Touch the Future with
Johnny Miller

J: Johnny M: Michael

M: If you were to ask yourself a question that would help describe how you became one of the best golfers in the world, what would you ask?

J: The thought that comes to my mind is what my father taught me when I was a young boy, he said, “if you want to be the best player in the world, you've got to be willing to do it. None of the other kids are willing to do it. It's that easy.”

Obviously you have to have talent, but the secret to the question probably is: are you willing to dedicate yourself? Instead of going with all the whims of childhood and all the fun things of childhood, the diversification of childhood, all the fun things that you can go and do here, there, and everywhere.

What my dad convinced me of is that there are times when you can do all the other things, but there are always times when you have to sacrifice what the kids think is fun and you're gonna go out there and have fun on the golf course.

And he made it fun. So I guess I was willing to sacrifice, and without the expense of fun either. I have to say that I really did have fun playing golf, but it wasn't the popular thing to do.

M: When did you start?

J: I started when I was 5. My father started playing golf about when I was born and he fell in love with the game, and in five years he went from a beginner to a mid 70's shooter.

He won the San Francisco City Championship Sportsman Flag, he won a big trophy. I was just a little kid and he came home with that huge trophy, I mean it was huge, I mean this thing was nearly as tall as me! And I was proud of him. He said what a lot of people say when they maybe make their first birdie or break 80, or whatever, they say, “gee I wish I'd have started younger so that I could have been a great champion like the Sam Sneed, Ben Hogan's, Byron Nelson's of the world.”

My father got all the big books--Slammin’ Sam Sneed and Byron Nelson books. And he told me the story of Ben Hogan and the car accident. He just made it really interesting. He made it where golf was a lot of fun.

He was a very smart man. His philosophy was and is that kids thrive on praise. They thrive on positive, not negative**. He never said anything negative. In my upbringing it was always “champ, nice going champ.” If I hit it bad, he said, “let's see what you can do on the next one.” It was never dwelling on the negative. It**

was always, always dwelling on the positive. Always positive. I had tremendous self-esteem because of my father. I had a very secure childhood. I knew he loved me and accepted me. And I know that there's no affirmation stronger than a father's affirmation that you're going to succeed.

M: Where do you think your dad got that intuitive wisdom to create that kind of space for you?

J: I think my father, in his own way, as sort of a genius, had a lot of ideas like that--a lot of left-handed kind of thinking. In his background there were a lot of artists and sculptors and inventors, and I'm left-handed and I have the same thing my father has for this “one-off” thinking. I'm very creative. My right side of my brain is very dominant. My heart and creativity always beat out the creative Johnny Miller and I listen to it intently. **And part of me is very much like a child in that I listen to my heart more than my mind. I think that's very rare these days, because as we grow up we learn to rationalize and intellectualize and play the odds. You know, you can't do this because . . . here's the history of it, here's the old way of thinking. If my heart says I can do it, I'll try it.**

I've learned to try things that other people aren't willing to try. And that goes again with my father's thinking; you've got to be willing to do things the other guy's not willing to do, if you want to be the best. Sometimes you fall, many times you fall, but you open up new doors to go into new rooms. The one big large spacious room is filled with people that just do what they’re suppose to do, or think the way everybody else thinks. But to get in all the other fun rooms and have your brain expand with experiences, and also failures, then you have to try new things.

M: You started playing golf with your father. How would you say that the influence that your father had on you is evident in the way that you play your game today?

J: My father's real teaching, and most of it was psychological, got me physically working on the basic fundamentals through the great players like Sam Sneed, Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson. But the thinking was also Larry Miller, my father. He taught me when I was a little boy to squint my eyes and grit my teeth and wear my hat just right, put that glove on correctly and look like a champion. He'd say, "If you're gonna play golf, you're gonna act and look like a champion."

He took me to the tournaments that would come to San Francisco, the Lucky International, and he told me, "You watch the best players. The best sand player, the best putter, the best driver of the ball, the best iron for it. You see what they do

differently. Always study the people that do something the best and learn from them and keep working."

He always taught me to work on my weaknesses so that they would become strengths, and not to shy away from them. And I think that nobody taught him to do the things that he did and teach the way he taught. And sometimes I think he was inspired to be the teacher that he was.

