

Remembering Jim Bentley

In memory of Jim Bentley
by Dr. Jennifer Hamilton

with Doug Van Slembrouck & the IT department

Jim Bentley worked at Rochester College for just over one year. Every day I passed his office on the way to mine down the hall. Yet, it wasn't until very recently I understood just how much a part of this campus Jim had become. Initially, his job was director of the IT department, but his responsibilities broadened to cover maintenance and construction projects because of his leadership and ability to get jobs done with speed and professionalism. But more significant than these accomplishments is the way that Jim made a difference in the lives of people around him.

I gathered with the IT department—Jayson Rainsberger, Will Waters, Mark Johnson, Matt Miller, Delyan Raychev and Doug Van Slembrouck—and I asked them to tell me what it was like working with Jim. The stories began, and they taught me about Jim through their laughter, thoughtful moments, and loving respect.

Mark remembers hearing that they were getting a new boss in January of 2004, and accepting this news with a bit of trepidation, for the last thing they wanted was an outsider to come and try to “sort them out.” Yet, the men look back on that time and all agree that Jim was the best thing to happen to their department. Knowledgeable in his field, Jim brought much more than technical skills to the IT department. From day one, Jim treated his team like professionals who wanted to do their job well. Building from that foundation of respect, Jim began raising expectations not only for their performance, but also for campus relations.

Jim led by example. Mark recalls a day when a frustrated student sought Jim's help for an issue that was not his to solve. Jim listened to her, helped her calm down and

solved the problem anyway. Moments like this proved that people are the IT department's business. Likewise, Jayson remembers Jim walking his team out at the end of every day. Jim's unassuming acts of kindness extended far beyond his workgroup, across the rest of the campus.

Jim's caring attitude and enabling management style allowed him to maintain high expectations for his department. Under Jim's supervision, the department completely overhauled the computer systems at the College, updated technology in many of the classrooms and participated in the completion of the Richardson Center and Theatre.

“Jim completely changed my outlook on professionalism. His management style was to enable and use people's gifts. He would tell us, ‘Dream big. Figure out what the goal is and work backwards from there,’” Will commented.

“Jim defined what a professional should be. My previous experience in another culture showed me that jobs were just that—jobs. Jim gave freedom to get things done, and he was concerned how the campus viewed his group,” Delyan added.

The stories continued, and I realized that in a short article I could only give a hint of what Jim means to the men in his department, indeed to the campus as a whole. As our conversation wound down, the closing comments moved me as the guys recalled what meant most to them.

“What he taught us is lasting. He raised us to another level,” Delyan said.

“A great testament to Jim is we continue to do our jobs, and we're doing it well...It's like he trained us for this exact situation,” Matt finished.

Jim's legacy remains with us, and we will remember him. ●

In Memoriam

The College mourns the death of longtime friend and supporter **Royce Dickinson, Jr.**, 48, who passed away on June 4. Royce ('75) and his brother Edward ('79) were involved in a serious motorcycle accident on May 30 in the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas. Ed is recovering from severe injuries. Royce preached for the Plymouth Church of Christ and was an adjunct faculty member in biblical studies. Additionally, he sat on the planning committee for Sermon Seminar.

Lester Allen, Sr., 81, passed away on January 2, 2005. After serving in the Navy during World War II, Allen entered the ministry and preached for over forty years throughout Michigan. A strong supporter of Christian education, Allen worked with the original board of trustees at the College and later served as public relations director.

January brought news that another long time friend of the College from Toledo had passed away. **Iola Rummel** was a charter member of the Associates, who worked tirelessly on their behalf through the Echo Meadows congregation in Oregon, Ohio. Recently, Sue Garner, Iola's daughter sent the college her original Associates Charter Membership Card issued by North Central Christian College. Iola's husband, Ronald, had served as a college trustee. The generosity of the Rummels led to the establishment of the Ronald and Iola Rummel Endowed Scholarship, which benefits a student from the Toledo area.

Jim Bentley died of a sudden and massive heart attack on February 5, 2005. He is survived by his wife, Kim, and daughters, Shauna and Taylor, ages 16 and 14.

Jennifer Hamilton is the dean of the College of Arts and Science. She recently received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland.