

The Ditch Digger

From Cape Cod Times

Sometimes we wouldn't even talk for a while but it didn't matter. We knew what we were thinking. Neither one of us needed to prove anything. Silence was proof enough.

Little by little I got to know a great man

Years before, he had called me looking for someone in my line of work to handle a certain piece of business. Although he didn't like my answering machine, he agreed to a discussion. He said to meet him at a large school just off the highway. I figured it was just a convenient spot.

When he showed up for the meeting I thought he was the maintenance man.

We were having trouble holding a conversation in the hallway so he decided we needed an office. When he walked right by the secretaries and straight into the top mans office without knocking, I knew he wasn't the janitor.

I asked him how come the head of the school gave him his office on a moments notice and he said simply " Me and some other guys got the place built".

The School was the Harwich Tech School and last year numerous students graduated prepared for careers in many fields. Over the past 25 years, the school has graduated countless career path graduates.

He had arranged the purchase of the land for the school and is generally described as the father of the operation. He passed the glory for the success of getting the school built to another man who had agreed to sell the land cheap making it all possible. But it was he who chaired the school committee, the architecural committee and was involved in every aspect. All from behind the scenes, out of the limelight, for 30 years.

I knew nothing of this at the time and was only concerned with how I was pretty sure he was going to be a tough customer. He was driving a tough bargain with a major national franchise who wanted one of his properties and he didn't really care if they got it or not. He also made it plain that my advice was secondary to his desired results. They eventually met all his demands.

In the course working for this man, it became clear that right was right and not much else mattered. Most of the time, most of the people will flinch a little around the money. Not this guy. He had been very successful much earlier in his life and yet the dollars didn't seem to matter so much as the rightness of a thing. Despite his significant accumulations from shrewd property investments, he continued to head a public service outfit, like his father before him and his son after. It's not a white shirt and tie organization - they operate from trucks and frequently use shovels in the everyday couse of business.

Eventually our business was concluded and we came to sitting together now and then. There was the profound fellowship of the older man and the younger.

He never once spoke of his contributions but we talked rather of business and how people had helped him when he was starting up his home building - the love of his life.

When someone passes on people tend to bring out the cliches. Let's just say there probably won't be another like Oscar W. Doane, Jr.