



Annette Estes
Columnist

Professional Development

Remembering Jim Cockman

I am thankful for a lot of things. I'm thankful today that I have this column so I can pay public tribute to a man I am grateful to have known.

Jim Cockman was my mentor and dear friend. I met him and his wife Cathy when I was doing the Children's Miracle Network Telethon for WYFF-TV. After talking with them behind the scenes, I could tell they were good people.

So, when I began my consulting business, I asked Jim if I could meet with him to get ideas about what services CEOs and companies want and need that I could provide. He told me to write down three words: Find, Get, Keep. He said companies want to find the best people, get the best people, and keep the best people and said I could help them achieve the last two with my behavioral and values assessments.

Knowing Jim's behavioral style and especially his values gives me an insight into why he was so successful and loved by so many people. Jim's top three values were Utilitarian, Individualistic, and Social. The first two help explain how he became a powerful and wealthy businessman. The Social value is what made him passionate about serving and helping others.

Jim continued to give me advice and referrals throughout my career. I still have clients today whom he referred to me.

For several months a few years ago, I attended a religious course presented by St. Francis Episcopal Church, which he and Cathy attended. They let us meet every week in their home in Chanticleer. It was during that time I learned of Jim's deep faith in and love for God. I can imagine God has already appointed him to chair some of His heavenly charitable organizations.

Jim and I met together in April of last year so we could catch up and I could get some business advice from him. When I arrived at their home, he and Cathy were watching their daughter Allie take riding lessons. Jim then took me in his Jaguar to lunch at his country club and helped me with a letter I had written to area CEOs asking them to participate in a Hiring Study I was getting ready to conduct.

At lunch, Jim told me about how they decided to adopt Allie and the gleam in his eyes told me how very much he loved her. He said he had prayed for God to find her

a good home while she was still their foster child. He kept getting the message that *they* should adopt her. He laughed and told me how he argued with God that they were too old to adopt a young child. But as always with Jim, God won.

Last March I began a series of columns for this paper on *Leadership* and asked a number of successful people to give me their definition of what makes a great leader. Jim wrote, "Compassion, caring, trust. Integrity is the foundation. People do not care how much you know until they know how much you CARE."

If ever there was a man who walked his talk, it was Jim Cockman.

The last thing Jim did for me was to endorse my first book. His endorsement says, "Annette has distilled this book into a wise and usable blueprint that all of us can benefit from. Internalize it and it will make a difference in your life as well as those you touch."

The last time I saw Jim was when I ran into him at The Commerce Club in Greenville right before Christmas, where we were attending separate meetings. I had some of my books with me and gave him his autographed copy. He was pleased and said he was proud of me. Somehow, his faith in me means even more to me now that he is gone.

On the day we learned of his death, one of the men Jim introduced to me years ago, Leighton Cabbage, invited me to participate in a weekly conference call for his company, Champion Communications. After Leighton and I commiserated about our tragic loss, he said the most comforting words I could have heard to make the tragedy of Jim's death more bearable.

"You can't kill an angel."

Thank you, Jim, for being an angel to so many whose lives are better because of you.

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