

Stephen Grimes, August 20, 2014

It was either shortly before graduating as a clinical engineer from Purdue in 1974 or very shortly thereafter, I came to appreciate the work of Joel Nobel and his ECRI team. I started the first clinical engineering program in a two hospital system in Cincinnati (totaling 650 beds) and ECRI's Health Devices became my "bible." I remember asking my incredulous boss for the "hundreds of dollars" to subscribe ... but my enthusiasm for the relatively new service must have won him over. If subscribing to ECRI's Health Devices and getting phone access to their talent had been the extent of my involvement with Joel's organization, I am sure that would have been sufficient for me to be praising the incubating role Joel and ECRI played in the early days of our industry.

But two years later I found myself in Plymouth Meeting working at ECRI. I only worked there (in what we referred to as "the lab") for 3 years but thanks to Joel and the talent he could attract, I believe they were the most formative of any time in my career.

Joel was probably the first real genius I met ... though there were unquestionably others on his team (who remembers Guy Knickerbocker?). As it is with so many great geniuses, I soon learned Joel had idiosyncrasies that would forever make him an icon and a legend. Many of my past and current ECRI friends will remember some (or most) of the following:

- always wearing OR "greens" and with his flak jacket serving as an overcoat ... He didn't like to go out of the "lab" often and it was probably 2 years when he and I did a speaking engagement together and he was forced to wear a jacket and tie.
- equipping the company Toyota Cressida wagons with survival gear and supplies ... complete with machetes
- conducting an interview from under his desk with a flummoxed job candidate (who didn't get the job)
- having telephones installed in the bathroom stalls
- driving around the office campus in his full sized farm tractor
- dropping in on orientation for a new group of technicians to give classic career advice (which though humorous now, I can't repeat)
- hiring a violinist during one holiday period to stroll up and down between our cubicles to play holiday music
- on one holiday giving each member of the staff a smoke alarm and on another, a fire extinguisher (practical gifts which left no doubt as to his concerns for our safety)

I will miss Joel. I will miss the idiosyncrasies that endeared him to us and the genius that inspired us. I loved him for all of it and I will be always be grateful to him for giving us the extended ECRI family ... a family whose talent was synergistic and that continues to grow to this day.

Joel ... you left this world a much, much better place. Who can aspire to more? Thank you and God speed.