

Marc Taylor Memorial Service

June 24, 2012

Comments by: Chris Murphy, U.S. Congressman (D)

When people travel to the Swiss Alps, they go for the mountains, but they come back talking about the gorges. Throughout the Alps, there are these jaw dropping gorges. Forest and trees one minute, a freefall thousands of feet down the next.

And for years, experts believed these gorges were formed by massive, powerful glaciers, violently moving through the landscape, cutting the gorge in one massive sweep. But two years ago, after a groundbreaking study of the rock walls of these gorges, scientists changed their minds.

The glaciers were there, and they did some of the work, but the gorges were really created by...rivers. Ancient, meandering, slow but powerful rivers. Rivers, flowing over thousands and thousands of years - that's what made the gorges.

I thought of Marc when I read that story. And not just because he loved rivers, frankly more than any sensible, grown man really should. But because to me, that's what Marc was – a gentle but powerful meandering river, cutting a path that would last forever.

You see, rivers don't change the landscape overnight. They don't do it with punctuated moments of violence. They work with the landscape they've been given, move from side to side so as to not wear away at any one bank too harshly. But they know, at all times, where they are going. And they know they will get there, because they are unceasing.

That was Marc. Some people leave their stamp on the world with bold, staccato gestures. And others, like Marc, work, and work, and work, to bring people together, and don't care who gets the credit or the glory for the eventual accomplishment.

I've known Marc for a shorter time than most people here. It was only seven years ago, that Marc walked into one of my first fundraisers for my long shot campaign for the United States Congress. I didn't know Marc, and I'm not even sure I invited him. But as I learned, that was Marc – he didn't wait for an invitation. When he found something he believed in, he invited himself. Properly, respectfully, but he didn't wait to be asked to make a difference.

He showed up that first time, and he never stopped. In those early lonely days of my first campaign, Marc was like a safety blanket for me. Every time I needed people to show up for a fundraiser or a rally or a house party, Marc was there. And no matter how frazzled I was, or how quickly I thought the sky was falling on our campaign that day, Marc was just Marc. Level headed, warm, friendly, and most importantly, calming. Over the years, I can count on two

hands the number of people who were as consistent and loyal a supporter as Marc. And for that, I'll count him as a friend forever.

Once he helped get me elected, Marc essentially became an adjunct staff member in our office. In particular, he took my young environmental staffer, Jesse Young, under his wing, and turned Jesse into one of the most knowledgeable House aides on rivers and land conservation.

Recently, he had been working with us on a bill that would provide federal funds to small land trust for land stewardship activities. After Mark's passing, Jesse and I were trading e-mails back and forth about how much Mark meant to his office.

Here's one: "After our meeting on the bill, Marc's imagination was immediately fired in action - he called and e-mailed me with thoughts and suggestions about the bill, and actually came into the D.C. office during one of his trips just to discuss it with me. Had we selected the right office within the Park Service to manage the grant program, he asked. Was this a model we can replicate elsewhere, he wanted to know. Within a few weeks, I'm pretty he sure he knew the bill better than I did (and I wrote the damn thing)."

Mark took on this project with gusto. After helping us draft the bill, he began to use the contacts he had gleaned through River Network to help us set up meetings in Washington with people who could help us with our bill. And by now, it really was "our" bill. A few weeks after a flurry of e-mails with Marc over a meeting that Marc was helping to set up, we learned of his illness. And as we tracked back to the date he started treatment, we realized that Marc had been making phone calls to set up meetings in between his chemotherapy treatments

I couldn't believe it. But then, the more I thought about it, it made sense.

The great rivers, they eventually do dry up, or pick a new course. But not before, like those waters of the Swiss Alps, they leave a path that alters the landscape forever. And right up until that moment when the river ends its run, even those final, last drops push, push, down the gradient, trying to carve just one more millimeter into the gorge it left behind.

Like most of you, I'm not sure what happens we die, but if Marc showed up at heaven's door, I know there was only one section of the scripture that could have been inscribed on the gate:

Job 28:10: He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.