

Charlie - Welcome to "15 Minutes with Charlie." I'm your host, Charlie Mechem. I want to help you become a more effective communicator, and I've written a book which is a sort of dictionary of anecdotes to do just that. It's called, *Total Anecdotal*. In each podcast episode I interview different guests to see how certain anecdotes might have played a part in their own experiences and careers.

Charlie - My first interview is with my good friend of many years, golf legendary, Jack Nicklaus. It's been 50 years since Jack and I first met and built a golf course near Cincinnati. I like to remind Jack of this very long friendship before he critiques my work. But seriously, I am honored to have him here and share his thoughts.

Charlie - Please enjoy my time with the great, Jack Nicklaus.

Charlie - The first anecdote has to do with "Hard Work," and I'll just read this one: "A man prayed and asked God to help him win the lottery. Every day he renewed his prayer and finally said, God, won't you please help me win the lottery? To his absolute amazement, the skies darkened, lights flashed, and a strong, deep voice said, "Hey, pal, would you at least buy a ticket."

Charlie - Well, the lesson's pretty obvious. We often expect good things without much effort. And I'd like your take on how important in your career just plain old working hard has been.

Jack - Well, I think that working hard plays a part in everybody's career, Charlie. You work very hard, I work very hard. Your friend Arnold worked very hard. Our friend, I should say. Anybody who has success works hard. As I say, there are no free lunches out there and I think it's what you put into it is what you get out of it.

Jack - When I was young, and probably how I ended up playing the game of golf, was because I played all the other sports but I always needed somebody to throw the ball back or somebody to guard me or somebody to... a team to be there to play, and all that kind of stuff. And golf was the kind of thing that I could go to the golf course early in the morning. It was just the golf course and me. I'd go out and play and when my mother thought it was dark and she grabbed me by the ear and tells me to come home that's when it'd end.

Jack - That, to me, I was rewarded for my effort. I think that to me is what it's all about. You get what you put into it.

Charlie - Amen.

Jack - And if you're going to win the lottery you better buy a ticket.

Charlie - Ok. Here's another anecdote under the category of "Dealing with Adversity," "When dealing with difficult situations, it is crucial that you not do things that make the situation even worse than it is. As one person put it, if you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is to stop digging."

Charlie - And so I wanted to ask you, and you didn't have a lot of bad days, but obviously, like any golfer, you had some, when you knew going through the first few holes that things just weren't really working quite like they should, how did it affect how you played?

Jack - Well, I think you have to understand that when you get up in the morning that your swing may not be the same every day. And I always went to the practice tee and worked on my swing de jour. Worked on my swing de jour and I also knew the swing I wanted to be when I wanted to get the golf course. So I tried to bring those together with the practice tee and what I wanted to be before I got to the first tee. However, a lot of times you got to the first tee and you didn't have what you wanted. You still didn't have it. So you had to be smart enough to understand who you are and what you are and what your ability is. And what your ability is that day. I don't care if you're at a business deal and you're doing things sometimes and you just don't have your 'A' game on and you've got to see what I can do with my 'B' game or my 'C' game.

Jack - And so, I think that you try to make the best out of what you've got, and you try to make the best out of what you got that day. So if I were on the golf course playing and all of a sudden I said, man, I'm just not really with it here today, I would sort of pull back and say, let's figure out what I can get out of this game. I got to get to the clubhouse, so I got to not destroy the rest of the week. So I think that's important to be able to understand who you are, what you are, what you can do, and what you can do at each time, at any instance of what's going on.

Charlie - Very good. That's good advice. The next one is interesting. I'd be very interested in your take.

Charlie - Under the category of "Intelligence," "Einstein had little use for so-called rote learning. Instead, his creative genius stemmed from his ability to imagine concepts. And he summed this up once by saying, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.'" I'd be interested in your reaction to that comment.

Jack - Lot of times, I always knew what I wanted to do with a golf shot. Knew what the thing needed to do. But I always visualize what I wanted to do. I imagined what I wanted that shot to do. And I had practiced long enough that I had a feel for that imagination or that vision with my golf swing. Then saying, I'm going to take the club back, put my hands in this position, put my hands at this place at impact, put

the club face... I went back and I felt my way through that swing that I felt was what I wanted to do. Could I describe that, absolutely not. But could I do it, yes. Not all the time, but most of the time. I think that really was very... Your intellect and your vision, you see in yourself what you want to get done and you go do it.

Charlie - My problem is whenever I would imagine my shot is was usually a bad one.

Jack - Unfortunately I always had those too, but I had to practice how I was not going to have that bad one, Charlie. How was I going to do the right one.

Charlie - That's true. I think this next question is particularly interesting.

Charlie - Somebody once did a quiz, and the first quiz had the following questions: "Name five of the wealthiest people in the world, name five Heisman Trophy winners, name five winners of the Miss America contest, name 10 people who won a Nobel or Pulitzer Prize, name half a dozen Academy Award winners, name the 10 last winners of the World Series." And obviously you do that, none of us do very well. But then the other part of the quiz was, "name three teachers who helped your journey through school, name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time, name five people who have taught you worthwhile things, name a few people who have made you feel special, name five people who you enjoy being with, and name several heroes whose lives have inspired you." And the suspicion is you can answer every one of those questions accurately.

