

The Incredible Barry

a story of being even greater than you are



Barry and I first met 4 or 5 years ago at the bank where he was our GE Mortgage Insurance rep. There was always a great deal of excitement around the bank when we knew Barry was coming, as he is one of those bigger-than-life people. Barry is always so charismatic, optimistic and diligent in working very hard to help us in any way possible. Throughout the years, Barry and I have developed a relationship that has matured far beyond a normal business relationship. We have shared several lunches and many planning sessions. Barry was also a strong motivating force for me last summer as he and his colleague Pete worked very hard to find me employment opportunities. I was very excited last summer when he came down to take Ashley and me to lunch. Throughout the past couple of years, Barry has been very kind to me by providing amazing tickets to big-named sporting events. You all first heard about him back in December 2005 when the "Incredible Barry" was the one who was responsible for getting Matt and me in the fourth row of the Cleveland Browns game. I literally danced on my desk when the tickets came in a hand-addressed envelope to John Rattysack. You may remember the picture of Barry with his 8-year-old son in my pictorial essay written about that event. We all had such a great day together. We took so many pictures that day, but Barry and I were both upset we never had one taken of just the two of us. Barry was also the guy who took Matt and me to the Cleveland Cavaliers game as well as provided me the tickets for my nephew Seth to see his first Cleveland Cavaliers game.

Barry's life took on a new direction last summer when he was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. He says that it all started with little twitching in his arm that he really didn't notice it until he lay down to go to bed, or was in a meeting and daydreaming. That's when he was referred to the Cleveland Clinic. Barry could sense the concern on his doctor's face. He knew and the doctor knew that Barry had something that Barry didn't want. Fast forward 6 months and a hundred tests later, Barry was told that he should get a second opinion with the ALS doctor at the clinic. When he met with doctor and he told Barry that he really had ALS, it really didn't come as a shock. He knew he had the classic symptoms and had really already come to the realization of what he was going to be told. One of the difficult things about ALS is that it's rare. Only 30,000 people have it. Therefore, it's difficult to get funding to do the research to find a cause/cure. **Barry is driven to change that.** Instead of sitting around and feeling sorry for himself, Barry put his situation to great use. With the help of his family and friends, he immediately set up a non-profit organization named the Bright Side of the Road Foundation, which is dedicated towards raising \$1.5 million in 5 years for the benefit of ALS prevention, treatment, education, and cure of this devastating disease.

The logo for the Bright Side of the Road Foundation features the words "BRIGHT SIDE OF THE ROAD" in a bold, yellow, bubbly font with a black outline, and "FOUNDATION" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below it.A horizontal banner with a blue sky and white clouds background, containing the text "dedicated to ALS prevention, treatment, education, and cure" in a small, orange, sans-serif font.

www.brightsideoftheroad.com

I'm so inspired by my friend, as he's not treating his condition as a disability. Instead, he is looking at it as an opportunity to make a significant difference in the world by working towards the cure. These kinds of things in life happen for a reason. I can already see that Barry's intense popularity is just what is needed to bring much attention to this cause. There is no doubt in my mind that he's going to make great strides to help find a cure. The foundation's signature event is "The First Waltz", which is held each November at Cleveland's House of Blues. They have also had several other fundraisers in order to achieve the mission of the foundation.

It was recently announced that the Bright Side of the Road Foundation had been named the official charity of the Cleveland Wine Festival. A few weeks ago, Barry sent me an email to invite me. Knowing that he was going to be the main man of the event, I responded to him by saying, "*Barry, I would love to come, but I'm only coming to see you... will you really have time for me?*" He responded, "*Ratty, all I have is time for you*". I said, "*I'm on my way, Baby!*"

A promotional banner for the Cleveland Wine Festival. The background is a scenic landscape with rolling green hills, a dirt road, and a vibrant rainbow arching across the sky. Text is overlaid on the image.

official charity of the
CLEVELAND WINE FESTIVAL
June 29-30th, 2007
[click for event details](#)

welcome.

Bright Side of the Road Foundation was founded by our friend Barry Winovich to help find a cure for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), the devastating disease commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Driven by our founder's love of music and life, we aim to raise funds through entertaining events that will be remembered and enjoyed.

