

## Tribute to Nigel Parker... Co-worker and Friend

**Friday, Feb. 12, 2010**

I asked the staff of the Board of Pensions of the Church of God, where Nigel faithfully served hand in hand with us for seven years, to list some words and phrases that describe Nigel Parker:

Here are a few of those....

Co-worker, colleague, partner, caring father, bodyguard, loving husband, culinary expert, uncompromising friend, minister to the disenfranchised, straight-shooter, free spirited, direct...sometimes to the ragged edge, intelligent, a lifelong student, Certified Financial Planner, Chartered Financial Consultant, coach, teacher, real, Brit, Soldier for the Queen Mother, storyteller, creative speller, compassionate, protector, Servanthood Saturday servant...

When leaving Nigel's presence you were wished well with a..."Later Mate," "Take Care Mate," "Thanks Mate,"

sensitive, honest, unwavering, servant hearted, unflappable, steady, rock solid.

"BIG" in everyway. A big presence; big physically, big hearted and big spiritually.

Here are some brief descriptive phrases about Nigel:

Nigel had his own version of English grammar (King's English or the American version... it didn't matter).

Owned up when he messed up..."I was wrong, and I'm sorry".

Faithful and dedicated to his Friendship Class friends.

A skilled "ice-breaker" in any stuffy gathering.

Put life into any "sleepy-eyed conference". One might not want to sit next to Nigel if one wanted to be "present but not noticed".

Knew how to select a great restaurant. Especially loved Indian cuisine.

Comfortable up-front, a role for which he was created.

Never complained about his barnmobile (the used SUV the Board provided for Nigel which contained a "farm like" fragrance).

Really spoke to the Lord when he prayed.

I've been asked at times, "What's it like to work with Nigel?" My best description was... suppose you have a favorite recipe and you mix the ingredients and everything is just a certain way; perhaps how you like it and are used to and then someone comes up and pours a bottle of Tabasco sauce in the bowl. Nigel changes the entire dynamic of the recipe. Nigel was the Tabasco sauce in our organization bringing spice, life, vitality and zest.

Here are a few remembrances of daily life in our office with Nigel:

"Good morning Ladies!"

"Ladies of Spain, we adore you"

Nigel made it a point to tell Judi Hall when he was included in a meeting in the board room that she wasn't invited to.

Why is the market up? "More buyers than sellers"

Why is the market down? "More sellers than buyers"

Nigel snoring in his lawn chair at lunchtime

Or, in the summer, sitting in his lawn chair behind the office in the sun

Carrot peelings and dirty peeler on the kitchen counter

Slim Fast in the fridge

The aroma of warmed-up leftovers for some lunches

Surprise ice cream or candy treats courtesy of Nigel

The wrappings from reams of paper that never quite seemed to find their way to the trash can

Humming and singing while walking through the office...regardless of what was going on. Tune usually covered at least three keys.

Dropping the toilet seat...Could always tell it was Nigel in the restroom.

ALWAYS brushed the snow off our cars in the parking lot... whether feeling good or not. Brushed the snow off for us his last day at the office.

Rugby players stopping by or rapping on Nigel's window or door on their way to class

Hollering from his office... "How do you spell \_\_\_\_\_?"

All of our staff agreed that Nigel was one of the most unique persons we have ever known. None of us ever remember him raising his voice (well, his voice was always loud), but he never raised his voice in anger or frustration. Ever. His personality was consistent and you knew you could count on him in any situation. He did not have down days. He was always on his game and confident he could help those who were looking to him for assistance. We learned so much from him.

Often you would find Nigel on a quest to help on a weekend outreach project or help a family that needed assistance with physical things. He enjoyed using his strength and size to get things done. I (Jeff) personally remember being with him on a clean-up project at

a local ministry. We had finished most of the work, but there were some hedges, about ten feet high, that needed to be trimmed and we did not have a ladder. I recall staring at those bushes with the hedge trimmers in my hand not knowing what to do. Without warning, from behind I'm thrust into the air and land on a set of massive shoulders and suddenly I'm up near the top of the bushes. I trimmed that long row of hedges perfectly as Nigel walked along with me perched on his neck. Kathryn does not know this until now...but that was about a week after Nigel had his back surgery.

