



## **Working on your legacy**

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

When I was younger I had a marvelous mentor named John Savage. He is now deceased, but he was one of the most amazing men I have ever met. His teaching and inspiration is with me every day. John was the number one life insurance salesman in the state of Ohio, but you never would have known about it by his behavior. His life was all about making a difference for other people.

I'll give you an example of his generosity. Once John was in a meeting and someone he had never seen before burst into the room. The intruder yelled, "My wife is having a baby and I need a car right now!" "Take mine", said John and threw him the keys. Wow, talk about trust and generosity. This was just one example of this man's incredible leadership.

Once I asked John why he was so supportive, kind and inspirational to other people, "Oh, I want a statue," he said with a smile. Then he added, "They don't build statues for critics. Ralph Nader will never get a statue." I laughed out loud. But there is a lot of truth to what John Savage said to me that day. A good way to tell if you are acting like a leader is to ask yourself, "If I died right now would they be inspired enough to build a statue of me?" In my opinion, if the answer to that question is "no", then you may not be living up to your capability.

I often ask my clients, "What do you want them to say about you when you are gone? And what are you doing about it today?" In my opinion we have an obligation to stretch ourselves to the limit every day in service of others. There are so many problems in this world that we all have to pull together if we are going to fix them. We have to live up to our God-given potential.

John Savage was such a man. Let me share with you some more about his greatness. Hopefully it will inspire you to live up to your own potential. First of all John cared deeply about other people. Whenever he sold me insurance, we never talked about insurance. We talked about me. He wanted to know what mattered to me. He wanted to know what my hopes and dreams were, and he wanted to help me make them come true.

I didn't buy insurance from him because he had the best products. I bought from him because I knew he cared about me. For instance, he would always tell me that I could call him any time if I just needed someone to listen to me. So, about a month later I decided to take him up on his offer. I called him at his office because I was really feeling down and asked him if he had any time to just listen to me. He told me that he not only had time, but wondered if I would like to join him at a University of Toledo basketball game that night. I was thrilled. I met him at his house and he made me feel that I was the most important person in the world that evening. As we watched the game together my problems seemed to melt away because he cared about me so much and was so willing to invest in me.

Another great quality of his was humility. He had a tremendous sense of humor, and he was always the butt of his own jokes. One time he was introducing my dad to a friend at church. This is what he said, "My friend Don Anderson is brilliant. He has a Ph.D. in biochemistry. All the way through graduate school he only got one B, one B! That is amazing." Then he added, "I only got one B in college too..., but that was my highest grade!"

I am not ashamed to say that I loved John Savage. He made an enormous impact upon me and challenged me to stretch myself to the limits. I hope that some day I will be able to make a contribution similar to his. Oh and by the way, John Savage got his statue. Savage Arena at the University of Toledo is now named after him and I understand there is a large statue of him in front of the arena. John Savage lived his life as a great leader should. He got what he deserved. What about you? Are you earning your statue?