I had an affirmation, a strong affirmation when I was 8 years old, that I was going to be a great champion. Well, maybe not great, but at least a champion. It was a quiet feeling of warmth that was about me that I just knew that was my calling, that golf was going to be my lot in life and that I was going to be a champion. It was probably because again my father instilled that confidence that I was going to be a champion, and I'd just do what he told me to do. Not to say that when I was in my teenage years that I didn't try to put in my input, but I followed his advice. I knew that he was for me, that he was in my corner and he was steering me in the right direction.

He entered me in the tournaments. He worked the midnight to eight am shift at RCA Communications so that he could sleep while I was in school, and then he'd pick me up after school and we'd work till dark. And it was always, "One more shot Johnny. That was fantastic, one more shot. We'll see you hit one more. Let's see you hit a little cut shot here. Let's see you hit this little hook around the tree. Let's see you do . . . whatever." It was hard work. but it was really more hard fun. That's what it really was.

M: What would you say is the difference between the great champion and those who appear to have talent that never quite make it?

J: Well, they say the most common thing in the world is talent that has not been developed. The most uncommon thing, the truest, rarest form of genius is someone who's willing every day to wake up, like a tom cat and say,"where's my clubs!" Every day. And it's so exciting to them. Just like the pianist, or violinist, whose whole world revolves around mastering that thing that they've been blessed with or that thing that they've developed. I can honestly say that probably from age 5 to maybe even 30, I don't think there's that many people who worked harder than I did, or were more involved or more dedicated than I was.

I just got a little burned out when I got 30. I had been so dedicated at any early age that when I sort of hit the top, I was 27, 28, 29, 30. And when I won my British Open in 1976, I sort of felt like I had climbed the mountain that I always wanted to climb. But my biggest weakness is that I love to do things differently and to try something else. I didn't have the ability to just stay focused like Tom Kaiser, Nick Fallow, Ben

Hogan. And I wanted to know how to teach. I wanted to know how to raise my kids better. I would have been a good explorer--I loved to see what's over the next hill! And I'd taken golf about as far as I could take it without sacrificing my family. By the time I won that British Open, I already had 4 children--and two more would come in 1978 and 1980!

I had children in 1972, 74, 76, 78 and 80. And I had been taught very strongly that no amount of success in whatever you do can compensate for failure in the home. I can honestly say that I was trying to be as good a father as I was a golfer, and they're not compatible. To play the tour and be dedicated to it, and still have not only the time but the energy to give to your kids, is a very difficult thing to do. My father dedicated his life to make me a champion and I think he enjoyed it, but he had to lose himself in me. I was not able to do that. And I was feeling a little guilty about it.

The one thing I am happy about is that my boys, all four of them, love the game of golf and they play good golf and I didn't drive them away by pushing them too much. And they do have fun playing golf, and we have fun playing together. My greatest legacy is really living it through my children, no doubt. My career, I mean it was a good career, but it's really parenting that's the closest thing we do to what our heavenly father has done in creating children.

M: Wow!! What's the difference between the thrill of competition and responding to it with that enhanced performance that comes with extraordinary clarity or collapsing into doubt, anxiety, and fear under all that pressure?

J: When I look at my career I can honestly say that I was the most fascinated by performance under pressure, and the choke factor, and studied all that more than any other player alive, I believe. I feel like . . . if there's a Ph.D. for studying how people react to pressure, how it changes them, whether they're successful at it or why they collapse . . . then I've got one! As a player, I loved being in the last group, or the second to the last group with a player that was leading, or had a chance to win, And I just studied how he reacted to it. I studied what made a player able to pull it out under pressure, or what caused the collapse. Where the weakest link was, whether he sped up, whether he couldn't focus, whether he started getting argumentative, whether he started getting nervous or anticipating the next hole when he should be concentrating on the present moment. Some players will get sweaty palms; others can't think clearly, their caddy has to do all the thinking for them. It's very, very, very interesting.

