

A Eulogy for Lewis Ditman

by

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One of the things I so regret in eulogizing Lewis Ditman is that there are so few left who really knew him. In the eight years or so since his retirement, there have been "generations" of students, and numbers of faculty and staff who are here now, that never knew this unique person. But we, of the "older" generation have come to remember, and pay our respects to one who was himself respectable.

To remember Louie is so easy. I recall the words of Reverend Tim Halverson who was his pastor when he said, "In a world gone bland, where everyone is becoming more alike, Louie was different." Is it not natural then to remember one such as he? We shall remember his virtues, and I believe it is fitting here to recall the good in him. It is often said that at a time such as this that to do so, to extol the virtues of one upon his passing is to no avail. I say it is. Not to add or detract from his life, for what he was, and the life he led is now a page in history for all to see and we can neither add nor detract from it. It is my purpose to examine the good things in Louie for the benefit of those who remain, that we may see, that we may emulate and therefore be the better for having known him and for coming together on this occasion.

A little over 22 years ago I had my first abrupt meeting with him. I was young, I was new here, I was afraid of what was ahead for me, but yet in a while I sensed that he could communicate. Not just with the written or spoken word, and he could use these in their most eloquent fashion, but he could communicate with a sense, with an abstract quality that until now has been difficult to define. Recently I have found some words by Henry David Thoreau and having read them, realized that this was the vehicle with which I could define his very

keen sense of communication.

"Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

I stepped to a different drummer. Yet he knew that before he could truly reach me, he had to hear the music to which I marched. He could and he did. This was a first for me, so I knew that I had found someone very unique. As time went on, it became obvious that he heard the tempo that set the pace of many who looked to him for help. The students who studied, the people who looked to him for professional help, to us here, he heard that tattoo that we all stepped to. It was what he had to do to understand the problems we faced and thereby he knew how to walk beside us all.

Again, I borrow from the words of his preacher when I say he had a unique sense of love for people. His keen sense of communication was the vehicle for his understanding of us, but his abiding love was his driving force. All of us here know of his willingness to give of himself, and it was because he loved us. His great capacity to love extended beyond his ability to love people. He loved God's good earth. The things of nature that are beautiful and mysterious he had deep respect and reverence, and my friends, I know because he has told me, he loved this land that gave him breath and life.

So, we pause to pay respect and say farewell to one who loved us. We mourn his passing but rejoice that he lived among us, that in a sense he still lives with us, for a little of him remains in those whose lives he touched.

His life and passing are probably best described by words from the poem, "Thanatopsis" by William Cullen Bryant. "So live that when thy summons come to join that innumerable caravan which moves to that mysterious realm where each shall take his chamber in the silent halls of death. Go thou not like the

quarry slave at night, scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, as one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams".

So it was that Louie lived, and so it was the way he quietly slipped into eternity.