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CHAPTER

# 16

## The Best Legacy

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I drove slowly down the highway, paying as little attention to the road as I dared. My mind was a thousand miles away. The circumstances of our trip had that sort of effect on both Randy and I. We were in deep and joyful thoughts. Our friend – our colleague – had passed on. We were on our way to his memorial service.

Phil had been a marvelous individual. I smiled as I thought of the many times we had joked and laughed together. He had an incredible sense of humor. He was always upbeat, regardless of the circumstances; he saw the sunny side of everything. I knew I was a better man for having known him.

Randy interrupted my thoughts. We chatted about the good times and exchanged our favorite memories of Phil. Then silence. We drove for miles with this pattern – talk, then quiet reflection.

Suddenly, Randy turned towards me and said, “No matter how you look at it, Phil was one guy you could always count on. His word was solid – whenever he said he was going to do something, you knew it was as good as done.”

“You’re absolutely right,” I replied. “You’ve totally summed up the greatest compliment that could be paid to Phil. I can’t begin to count the number of times he came through for his family and many friends – people like you and me.”

He had always demonstrated tremendous fortitude by sticking to his word, often at the expense of his own personal gain. He was the perfect example of a man who exemplified integrity, faithfulness and loyalty. I couldn’t help but wonder if I could ever be viewed in the same light.

As I reflected on the legacy he’d left behind, I was overwhelmed with a deep feeling of appreciation for the influence he’d had in our lives. Yes, it was a feeling I’d had many a time during our friendship. Life was genuinely better for all of us because of his example.

It was no wonder that he was such a success, both as a parent

and a leader in business. He wasn't a millionaire in the financial sense, but he was in terms of the things that really mattered – family, friends, principles, health, and especially, happiness.

The ideal mentor, Phil exemplified what was important in life. Now, don't get me wrong – he was a business success too, but never flaunted that or anything else – he had too much respect for us – his friends.

It was amazing. I suddenly remembered a business convention I'd attended with Phil. In the afternoon between seminars, he and I were sitting in the hotel lobby relaxing. We suddenly found ourselves surrounded with fellow conventioners, all past employees of Phil's. Many had gone on to own their own businesses or manage the businesses of his direct competitors.

They kibitzed and joked together like the old friends they were. Phil seemed to genuinely enjoy their company. Later, he bragged to me, with great pride, about the successes that each of them had achieved.

I was stunned that he would say that. I even remember his exact words to me, because I couldn't believe that someone would think that way. He said: "They were great students. They make me proud. Evidently, I must have taught them something right, or they couldn't have gone on to what they're doing now."

It was at that moment that I recognized Phil for the Sage he was. His attitude inspired me to always look at the positive side of things, for as he said, "You've got to make lemonade out of the lemons or you'll end up like the rest of them – a sourpuss."

Yes. We were all better off for having known Phil. I smiled at the thought of his firm handshake. Even though we'd been friends for a long time, Phil loved to greet me and all of his friends with a handshake. It demonstrated his genuine pleasure to see us again.

Internationally recognized for excellence in his industry, Phil was much more than the *run of the mill* local franchise operator

everyone thought he was. He was astute, careful, caring and honest, but especially, he was committed. Everyone who worked with him knew without a doubt that they could have total faith in his word. His passion for commitment made him a solid pillar for all of us to emulate.

I remembered another occasion when his example deeply touched me. I was at one of his stores and overheard him talking with his manager.

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