

Celebration of Life – Jim Van Allen

November 7, 2017 by John Traynor

Good Morning. We are here today to Celebrate the Life of Jim Van Allen. Before I share some of my thoughts, I want to express my sincere condolences to Marcia, and Jim's family.

While gathering my thoughts for today, many stories and situations came to mind. I knew those thoughts could easily lead to rambling so for your benefit, and to spare you potentially hours of your time on this beautiful morning, I've tried to focus on some meaningful 'Words'.

When I think about Jim Van Allen, a number of simple but very descriptive words come to mind. Here are some of those words, and how I believe they related to Jim.

Unassuming – For as long as I knew him, Jim never put on airs. He was straightforward, and comfortable in his own skin; many folks today claim that, but in Jim's case it was true. He never had the need to pump himself up or to pretend to be more than he was. Jim held no grandiose opinions of himself.

As I grew to know him more personally, through our conversations and meetings, I came to realize that some of his vocabulary came straight from his Iowa roots. For example, in a café or restaurant he would often refer to a hostess or waitress as 'Missy', with no disrespect intended and none perceived. Even harried waitresses would smile. With my lingering NY accent I could never pull that off. Grandchildren were Grandbabies, and Marcia was often referred to as Momo.

Deliberate – Jim didn't jump to rash conclusions. He did his research and then evaluated the facts, *before* coming to a conclusion. He would keep digging. He stuck with things, and he didn't give up because something was difficult or convoluted.

Honesty – In the 6 or 7 years that I knew Jim, I never knew him to lie or even stretch the truth, or to divulge a confidence. How rare is that? Because he was honest, he expected honesty from others. I observed that the easiest way for someone to get on his wrong side was to lie to him. In society today, many of us seem to accept that politicians and bureaucrats don't tell the truth; they misrepresent facts or omit them to suit their own purpose. Jim always saw through the fog of deceit.

Caring – Whether the subject was family or Carefree there was never any doubt about the depth of Jim's feelings. Until very recently I didn't know Marcia well, nor had I met other family members. It's sad how illness or death can bring people together.

Despite his roots and many years of extensive travel, Jim adopted Arizona in general and Carefree in particular. Aside from his family, the Cardinals, the Dbacks, and Carefree all held a place in his heart.

Committed – His every undertaking was approached with the intent to complete & succeed. Jim felt that if it was worth doing it was worth doing well – an old fashioned concept in today's world of instant gratification and self-focus.

Tough - As I've said in my notice of his passing, he followed the rules and expected others to do so as well. This was closely linked with his beliefs on honesty.

Dedicated - Jim, like many of us who discovered Carefree, fell in love. Perhaps that sounds corny or old fashioned but it is true. There was never a day since I first met him, that he wasn't wearing something that said Carefree - a hat, a pin, [often at least one of each] just something to communicate his feelings without words.

By now you have heard the many ways Jim Van Allen dedicated his personal time, not only to Carefree, but to our foothills communities in general, year after year. Here are some of the ways:

Countless hours, as a member of the Posse, patrolling our neighborhoods;
Many hours spent actually speaking with commercial property owners and businesses, long before it became 'a thing to do';
Volunteer work for the Chamber, and Chamber events;
Volunteer work for the town, often spending [what seemed to me] many boring hours manning information booths to 'sell' Carefree;
Dedication to the Carefree Christmas Festivals, the Pumpkin Festivals, the Thunderbird and Magic Bird Art shows, and on and on.

Regardless of the chore or event, Jim always asked where folks were from and was happy to tell them about Carefree and to answer all of their questions. Because of his extensive professional travels, he could almost always relate to people and talk about their home towns, in detail!

As a member of the Carefree Town Council, Jim took his responsibility very seriously. While serving on the Council, he never forgot about the people who elected him.

That Saturday, early in October, Carefree lost a dedicated friend and protector. I did as well.