And I can honestly say that what I'm probably most proud of in my career is that after five years of retirement, I won the AT & T in 1994 with "the yeps." You just don't

win a tournament when you get “the yeps.” I was able to do that with creative thinking, and because a player doesn’t have to have all systems “GO!” to win a golf tournament. You don't have to be hitting on every cylinder. If you're willing to pick up the slack by being a little more aggressive maybe with your iron shots, or whatever. You can overcome a flaw or a defect in your game. A lot of people think everything has to be perfect. It doesn't. I won most of the time by listening to my heart. When I won in '87 I was going to the 14th hole at Pebble Beach and I said the dreaded words, "Gee, if I make this putt right here, I got a chance to win the golf tournament." And Stuart was leading, and of course saying that's a sort of the kiss of death because you get an adrenaline rush and immediately I got super nervous.

And I SHOOK IN this three-footer! Somehow it bounced around and went in the hole on the bumpy greens. Now I'm walking down to the next hole and I know the “red light’s on.” I saw it on the par 5, the 14th, and the 15th. I'm walking to my tee to hit my second shot, and a little voice said, "You're too nervous now. You're not going to be able to stroke the ball," which was true. I knew that. And then it just said to me, "Why don't you look at the hole when you putt?" Next of course I'm saying to myself . . . “why would I want to do that? I've never done that before. . . .This could be embarrassing . . .I might hit it fat or something looking at the hole!!??!!” But, instead, I listened to the little voice. I always listen to my intuition. I hope it's the better part of me speaking. I looked at the hole and made about a fifteen-footer. I looked at thr rest of the holes also, and I made about a 25 footer on the last hole to beat Payne Stuart.

I know I wouldn't have made those putts if I wasn't willing to sort of look at the childlike side of myself, or listen to my intuitive side, and throw off the reasons why I shouldn't have listened. And I really believe that that's like a turbo charger. If you can do all your homework, and then open your heart up to say, “what's the shot for me?” And if you play those shots, those are really you. That's the person who wants to escape and get out and play the shots that you feel are your shots. They’re not the high percentage shot; nor are they trying “to force the square peg into the round hole” kind of shot.

I'm still studying this whole performance-under-pressure thing. Now I do the broadcast commentary for the Rider Cup matches every two years, and national TV coverage brings a lot of pressure to golf. And I get to observe closely the heroics of a Cory Paven at the US Open, for example, and even some of the little problems that Greg Norman had with his game. I get to observe all the things that happen in the majors, which is really fun stuff to watch. There's sort of a secret formula and it's almost hidden, and every formula is different for different people. It's sort of like everybody

owns a different safe and every safe has a different combination, and you only have your safe and you have to know how to open it up. And you have to know how to keep it open. It's an interesting process.

M: What's the relationship between your upbringing, all the positive reinforcement and the encouragement that your dad gave you, and how that helps you today after you blow a shot to have the safety and the psychological security to keep going without worrying about it?

J: Well I think there's no doubt that my upbringing with my father helped me win tournaments, helped me become the player that I was and am. But I really believe that the secret for me, if you were to say “why did Johnny Miller have the success he did?” I would give my father probably as much credit as anything, and I'd give natural ability quite a bit of credit. But I think probably the most credit would go to, it's really hard to say the most credit, but I would say a lot of the credit would go to the fact that I was willing to be “one-off.”

My father told me it was OK to be different. He said, "If all your friends want to go do something, I want you to say in your mind that you don't ever want to do what everybody else wants to do. If you want to be special, or if you want to make a difference, you can't be a ‘bah-bah,’ you have to be a leader." And he taught me to be a leader. He taught me to lead the sheep, to lead them in a good direction. And playing golf, I always believed that to be the best golfer somewhere in “the spokes of your wheel” you've got to think you're the smartest, like Tom Watson or Jack Nicholas. I really believe they think they're the smartest. Tom Craig thinks that he worked the hardest. So did Ben Hogan. Some people, maybe an Elkington, or a Norman, think they have the best techniques. I thought that I knew the most about the swing, and that for some reason I was the best iron player. And I believe that I was a little bit more creative and willing to try things other guys weren't willing to try. And I think I'm the only player that's ever done this, really profoundly done it--I was willing to play like I was “three players.”

