

Crist Enjoys ‘Special’ Evening With His Dad

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By Scott Kindberg , Post-Journal

GERRY - Scott Crist sits at the end of a table in the back of the Den Adelsman's Klub on the Salisbury Road, fresh off an evening of good food, good fellowship and plenty of laughter.

As a guest of fellow Bemus Point resident David Lockwood at the Norden Club of Jamestown's annual steak fry, Scott has been introduced to some of the Scandinavian heritage and traditional food that the organization has celebrated for more than a century.

But with all due respect to the specialty cheeses, the pickled herring, the Swedish meatballs and the melt-in-your-mouth filet that is on the menu, not to mention the camaraderie of more than 100 folks in attendance, Scott is there to support, and to listen to, the guest speaker for the evening, a man he knows pretty well - his dad, Chuck.



Chuck Crist addresses a gathering of the Norden Club. Photo by Rick Lundquist

"To watch him be able to speak and to not grasp for accuracy, was a great feeling," Scott said Saturday. To the younger Crist, he was, in many ways, celebrating Father's Day four days early. For almost two years, Chuck, the Salamanca native and former NFL defensive back with the New York

Giants, New Orleans and San Francisco in the 1970s, has been battling aplastic anemia that has alternately landed him at Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Cleveland Clinic and Heritage Green Nursing Home in Greenhurst for various lengths of time.

"(Earlier this year), doctors said that the treatments didn't work, so the only option left to live a normal life was a bone-marrow transplant," Scott said. "But as we kept testing, something started happening."

Chuck began feeling better.

"Was it a miracle? Prayer? Something turned positive for him," Scott recalled. "The medical people can't explain it."

It's indeed been an amazing turnaround. In fact, early last year, Chuck had all he could do to summon up the strength to get from Roswell to the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame induction banquet at the Lakewood Rod & Gun Club.

"That was his goal," Scott recalled. "He just made short-term goals and that certainly was one of them. He was going to be there no matter what. It gave him something to look forward to, to get himself healthy enough to be there. It meant a lot to be recognized.

"He probably wears that (CSHOF) ring every day."

Chuck's personal resume speaks to the excellence required for induction. After being a four-sport athlete at Salamanca Central School, he chose basketball over football at Penn State University where he was captain his senior year. Incredibly, he earned a free-agent tryout with the Giants, which began a seven-year NFL career that ran from 1972-78.

"I've heard the stories," Scott said, "but it hasn't necessarily been with me in a crowd. Other than maybe in his (CSHOF) speech, I've heard him (speak publicly) two or three times."

So with his dad at the podium the other night, Scott, 45, listened to the stories, which all occurred before he and his younger sister, Niki, reached 10 years old.

"You know something special happened," Scott said. "It's just been my life and the way it's always been. When you have a room full of 100 guys who are captivated by some of the stories, it kind of shows you what a special life he's lived. To have a father whose life is so interesting that people are willing to take the time to sit and listen to him, it's kind of special."

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A few weeks ago, Chuck returned to Penn State where he played in a scramble golf tournament to benefit the Coaches vs. Cancer campaign. Then, he and his wife Patti traveled to Charlotte, North Carolina where they visited Niki and her family. Chuck even got in some golf with his grandson, Cole, while he was there.

"He's back at it a little bit and feeling well enough to get back and play," Scott said.

It's fitting, then, that Scott and Chuck, a six-time club champion at Holiday Valley Resort, will celebrate Father's Day today by watching the final round of the U.S. Open on TV.

"It's a nice thing that we've always been together," said Scott, who is married and has two boys of his own. "Hopefully, (it will be) for many (more) years."