*Let's enjoy it while we can. Won't you help me sing my song.
From the dark end of the street. To the bright side of the road.*

The festival was held at Cleveland's Voinovich Park located behind the Rock n Roll Hall of Fame and adjacent to the Cleveland Browns stadium. It was an absolutely beautiful day. The setting was right on Lake Erie with the city at our backs. A live jazz band provided the perfect backdrop to the occasion. I was so excited that I would be seeing Barry. It had been a year since our lunch last summer. Melissa and I walked in to the large festival with no idea how we would ever find him. There were many, many tents all set up with different wine distributors and vendors. We walked towards the end of all of the tents where we found a couple VIP hospitality tents. It was at that moment that I noticed a guy in a really cool, yellow Wine-Festival shirt holding up his arms waving at me. Yes, it was Barry! I literally ran to him and we embraced. I introduced him to Melissa and he introduced me to his wife, Kelley.



Melissa and I really enjoyed our conversations with Barry's wife, Kelley. We made plans for us all to have dinner sometime soon followed with attending "The First Waltz" in November, the Foundation's marquee event.



Before Barry, Pete was our original Mortgage Insurance Rep at the bank. We have remained friends throughout the years. Both Pete and Barry were instrumental to me last summer during my time off.



I was a bit envious of everyone's Cleveland Wine Festival shirts, which all the VIP's were sporting. Although we all came from different directions and different circles, we all got along like we had been friends for years. (Dave, Me, Barry, Bill & Jasson) We all, of course, had one main common bond, which was our admiration of Barry. Since Barry and Kelley had been there all day, they left towards early evening to head home and spend time with their children.



After Barry and Kelley left, we spent most of the time with Hannah and Jasson. We had an awesome time together. We have made plans for many reunions since we got along so well. I knew I was going to like this guy when he walked up to me and said, "Hey, are those really Adidas Khakis you are wearing?"



As the night set in, the four of us realized that we had experience an “Incredible” day together.

*On the way home, in true Barry fashion, we stopped to see our friends Mike and Vicki who live just a few moments south of the city. Sure we were very tired from the day’s activities, and sure it was 11 o’clock with still a 2-½ hour drive ahead of us, but **we made things happen**. Ironically, Mike and Vicki were at that Cleveland Browns game I mentioned above where I was able to introduce them to Barry. We greatly enjoyed our visit with Mike and Vicki and we made definite plans to attend Barry’s First Waltz together in November. Vicki announced that she would be our designated driver ... as they are expecting their first child! Such excitement!*

You know, as great as this day was, I haven’t yet told you the absolute highlight. It happened right before Barry and Kelley left. Barry leaned over to me and said, “*John, come with me for a moment, I have something for you.*” We walked with our arms around each other’s shoulders back to the Bright Side of the Road Foundation booth. At that moment, he took his Wine Festival shirt off only to reveal his prized Bright Side of the Road Foundation t-shirt. He then took off the Foundation shirt and handed both shirts to me and said, “*I want you to have these*”. I was overwhelmed. He literally gave me the shirts off of his back. That’s the character of the man I call the Incredible Barry. Do you understand why I call him Incredible? We embraced, I kissed him on the cheek and we made plans to see each other again very soon. I walked back to the hospitality tent through the crowd of thousands all of who were supporting my incredible friend and there I was holding the shirts off of his back...his very sweaty shirts. Kelley’s last words to me were, “*John, wash those shirts*”. LOL The emotion of the moment was overwhelming and humbling.

Barry once said, “*Remember, whatever you are going through could always be worse – always look on the bright side.*” There are many lessons to be learned from his inspiration and pursuit. I’m always asked what keeps me going. Well it’s my own personal drive, my family and my friends. Barry is one of my friends who drive me the most. He is one of the reasons why I live my life to the fullest, and a solid reason why we all should. **Above and beyond that, Barry has taught us all to become something greater than we are.** I knew I was going to be inspired this weekend, but I really didn’t realize just how much.

*Let’s enjoy it while we can. Won’t you help me sing my song?
From the dark side of the street. To the bright side of the road.*