My theory was, your not always the smartest, so why not take a guy like Lee Trevino and copy him as your fade? And then there’s a Chee Chee or a Tony Lema for cross court draws. And then have your own swing for straight. So I was playing golf in the 70's really as three distinct people. And I really believed that that gave me a huge advantage because my theory was that I didn't think all three would play bad on the same day! So, I always had a shot. I call them “green light specials.” In a round of golf you have “green lights,” where it's a perfect shot for your game. It's beautiful, wide; the wind’s right; the pin placement's right; you're feeling right. Man, it's time to go for it!

Well. some guys, as they cut the ball, they get maybe half their shots, or “green light specials,” and the other half are “yellow light,” or even “red light.” Well, when I was playing as Trevino, or as Lema, then I was having more “green light” shots than everybody else! So I truly believe that because I was getting more “green lights,” this enabled me to be more aggressive, to be more confident, to go for the pins more often and basically be a better player. I had an advantage over everybody. And the whole secret is somehow you've gotta believe that you have an advantage over the rest of the field. If you do not have that feeling, you will never be the best.

And it doesn't happen by accident. You don't just fall into it. You have to believe, like Peter Jakes did in 1994. He said to himself, “ I've got to turn this thing up a couple of notches.” I've got to go exercise. I've got to go practice more. I’ve got get dedicated. And because of that, he became a special Peter Jakes. He came out and won a couple of tournaments, and could have won more. There's an ingredient there that opens your greatness and you have to be willing to feel like, “Hey, I deserve to be great! I deserve to play great at golf.” So you've got to be willing to go out of your usual mode, turn it up a notch. and be willing to do some things other guys aren't willing to do. Then you feel like, “Hey, I should beat everybody!!”

M: Where is the whole field of athletics going, both amateur and professional, in America today? And is it healthy for kids?

J: I can honestly say that growing up I never thought about equating being a champion to getting material things or money. I'll never forget when I won $950.00 in the Texas Open, my first tournament in 1969. I couldn't believe it. They're actually paying me for this. It never occurred to me that I actually would make money doing this. I wanted to be a champion. I wanted to be a special player, but I never really equated it to glory or power or money. I equated it to “this is going to be fun.” I'm going to become a champion. I'm going to play with the best players in the world. I'm gonna win tournaments and I'm not saying it isn't a good part of the game, the monetary side, and maybe even the prestige and the glory and all that stuff. But if you're seeking after those things, if you're seeking after money, power, position, and have all that but forget the L-O-V-E . . . Well, the real secret is the love of the game, and wanting to be the best you can be. If you love it, you'll always beat the person that wants it for power and glory and money.

So the problem now is that kids see the fruits of their labors, which are the power, glory, money, and whatever, and they forget that the real reason why the Magic Johnson’s of the world are so great is because everybody could feel this magnetism from the love he had for what he was doing--his smile was the greatest smile in history.

He had that smile because he was a kid playing the game that he loved. And when you start forgetting the fact that it's a game that you love doing, that it's fun, that you're listening to the kid part of yourself, and you start playing "like an adult," then you lose some of your glimmer and shine and you probably lose the love, too. The hardest thing to keep is the love for the game. That's why people are so attracted to Arnold Palmer because he always loved playing the game. I mean that was the greatest part about Arnold Palmer--his deep love for the game. I lost the love for the game a little bit right after the British Open because I felt like it was taking me away from my family, and my kids were in school and they couldn't come with me. And I was looking at golf as sort of an enemy because I was not able to be with my family. So until I got that sorted out in my head, golf wasn't fun anymore for me. I couldn't do everything. It was just not possible to raise six children and play the tour and do them both well. So it was a tough thing for me. It really was. It was very difficult to sort out in my mind.

M: Many parents see the glory, money, prestige, and they get some strokes because they're kids are doing so well. So how can we gracefully sidestep all of that and create the best environment for children to learn to be their best in athletics? What do we have to do?

J: Well hopefully there are some good role models to point to. I tell my kids, "play like Fuzzy Zeller. Have fun, talk to the gallery, express yourself, be yourself. Don't be 'a grown-up' in that you can't show how you feel." Craig Statler's a guy that I'm sure the tour sometimes is embarassed by because he is so childlike with his reactions. You can read everything. It's like I said at the San Diego Open, you don't need a commentator when Craig Statler hits a shot because he does it all for you. And we need more honest emotions like that on the tour. We need people to realize that the most attractive thing players can do is be honest and show their emotions--show how they really feel. I think it's important that we teach kids to be true to themselves, to be honest with themselves. If you want to be successful in life, you are guaranteed success if you work hard and be honest. That's all you need to do. If you are honest and work hard, you will always be a success.