Jack - The point being is that they're right. I couldn't answer any of the first ones, and I can certainly answer all the last ones. I think those are the important things in life. I think the things that are close to you and what you deal with... I look back at my wife Barbara. Barbara's much smarter than I am and how she has been supportive and helped me through life, and how we've worked together as a team and so forth, those are the important things to me. My children and how I spend time with them. The teachers that I had that helped set my life. My father. I had teachers in school at different subjects that actually impacted my life greatly. There's a lot of things to your life that you have that has happened to you, and that's what builds the life.

Charlie - Amen.

Jack - It's lessons of life and what you've learned and what happens. Our friend Arnold Palmer, I learned a lot from Arnold. Arnold was a great man. And Arnold taught me lots of things. He's 10 years older than I, and Arnold told me all kinds of things that helped me in what I did.

Jack - I always remember going to Cincinnati with Bob Hope. And from the time we got there to the time we got done, we were at Maketewah, and the people were pulling at him in every direction. Not one crossword, not one "no," smiled for every picture, told a little joke, put his arm around a gal when she wanted to have a picture, took a couple of young kids and put them right under his arm for a picture. They pulled at him from the time we got through, and I went back to Barbara that night and I said, Barbara, I learned a huge, huge lesson today. Said, I learned how you really handle people and when you have success in life how much humility helps you there to sort of pull back and say, you know, there's a lot more important things in life and things that you can teach people and help people with here that are more important than how you feel at that particular moment. Hope was fantastic. And Charlie, we've all had those lessons, and that made us better people.

Charlie - Here's sort of a companion question. Somebody said, I'm going to quote this, "In life you will realize there is a role for everyone you meet. Some will test you, some will use you, some will love you, and some will teach you. But the ones who are truly important are the ones who bring out the best in you. They are the rare and amazing people who remind you why it's worth it."

Charlie - I think that's a great quote. When I read that, I thought, obviously of the people you have mentioned. I also thought of Jack Grout because I felt in your life, as I know it, he really not only taught you, but made you believe that you were worth teaching.

Jack - I would say I would have to mention Jack Grout. I'd have to mention Charlie Mechem in there.

Charlie - Oh my. Well, very nice.

Jack - Charlie Mechem has been a great friend and has taught me a lot through life. I think there's Jack Grout and my father was a big teacher. As I said, my wife was a big teacher. Bob Kepler, my coach at Ohio State, was a great teacher. Not about the game of golf. When I was a sophomore at Ohio State I made the Walker Cup team and I was really worried about what I was going to do at Ohio State that year playing on the golf team. And Kep, too. He came to me and he initiated the conversation. He took the fear right out of me by saying, "Boy are you going to have a great spring." "What do you mean, Kep?" He says, "You're going to go play golf. You make the Walker Cup team, you're going to go play the Masters and..." Rick... the Walker Cup master says, "You play golf on our team next year." What a way to take all the stress off of you.

Charlie - Boy, that's very impressive.

Jack - Jack Grout was fantastic. Jack Grout went to hundreds of golf tournaments. Not once did he ever set his foot on the practice tee. I see these guys out there today having their teachers hang over the top of them so they get their publicity. Jack Grout didn't want publicity. Jack Grout was just there for me. He was there for support. My wife Barbara has just been in the background with everything I've done all my life, and I didn't have to look twice to know that she was there. She was there. And you've got all those... My dad was there. Everything, everything I ever needed, ever wanted, he was there behind me. He was there also to correct me when I was wrong. Taught me about being a good loser and a good winner. The things you're talking about. Because when somebody beats you at something, I think you put out your hand, you put a smile on your face, you look him in the eye and make him feel like he did something special. And you congratulate him properly with a firm handshake and a smile. He said, "If you want to go beat your head in a locker later by yourself, that's okay." But he says, "Right now, you make him feel like he's the most important person out there."

Charlie - When you try to make that point, I read this wonderful quote that says, "Simply accept the fact that some days you're the statue and some days you're the pigeon."

Charlie - And I think that's right. And being a good winner is easy.

Jack - It is, Charlie. And I think it's a great lesson in life. I think that, you know, as you say, it's easy to be a good winner, and we all love to win. Everybody wants to win. But you're going to lose a lot more probably than you're going to win. I think it keeps you down to earth, it keeps you from scratching your ears out about three feet, that big head. I think losing is actually really good for you. That's one of the great things about the game of golf. If you win about somewhere between 10 and 20% of the time you're probably the best in the game. And so, you get a lot of practice of losing. So, if you want to be a bad loser you can have a miserable life because you're going to lose a lot. But I think it's a good lesson. And it's also a good lesson to win. You got to learn how to win, too, Charlie.

Charlie - True.

Jack - I think that being a good winner is important. It's as important as being a good loser and vice versa. So they're all things that are lessons of life.

Charlie - Jack, I can't thank you enough. This is a great start to our little podcast. And I listen to you and hear you and just reminds me of why we've been such great friends and always will be. Thanks so much.

Jack - Thank you so much, my friend. Look forward to seeing you in a couple of months at Deerfield.

Charlie - You bet.

Charlie - Thanks for joining me for today's conversation. If you'd like to listen to more episodes, please visit [totalanecdotal.co](http://totalanecdotal.co) or search for "15 Minutes With Charlie" in your podcasting app. If you are enjoying the show you should check out my book, "*Total Anecdotal: A Fun Guide to Help You Become a Better Speaker and Writer.*" Learn more at [totalanecdotal.co/book](http://totalanecdotal.co/book), that's [totalanecdotal.co/book](http://totalanecdotal.co/book), or it's available through Amazon or Barnes & Noble, and perhaps your local bookstore.