, third, Coach Hegenbarth deserves special recognition because 50 years ago this Fall (back in 1959), he began Cumberland Wrestling with a dream of what wrestling could be in Cumberland. And since then wrestling in Cumberland has grown bigger and better and more important than any of us could ever have imagined back in 1959. So for that, I join all of you who've ever been part of Cumberland wrestling in saluting Coach Hegenbarth and saying thank you, Coach.*

*We must also thank all those who've followed Coach Hegenbarth, whether as a head coach, an assistant coach, a wrestler, a manager, or a wrestling fan (and it must be said here with emphasis that we've had the great good fortune to have, right here in Cumberland, the very best wrestling fans found anywhere). Thank you to all who've helped build and maintain Cumberland Wrestling for 50 years now. And the heartiest congratulations to each of you!*

*I'm greatly honored tonight to talk about "Why We Wrestle"*

- 1. First, there's the competition of wrestling as a sport. Let's beat Chetek! Let's beat Ladysmith! Let's beat Amery! Let's win the Heart O' North Conference tournament! Let's get to the Sectional! Let's go to State! Let's win the State Wrestling Tournament! That's what drove us when we wrestled. And that's what's driven Cumberland wrestlers for 50 years. It's good for each of us to dream big dreams and then to work hard to see whether, maybe, we can make our big dreams come true.*
- 2. And then there's the physical aspect of wrestling. Wrestling has a genuine physical fitness benefit lasting a lifetime. Wrestlers increase their strength, balance, quickness and their overall physical fitness. Wrestlers are overall physically fit, and they develop fitness habits that can keep them fit over a lifetime.*

*Wrestling is for a small guy weighing just 103 pounds, and it's for a big guy weighing up to 285 pounds. And it's for everyone else in between. All contribute equally to our team's success. Whether big or small, all count the same. No one's more important. No one's less important. We each face an opponent our own weight, and we can each earn the same number of points for our team.*

- 3. The lessons we learned and qualities we developed as Cumberland wrestlers have stayed with us. As Cumberland wrestlers, we learned hard work, determination, persistence, dependability, teamwork, and toughness. We developed those qualities because we needed them to wrestle for Cumberland, but later we found that those same qualities were still there when we needed them most much later in life*

*Now about these and the other lessons and qualities we learned as Cumberland wrestlers, many of us can tell some stories arising out of the 50 years of Cumberland Wrestling. I can't tell all those stories, but I can tell three or four of them — stories held in my memory for nearly 50 years now.*

*My first wrestling story shows that consistency and dependability are vitally important. Les Loverude was Cumberland's heavyweight on the early Cumberland wrestling teams. If you look at the Cumberland record book, you'll find that Les was the first Cumberland wrestler to go to the state wrestling tournament. And he did it twice — first in 1961 and then again in 1962. As a big-time winning wrestler for Cumberland, Les was as dependable as a wrestler can ever be. Match after match, he had a winning strategy, and it worked well for him nearly every time. The lesson was this: If I can learn to do something the right way and if I then try to do it the right way every time, maybe I can be successful in whatever it is that I'm doing. Thanks, Les, for that valuable lesson.*

*My second wrestling story shows that where we are today as wrestlers is not necessarily where we must remain tomorrow, next month, or next year. Maybe we've just lost a tough wrestling match to someone today, maybe even by a big score, but we can still improve and maybe beat that same wrestler tomorrow, next month, or next year. And I've got a story that shows this —*

*The story is about Cumberland 145 pounder Bob Zappa. Bob was a giant in the early days of Cumberland wrestling. He was there "at the creation," as they say, of Cumberland wrestling. He was on the team from day one in 1959 under Coach Hegenbarth. One of our toughest wrestling opponents back then was Ashland High School — the Ashland Oredockers. First when we traveled to Ashland, Bob lost to an Ashland wrestler named Dietz. Dietz had gone to the state wrestling tournament the previous year.*

*Now as it happened, since it's 125 miles to Ashland from Cumberland and since the match in Ashland was wrestled late Saturday evening, we all stayed overnight at the homes of Ashland wrestlers or Ashland wrestling backers. Well, that night Dietz, the Ashland 145 pounder, made the mistake of teaching Bob a couple of Dietz's favorite wrestling moves. And Bob mastered those moves before Ashland traveled down to Cumberland to wrestle us again a month or so later. In the return dual meet in Cumberland, Bob beat Dietz, and of course, he used the wrestling moves Dietz had described and demonstrated for Bob just a month or so earlier in Ashland. I still remember watching Dietz leaving this gymnasium so disappointed with his loss to Bob.*

*Over the years, I've thought about this story many times. It clearly demonstrated to all of us that we don't need to accept things as they are now. With hard work, done under a sound plan for success, we might be able to turn defeat into future wins. That's what Bob Zappa showed us that night against Ashland.*

*My final story tonight is this: I guess most anyone would say that I come from what you would call a "wrestling family." Wrestling is important to the Petersons. But someone had to get our real interest in wrestling started. And in our family it was our brother Tom. From 1960 until 1964, Tom was a Cumberland wrestler. And so for myself and for all of our family, I say thanks, Tom, for your real interest in wrestling and thanks for passing it on to all the rest of us.*

*And now to finish: All this makes me wish I were a young guy again starting all over — maybe 10, 12, or 15 years old. And looking out at tonight's anniversary gathering, I see that some of you are 10, 12, or 15 years old. So today is your day! You too can choose to wrestle for Cumberland. And when you do, you too can look forward to the wrestling benefits we've mentioned.*

*So I say to you, go for it! Over the years, Cumberland Wrestling has been a big, big, big winner, and you too can be part of it.*

**To receive a complete copy of Phil Peterson's comments contact us at; Camp of Champs PO Box 222 Watertown, WI 53094  
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