The dishonest person can run by you--it's like the tortoise and the hare--but what the dishonest person doesn't realize is that he's throwing out a big boomerang. And the boomerang is making a big wide arc, so that when he least expects it, the boomerang comes around and knocks him right down. Then the little turtle just keeps going on by and he's happy. The dishonest person with the tumultuous life calls it, "good breaks and bad breaks." But it's not good breaks and bad breaks. The dishonest person isn't

true to himself. It's really important to really be honest, honest with everything you do. If this society was totally honest, we'd be heaven on earth.

M: Most of our culture, especially today, thinks that athletics is really good for kids. There's a lot of good life experiences from participating in athletic activities and yet, more than 50% of American kids when surveyed say that their first great humiliation and sense of failure in life came while participating in athletics. So most kids drop out, certainly by the time they're in high school. Why do you think this happens?

J: Well one of the greatest lessons we learn in sports is how to deal with failure. It's almost like getting on an escalator. The failures are heading your way and in order to just stay in the same place, you have to move forward. If you just move forward at the rate that the failures come, you don't go anywhere. The only way that you can stay ahead of failures that come your way is to lengthen your stride--to kick it up a notch or two, and then you can gain some ground. But the way this society functions, in sport and in life, it wants to pull us down if we give up. So the secret is to have a game plan that knows that some failures are going to come, and be ready to lengthen your stride and just really be resilient. Know ahead of time that the doors to great creativity and great insight open up through being knocked down. And then maybe crawling through a low door. It's during your most humble state that some of your greatest intuitions arrive. When you are knocked right down to where you have no pride, then the greatest secrets of yourself and life may reveal themselves, if you'll just listen.

M: Psychologically, what is the worst thing that's ever happened to you on a golf course?

J: Well, there are a lot of things that I've learned on the golf course that could be perceived as negative. My first great negative experience really was in 1972 at the Bing Crosby, which was a huge tournament with big TV ratings. I'm playing with Jack Nicholas; we're dead even going into the 16th hole at Pebble Beach. It's the last round; I'm just a young kid, I'm 24. Nicholas of course is Nicholas, who had won everything! I got over this shot on a downward sloping sidehill line. I had a little half 7 iron, or full 8 iron, set to go with a lot of knee action. My 7 iron was very smooth, and I just moved right past it with this real graceful knee action—like a Tony Lema or a Cole Shankton, on national TV! And it's very unusual to shank one when you're playing against Jack Nicholas. It gets people's attention. To this day, I feel like I was one of the best iron players who ever played the game, and I say that because I feel like it's true. I don't say it because I'm trying to brag. My iron game was always the best part of my game. And to this day, that shot is remembered more than any other shot that I've ever made. I made 17 holes-in-one. I've hit a lot of good shots on TV; heroic shots I think

sometimes. But people most remember the shot that I shanked against Nicolas, and they still talk about it. Nicholas 3-putted the next green. I made a bogey on the shank and Nicholas bogied the next hole, so they're both bogies. But nobody remembers the 3-putt.

I've won about 35 tournaments since then. And somewhere in the last three or four holes I'd catch myself saying, "you're not gonna shank one like you did back in '72." Now I don't tell myself to do that, but just to show you how your brain captures trauma and won't let you forget it, I've had to live with that ghost. Every time I had to talk myself out of it. But it's amazing how those ghosts come up.

I got other ones where I 3-putted at a key time for a bogey-bogey finish at the L.A. Open and I lost to Tom Watts. I won that tournament in '81, but in '82 I bogied the last two holes and lost in the playoff. But I haven't had too many horror stories as a Pro. I had enough fear of close matches that when I was one ahead with four or five holes to go, or even nine to go, I'd "lengthen my stride" and get ahead by two or three. So out of my fear of not wanting to let my putting be the final say, because my putting wasn't very strong, somehow I would get out ahead of the field early and win by at least 4 shots. I won 24 times in the U.S., and usually by about 4 shots over my average, which is probably the widest margin of anybody in modern golf. That's the way I won.

