Dean Crain was the closest thing I ever saw to a live hero. I grew up idolizing a few heroes – Muhammed Ali; Terry Fox and Nelson Mandela. By Dean was not just this great man but someone that was a dear close friend and co-worker.

For those of you that have never heard the story, please let me continue. And for those of you who have heard to too many times or can't stand my voice – this I understand very well – I apologize.

I started in my industry with RBC Dominion Securities in 1994. Within a few years I was doing well but still raw around the edges. After a meeting at DS, as we called it, in 1996 a youngish blond man came up to me and suggested I spend some time with him. Dean Crain had been in the business a few more years than me and wanted to share some of his experiences as our prospecting styles and investment visions were apparently very similar. Dean was funny and sharp, affable and open, hard-working and had a young family. He hit it off, or as my family would say, I had a man crush on him.

Shelley and the boys got to know Dean and his family and everybody hit it off grandly.

Then in 2000, at age 50 Dean retired. It thought good for him! He called me up. He explained to me that he had Huntington's disease and it was hereditary and he was going to die from it. I was in shock, probably as much as everyone he told this story to.

HD, as it is called, goes from a parent to a child and it is a 50/50 proposition. It is a death sentence that includes loss of muscle control, brain seizures, possible rage problems and likely a choking death – if you live that long.

So, is Dean Crain a hero because he got dealt a bad genetic card? Although on many levels those that suffer from diseases can easily be labeled heroes, Dean did not just sit around and complain about his future.

He got up off the couch and decided to take action. First he started talking about the disease – to family members, friends, ex-co-workers and organizations. His speech as called the Luckiest Man Alive." He did this to raise awareness. But that silly man did not stop there, he decided to raise money for research as well. What form should he do this – selling cookies? Make posters for telephone polls? Nope, he decided, intellectually, that since his body is breaking down and that he can barely walk, why not run for cash? Dean and I shared many attributes but intelligent was not one of them.

He ran 5Ks, then 10Ks, then a half marathon and even followed that up with a full marathon - this for a man that quite often tripped on the cement walking. So, being of sound mind, I merely suggested that I might help him and somehow it ended up that Chris Pughe and I ran the 2004 Vancouver Half-Marathon with him. I don’t know what was more stupid – me offering to run this length when I was not a runner then, or me trying to force Chris to do the same.

The runners and other friends raised $100,000 for research that day. We laughed, we cried, Dean almost choked on a protein bar (Chris saved him). He did not do this for himself as you cannot prevent something you already have. He did it for all the kids and grandkids out there that needed a hope of preventing the disease – just like the hope that existed for smallpox, polio and even Aids.

He was eventually profiled in the O magazine, which if you don't know is run by Oprah Winfrey. It was a bittersweet article about the family of HD and what happens to those affected and also their loved ones.

Dean died in 2005 in an accident downtown.

He was a Rotarian.

He was a father and a husband.

He was a hard worker and a close friend.

And he was, and is, my hero.

In 2010, the club, with some strong support from people like me Chris and Dalbir, decided to honour and recognize Dean with annual award.

The Dean Crain Humanitarian Award is given to a Rotarian who exhibits the true virtues of Dean – honesty, courage, determination and integrity. Dean would be embarrassed to know we did this but please don’t be embarrassed to nominate someone in this club. That would make Dean more upset than anything else.