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April 30, 2011

NORM

At Norm's Funeral Service this past week he was referred to no less than three times as being a *'Great Listener'*. Although I haven't known him all that long --- I couldn't agree more.

Norm was the kind of guy who you didn't need to know for a long time in order to know him well. While friendships are generally forged over extended periods by people sharing a lot of time together --- with Norm that was optional, not required. Norm made you feel at ease the first time you met him.

For a guy who was so full of interesting stories – it is a little surprising that he was also a great listener. Maybe that has something to do with how he created friendships so easily and so well. The truth of the matter is that listening is actually more difficult than speaking. Telling a story is easy – really listening is surprisingly tough to do. Norm knew better than anyone I've met that all he had to do was to genuinely listen to someone to show that he cared. As simple as that sounds – it is not all that common. Most of us take turns talking – which is very different than listening. How many of us are guilty of being so preoccupied with what we are going to say in response to what someone else says that while we certainly *'hear'* them – we are not really *'listening'* – we are planning! I confess – I am oftentimes one of those people. Not Norm though.

He didn't care what you did – he cared about who you are. For him it was as much about *'being'* as it was *'doing'* Norm didn't trust someone based on what they did --- but because of who they are. I only wish there had been more time to get to know him even better.

Every day I am fortunate to meet with new and different people looking at future options for themselves or for a loved one. There is just no end to the number of interesting people out there and it is a real privilege to get to know their stories. Very often when people arrive for a tour they really expect that the tour is about seeing a building and learning about services and amenities. That is what they expect and that might be what they are used to – but that isn't what happens. While our tour certainly involves the *'building'* that isn't what is really important. Whether they know it or not what they are really discovering is whether this place feels right to them in terms of values, attitudes and approaches. From my side I'm interested in knowing their needs and expectations In order to give informed and honest advice as to whether a move to our place at this time makes sense for them. It is a kind of dance where the tour is a wonderful backdrop that facilitates some great discussion. It's not at all about selling anything --- it's all about listening.

How many of us grew up being told that *'God gave us two ears and only one mouth so that we should listen twice as much as we speak'*? It sometimes seems that the world is full of those who speak and very few who listen. We have become a very impatient society who are somehow afraid that if we don't say something right away that we will forget to ever say it.

I only know one person who actually has reason to be afraid of silence – and that is none other than the *'Voice of the Lakes Region'* Allan Harrison. When you are broadcasting 'dead air' is a problem --- and unfortunately many of us treat silence the same way in personal conversation. Silence makes us nervous and we rush in to fill that void with words. Norm was never rushed with his responses. A break in the conversation was just a break in the conversation.

There are a lot of things that I will remember and appreciate about Norm --- but towards the top of that list will of what a great listener he was!

Age Well!

Howard Chandler has worked in elder services for over 35 years and is Vice-President of Meredith Bay Colony Club along with being a Partner of White Mountain Eldercare Solutions. Your comments are always appreciated.

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