I won by 14 at Phoenix. I won by 9, 8, 8, 7, 6, a bunch of times because I just didn't want other players to have a chance. I didn't want it to get close. I didn't want the game to be decided at the last hole, because I started getting "the yeps" when I was19. Everybody talks about Vernon Larner, but I first got "the yeps" when I was 19, and I haven't ever said this before, but when I get nervous—even when I'm working on my ranch and I go to sign some checks or sign my name--my hand just jumps. I have some sort of circuitry that's a little messed up or corroded. I get a short circuit. So I'm proud that every since I was 19 I've had to deal with that. I had "the yeps" when I won the British Open in '76. I decided to paint a little red dot underneath my thumb on the grip and instead of watching the putter and yepping it, I would just watch the dot and make it go the same miles an hour. Then, a year or two later, I was closing my eyes. Or, I was looking at the hole I was putting. I was the first guy to make a long putter. I made the original long putter at the L.A. Open in 1980. I've tried everything. I'm not proud of the fact I have "the yeps," but I'm proud of the fact that I won like 15 tournaments with "the yeps." I mean people don't realize, but if I had the nerves of a Ben Crenshaw or somebody like that, I'd of won 50 tournaments. There's no doubt in my mind. It's just that I got "the yeps" and that was the end of Johnny Miller. I didn't want to play golf with "the yeps." It wasn't any fun.

M: If you were going to design a perfect coach or a mentor, what would she/he be like? What kind of environment would they create?

J: The perfect coach would make you love what you're doing even more than you already loved it. If he can create a positive atmosphere, an atmosphere of unconditional love that also says learning is fun, then you can learn from the bad things, the bad shots. Then competing is fun, even when there's bad shots and you're losing. You just need to have a coach who says that's the best shot you could have hit at that time. You did everything you could. I guess the best shot I could have hit was that shank at 16 at that time. In my mind I was doing everything I was supposed to do. So that's a good way of looking at it. Instead of jumping on somebody, just remember what Greg Norman once said, "Be kind because everybody's fighting the hard fight." When a guy chokes going down the stretch, you probably should be kind because he's probably trying his guts out.

As a coach of a kid or a child, you've just got to realize that that kid is probably giving it everything he's got, even if it doesn't look like he is. He may be afraid to show how hard he's trying because he's afraid of failing or losing. So I think you really need to be kind, unconditionally kind. That's really important. Sports are great. Golf is a lot like life because you can hit a perfect drive and be ecstatic, and then you walk down there and your ball's right in the middle of a big deep divot hole. So you're in a divot, and now you hit the best shot you can and your ball's heading right at the pin, but because the ball is sitting a couple of grooves down, it buries down right underneath the lip of the bunker—unplayable. And you say, "well geesch! I just hit the perfect drive and I hit it as good as I could and now I got an unplayable out here, and I'm gonna drop it." And you drop it, and of course it plugs, and you knock it out and you miss the putt. And you have to learn to live with that because that's a lot like life. Life does that to you. Life can deal you those divots and it can deal you choices that seem right but they're wrong. It's a game.

My dad always said, "golf is a game of misses." Golf is not a game of hits. It's not how good your good ones are, it's how bad your bad ones are that count. And life's a little bit that same way. It's a game of learning by your mistakes, and knowing that mistakes aren't all bad if you can learn from them and they don't drag you down. But life's that way. Life is tough and it's nice to have a coach that you think understands the road that you're traveling on. That's important.

M: Do you think there's any difference between great coaches and great parents?

J: Well sometimes it's very difficult to be a great coach and a great parent in some ways because a kid may ask, " what gives my dad or mother the ability to be a great coach?." It's like when I'm teaching my kids golf, my kids know I've won a lot of tournaments and that I know a lot about the game. So when I coach them, I have a lot more credibility than some parents. A kid has a tendency to think, well, you love me but what gives you the right to coach me? It's very difficult for parents to teach their kids and it's very difficult for a husband to teach his wife, and it's very difficult for a wife to teach her husband. I'm very lucky in that my family accepts the fact that I know what I'm talking about when we talk about golf. Now I get into other areas and I'm just like any other parent. My kids say, "get lost dad. What do you know about that?" I try to tell them, well I went through that too. The secret is, even if a parent with no credibility in, say, basketball, does the homework and gives good advice, then that can help.

