

Throughout my life I have had the opportunity to meet some pretty amazing people several of them have had a major impact on my life. While my mother and father have introduced me to variety of important people, there is one person that I was introduced to by my step dad who I will never forget. If you ask anyone around Westport, Connecticut they'll know who he is. His name was Scott Wilder but everybody who knew him called him Hoover! At a young age, about the same age I am now, Hoover had an extremely dramatic experience, one that changed the rest of his life. Hoover was involved in a drunk driving accident that broke his neck and back. He recovered but was basically paralyzed from the neck down. He was quadriplegic and he spent the rest of life in a wheel chair.

My step father has always been a good friend of Hoovers; he was with Hoover before it happened and in the car behind him watching the accident. When he talks about the accident you can see the emotion in his face. While the details of that night are fairly horrific there is one aspect of the story that David (my step father) never leaves out. This is the part about how brave Hoover was and how despite the circumstances he never once pitied himself or asked "why me". I will always admire him for being so strong. If it were me, I do not feel I would have been able to handle it. I will never forget the first day I met Hoover. I was about 10 years old and my parents took me over to Hoover's house which sits aside the third hole of the golf course in Westport. I walked through the back porch doors and there he was watching sports on three different televisions, NAC SAR, NBA, and MLB. We walked in and Hoover's face glistened with a smile from ear to ear. "How you doing little buddy". He asked as if we had known each other my entire life. I replied, shy at first, with a low sounding "good". The next thing that happened I don't think I will ever forget. He asked me if I wanted a candy Fireball, which I had been eyeing like a

hawk ever since I walked through the door. I obviously said yes because what 10 year old kid doesn't want Fireball. Then right before he handed me the piece of candy he said "It's hot so you sure you still want it because I have one policy, once you put it in your mouth, you can't take it out." Thinking that it was easy I replied "sure" and grabbed it from the big bucket of Fireballs near his wheelchair. I then stuck it right in my mouth. About 10 seconds later my eyes began tearing and my face began flair up. He then looked at me and chuckled and said "You still have it in your mouth, that's a new record but you can take it out now. I was just kidding with you." I immediately took it out and ran to get water. From then on Hoover was my friend a permanent fixture in my life.

Hoover was a great man and truly touched and motivated every person he met. To me he was my sports guru. Whenever there was an argument between my brother and I that couldn't be solved, we called Hoover. He knew the answers to everything; it was truly unbelievable. When I entered my freshman year in high school, Hoover became a real inspiration to me. He came to as many of my football games as he could to see me play. He was good friends with all of the town's coaches, no matter what the sport, so they loved that Hoover loved me. I would always get on the field and try to spot Hoover in his wheelchair. And like clockwork there he was, slightly slouched to the right, program in hand. Then came basketball season and I couldn't wait for Hoover to see me play. Before his accident Hoover was on the Staples Basketball team. He was an amazing athlete and to this day still holds the record for most points scored in a game.

Unfortunately, just after the season began Hoover became sick and was hospitalized. This was right before the 2008 super bowl and Hoover's favorite team was playing in it, The

Giants. Hoover never got to see The Giants win the super bowl or even see me play the game we both loved. He died from blood clotting three days before the Super Bowl.

Hoover was one of the most influential people in my life. Ever since the day I met Hoover I knew there was something special about him. Whether it was his infectious smile, his unparalleled knowledge of sports, or his sheer ability to transcend his adverse circumstances and impart inspiration in everyone he met; in the fairly short time we knew each other he was able to leave an indelible impression on me. Since Hoover died, every time I step out on the basketball court there's only one person I am playing for, and that is Scott "Hoover" Wilder. He meant a lot to me and we had a lot in common. Since there is no number fourteen on my team I wrote his number on my shoes to signify that he is who I am playing for. Scott "Hoover" Wilder is truly my biggest inspiration and although I did not get to know him for as long as I wanted to, he was a special enough person to have made a large impact on my life.

R.I.P Scott "Hoover" Wilder