Nigel's size and strength were part of what made him bigger than life. A rugged rugby player with massive legs, arms and shoulders who, when you bumped him, felt like bumping a brick wall. It was so easy to take comfort in the physical strength of the man knowing that he always had your best interests at heart.

But all who met him quickly realized there was so much more. This was a guy whose heart was much bigger than his physical size by far. Our staff members have recalled the uncountable times Nigel would help people and go the extra mile to make certain they were taken care of. He loved people and particularly loved pastors and missionaries. He would do anything in his power to help the people our organization ministers to. His accent, humor, and blunt take-no-prisoners approach endeared him immediately to people of all varieties.

Nigel and I traveled thousands of miles together in cars and on planes; slept in unusual places and even had to sleep in the same bed once (sorry Kathryn). We ate some interesting food and enjoyed lots of meals together. When you spend that much time with a person, you truly know them at a gut level. I can say with all certainty that his love for the Lord was as deep as anything I know. His zeal when he shared his personal testimony (often in public), for the way in which the Lord intersected his path, in a foreign country, with a pretty, young Church girl from Chesterfield, Indiana who then introduced him to Christ was mesmerizing. And the life change that he displayed in his daily living; that of a rough and tumble soldier, wise in the ways of the world, who turned over his entire heart and soul to Jesus Christ is a story all of us who love him celebrate.

Nigel was a breath of fresh air every single day. His ability to speak the unvarnished truth made it easy to know where he stood and you didn't have to guess. Honesty and integrity were important characteristics that Nigel possessed and expected in others. For a long time it galled me that he could get up in front of a group of ministers and say things with that English accent and a smile that, if I said the same thing, I would have been fired. It didn't seem quite fair. But it was awesome, powerful and God used his humor and larger than life presence for positive influence.

Proverbs 10:9 *A man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.* Nigel walked securely each and every day. And those of us who worked with him knew him well by spending many hours each week with him. Honesty and integrity describe Nigel.

Nigel was also a man of great intellect. His ability to absorb and understand complex financial concepts was uncanny. On numerous occasions he would discover improvements or modifications that improved our work. Often his ideas were adopted by our consultants, who are some of the brightest minds in the financial realm. Nigel also was self taught in areas of technology. We would find ourselves asking Nigel to solve computer or technological problems and he relished the chance to take on the challenge. He was a very wise man.

The Word tells us *By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.* This passage holds true for both the converted house that we use as an office on East 7<sup>th</sup> Street and true for Nigel's own home which contain his beautiful treasures: Kathryn, Jake, and Libby.

Nigel showed us how to love your family. His wasn't a gushy display, but rather shown in innumerable tangible ways. I'm stating the obvious to everyone in this room, but Kathryn and Nigel were a team. Kathryn's gifts of hospitality paired perfectly with Nigel's gifts. They provided care and graciousness to so many people, and Kathryn often has prepared elaborate meals and events for our Trustees and for pastor groups. Simply incredible.

Nigel's pride for Jake and Libby ran deep. There was nothing Nigel believed Jake couldn't do; especially when it involved a sophisticated computer, graphics and video. And his pride for Libby and her blossoming leadership skills, including her present leadership on the International Youth Convention Planning Committee made him beam. He treasured family. He loved being with John and Janice and the boys. And his love for his Mum and for his mother-in-law were incredible. He openly displayed his love and appreciation in front of us for Janet. He even had a unique term of endearment for Janet that probably half of us here know and I'm not telling the rest of you.

We thank God for caring about us enough to share this giant of a man with us, even for too short a season, who showed us how to live large. We are so much the better for it.

Of Nigel's many favorite sayings, one that we especially liked is "All that matters at the end of the day is the *Scores on the Doors!*" He loved to follow the investment markets and understood them well as a result of his training and his time with Wells Fargo Investments (some of his friends from Wells are here). In long-term planning Nigel's point was that the ups and downs during the day weren't important. It was how the market ended that counted. Well, Nigel...today the "score is on the door"... and the Master has temporarily closed the market ... and the message says "Well done good and faithful servant."

We love you more than you can know. And we'll see you again soon, Mate.