Too many people speak when they're angry and too many people say negative stuff because their child missed the shot that the parent wanted to make. And so if the parents live through their children, it's usually a mistake. I have learned to take losses. My dad taught me to take my losses gracefully, not that I wanted to, but because that's just a part of sport and life. You don't want to be a sore loser, nor do you want to be a boisterous cocky winner. My father could just pull up a million things of wisdom. He probably could write a book, he probably is the guy you should be interviewing.

M: Can we?

J: No. He won't do it. My dad is very reluctant to give interviews. He wants no glory, no glamour. He's a very rare person that way.

M: What is the difference between competition and playing?

J: Competition gets more aggressive. If you didn't have some aggressiveness, then competition would just be play. It would just be play among all your friends. It's just where we put our importance. If the importance becomes great, we have a tendency to choke. If the importance becomes routine . . . I had a point in the mid 70's when I went out to win the Phoenix Open and it was just like I was playing by myself. There was no tension. I had zero tension. I just go play the last round, go win, and go home. If there was a way of measuring anxiety or stress, there'd barely have been even a blip. I mean it was Nirvana. I experienced a state in my game where I was so confident. I couldn't wait to hit the next shot, it was gonna be fun. That was the main thing that I was thinking of. I can't wait to hit. Would you guys hurry up and hit because I can't wait to hit, it's gonna be fun! I couldn't wait to hit it as hard as I could off the tee. I couldn't wait to knock the pin down every time with my irons. I was taking every shot to the highest

level of like an "E" ticket. I was playing "E" ticket golf. I would hit the drives as hard as I could. I'd do everything and take it to the max, and it wasn't because it was a smart thing to do. It was because I was trying to have the most fun I could, “flooring my car,” so to speak, whenever I could. I mean I wanted to just go 190 m.p.h. playing golf. That's why I was the first guy to consistently start shooting 65 and lower. I was the guy who raised the level of play. And I was able to achieve that because I was playing like I was three guys, like I said. And I was taking it to the max. I was just turning it loose. I didn't really care if I shot bad. I was just trying to have fun. That was my whole thing—I was just having a great time out there!

M: Did you find that you actually played better when you were having fun than when you were struggling or fighting or trying to do something?

J: Yeah. I mean the answer to your question about can a player compete and play, and do it the same way? Some golfers are great practice round players. Some are great practice tee players and bad practice round players and horrendous tournament players. Some get to where they're great on the practice tee, great in practice, and no good in tournaments. And then they get great on the practice tee, great in the first round, and lousy in the last three rounds. And then like Tom Watson says, “I'm great in practice tee, practice rounds, first round, second round, third round, but I can't play the fourth round.” And Tom’s happy because three or four years ago he was only good on the first round. Now he's good on the second and the third round. He's encouraged by the fact that he's able to play that same excellent golf that he's capable of in the first three rounds and he’s working on improving the fourth round. Some players never get to where they can actually play competitively in the tournaments as good as or better than they do on the practice tee. In the 70's, I was a notoriously poor driving range player. I wasn't any good. It was boring to me to just hit balls on a driving range, but I just couldn't wait to do it in competition because that's where the glory, where the real fun and the real limelight was, and I wanted to be there. I wanted to have that thrill of victory, but I lost that after my putting went downhill.

But it's almost magical, or mystical, to play well when “the bell rings.” I mean, some players have that ability. I think that some of it's inherent or God given. I think some players are truly great performers. Some have this magical state, or this energy goes through them, and they just light up and perform at a much higher level than when they're with their friends. They just become turbo charged like the Jerry West's of the world, and the Joe Montana's of the world. It seems like they were born to be “the man.” I think some of it is a form of genius.

M: What do you think prevents you or anyone from staying in that semi-mystical rather joyous state? Best performances or best skills take place “in that zone.” What prevents you or anyone from being in that state all the time?

J: That's a great question. Looking at it through my eyes, just my own experience, I was in my prime at 27-28. Physically I was strong as can be. I was super motivated. I had put in a lot of time and effort and creativity in learning the game, and it was my time to perform. I felt so strong. I remember the feeling I had when I played golf. When I was over the ball I felt like I was weightless. I've done a little bit of study on this and the only common denominator of all great athletes in their prime, in their magical prime, is a sense of weightlessness. I had a feeling that I could almost just float off the ground. I was so powerful in my legs and I had this feeling of confidence. It was a warm feeling inside that I was in control “of the orchestra.” I mean the holes out there were the orchestra, I could just sort of dictate my own energy and “paint my own picture” out there on the course. And I had a lot of ways of playing every shot. I had a lot of “arrows in my quiver.”

I was able to address every situation and find a creative answer. I wasn't trying to fit the square peg in the round hole. I was looking at the shot, and the shot would talk to me. I'd say to myself, ”Fine. I have this shot, let's play it. Let's take it to the max.” And I felt like I could blow away the competition. I got to one point where I basically just felt like if I play well they can't beat me. Now in the majors, I never felt that comfortable, but in the regular tournaments I did. I never got to the total Nirvana state. I won the U.S. Open and the British Open, but was second three times in the Masters. I had other chances to win the British Open and the U.S. Open, but didn't quite pull it off because the majors were so important, and I got a little nervous. But, I've had to dial into this Nirvanic state, or whatever you want to call it, this state of “in the zone,” or “in the groove.” I think that most golfers are only in the zone or in the magical state for a round or two in their life. For me I was into it more than that. I think I was into it because I would listen to my heart. I would listen to the child in me. I did all my homework, but I'd listen to the child in me. I'd listen to that voice that said, “this is a perfect little moment for ‘your Trevino.’ It's a perfect shot for it. Do it!” And I’d do it even though a part of me just wanted to hit my own swing.

You wanted to talk more about the zone, and I can say a couple of things. First of all, there's no formula that's a set formula for everybody to get into the zone. My own recipe for getting into the zone is . . . you’ve got to love it. First of all, you've got to love doing it. You've got to say, “THIS is what I want to do!” That opens up this energy that's out there, **and the strongest energy in the world is love. And if you're doing**

it because you love to do it, then you've got a chance to hook onto a clear channel. If you hook onto that clear channel energy, then you become energized. Your brain is alert, your body feels strong, your intuitions are there, you have clear thinking, you can be the most that you can be.

But if there's fear, fear of failure, or you want it too bad, you want to force it to happen, then it doesn't happen. But if you can just love it and say, "Man this is the greatest. I just love doing this." Then you're gonna have more days where the game comes to you instead of you having to chase after it. Too many people are always chasing after the mystical, magical, Nirvanic state of perfect shot after shot . . . that maybe Ben Hogan used to hit. "Used to hit." It's not really real. But within your own realm of capabilities, and without negative expectation, you just let the shot talk to you. And you remember a shot just like it, you remember what it felt like, and say to yourself, "I can't wait to hit it. It's gonna be fun. I love this game!" Then you've got a chance to reach out and get a little higher in your chances of being magical that day.

M: That's great! What does it mean "to have heart," and where do you get it, and how??

J: Well, are you asking about the people who "have heart" in the game, who love the game no matter what? Win or Lose? Or are you asking about the players who putt well under pressure? It's funny because everybody says, "Oh, he's got heart." But maybe what they're really saying is that a player's got the ability to putt well under pressure. But nobody really knows that for sure. In other words, if you cannot putt under pressure, you can have all the heart in the world and it won't appear that you do because the defining part of this game, 40% of the game, is putting. So if you can be the Cory Paven under pressure, or the Tom Watson when he was younger, you'll say, "Man that guy's got heart, look at the putts he makes and look at how he does. . . whatever." Then maybe "having heart" shows itself mostly through the putting, but good putting also shows what kind of nerves you have.

I also think that "having heart" means you have the will or the desire to win. Do you want to win? Who wants to win the most? It's hard to beat that guy. It's hard to beat the Cory Paven's of the world. You look at Cory Paven; he beat Greg Norman in the U.S. Open in 1995. Cory Paven can't beat Greg Norman! It's like a V.W. racing a corvette!! It just doesn't work, okay. But because Cory can putt under pressure, he sure beat Greg in 1995 and won the Open.