

Cramer Reed Memorial Service

Hughes Metropolitan Complex

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Geney Reed asked a few people to make written comments about Cramer. Some were long others brief, but all of them unique to the person's relationship with Cramer. Reading these comments was a very poignant experience for me. I will try to summarize these expressions and show how in their totality they speak to the life of Cramer Reed.

We do not have to struggle in this respect with the psychologies of personality that exist in the academic world. It is enough to know that from high school on, the person we know as Cramer Reed was taking recognizable shape. The core values in place then served him well, and remained at the forefront of his long and productive life.

We see in this picture a young man of intelligence, seriousness of purpose and incredible energy. His classmates at North High elected him as their class president every year. He attended the University of Wichita and graduated as a senior honor man, serving again as class president each year. This scenario was repeated in medical school. If you did not know Cramer you might think of him as a budding politician. Actually he was a wonderful politician. In his life, though, he did not run for office. Think about running against Cramer for a public office! He would have felt terrible running over his opponents. People sought him out because of his warmth, his recognized academic ability, and his infectious faith in others.

Our respondents say that Cramer possessed charm, grace and wit, qualities that were underpinned by a personal humility. People were very aware of Cramer's real sense of humility, not anything he dwelled on, but a reason why so few people were jealous of him.

To associate with Cramer, one had to leave pettiness behind. His focus centered on things that mattered, issues that needed to be addressed, accomplishments that awaited vision and effort. He often saw possibilities others did not see initially.

Lena Mae Brooks says that she and Cramer became fast friends 76 years ago at North High. "Since that time he has been by my side giving support each time I have

needed it.” She said quite convincingly that Cramer has been the most beloved man in Wichita. The help he has given her he has given to everyone in his vast array of connections.

Certainly another dominant characteristic of Cramer’s was an ethic of caring, empathy, a true sense of compassion for people. Friend Alma Fulton said that sixty years ago in the midst of her nursing studies, a surgeon verbally mistreated her to the extent that she began to doubt her ability to be a good nurse. Perhaps she should drop out. Cramer heard about this, found her and pulled her aside, gave her reassurance and told her to stay the course. Sometimes Cramer would pat your arm as he was making his point and I can see him say, ”Alma you will be a fine nurse.” As she began a long career in nursing she recognized immediately the respect Cramer had among nurses. He never had to demand respect because he had earned it by his competence and his concern for staff. As Dr. Norman Pullman says, “it was a privilege to have him call you friend.”

Cramer exhibited unbelievably cordial manners. He was gracious in all things. Women respondents, and every woman I know, who also knew Cramer, hold him up as a model. His artful good manners were a Cramer Reed trademark, wholly natural and never manipulative.

The whole of Cramer’s life is a byproduct of these personality characteristics. Many of them on any given day would characterize all of us, their use a useful part of our repertoire. Cramer seemed to wear them everyday like an old suit that is magically made chic no matter the year. Some effective values are timeless, their uses of inestimable worth.

Getting people to work together effectively is no guarantee of it ever happening as we all know. Sometimes we bring baggage, sometimes others bring theirs. This was not a wise thing to do around Cramer. It might well result in a cordial but direct civics discussion about the goodness in everyone, and how important it is never to yield to our lesser self. Jerry Kerschen, Jim Moore and Lorene Valentine saw this call for better behavior to be an important mentoring role for Cramer. Did he have to work at it or did this sense of mutuality just come easily? We will never know and that is the point.

People called Cramer for political advice, help in fund-raising for worthy causes, just a moment to consider a serious personal matter or to ask for medical advice often for a member of the person’s family. I am sure there were times when Cramer wished he had

gone into Internal Medicine! He found a way in most instances to deal with these interruptions. I think in truth he looked at this as no interruption at all, but rather a part of what was a daily routine for him.

Cramer taught Bob O'Brien the importance of associating oneself with people whose values were of a high order, to respect and help others, and how this behavior would yield rich rewards.

Cramer knew that by his personal efforts other people could succeed. This became an integral part of his professional and personal life, an aspect of his overall sense of moral purpose. Writing, calling, recommending, getting people together in common cause, were tools used thousands of times since his days at North High where he was an adolescent doing the same kinds of things for people. Marni Vliet wonders if anyone in our city has nurtured more careers than Cramer, who have provided advice in the most dire of circumstances. Most respondents convey the view that Cramer moved their ethical behavior a notch higher.

These are unsung personal stories. Yes we know a lot of such stories but they very likely represent only the merest fraction. Remember, this was a man who left for work at 5:30 a.m., not returning home until evening. I think if we had the ability to put these stories in the context of those long days and decades of effort, one would see an accomplishment of unbelievable potency.

Peter Cohen notes that according to some scholars the rarest of exceptional leaders lead through "a paradoxical blend of deep humility and intense personal resolve." In a conversation with Cramer on this topic, Cramer inquired whether Peter had ever met a leader like that. He responded: "Yes, I have met one such person and I am talking to him right now." Cramer tended to fend off such comments but it was my experience that he never just dismissed goodwill coming his way. Peter's remarkable statement probably earned him one of those pats on the arm.

Cramer's pioneer colleague in urology practice, Bill Browning, makes the distinction between the people Cramer helped and the institution building which is an important but separate part of his legacy. After one of his several retirements, he became the first dean of the College of Health Professions at WSU. It operated out of Fairmount Towers a student residence hall. Occasionally I would see Cramer over there, with a student room as the dean's office. The only health care elements on the WSU Campus at

that time were a two-year dental hygiene program, and the onset of assuming responsibilities for a four-year nursing program. Today the college is housed in Ahlberg Hall and has 1,500 students in a dozen programs.

When the decision was made to bring a clinical branch of the University of Kansas School of Medicine to Wichita, one name surfaced as the founding dean. Cramer Reed later became the first Vice Chancellor. The medical school was brought to life by Cramer. It was not without controversy. I know that he gave a tremendous effort to put the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita on solid footing, assembling a talented staff and physicians who brought excellence almost from the beginning.

Anyone coming to the campus on Hillside sees Health Strategies, another of the institutional building legacies of Cramer.

Larksfield Place is, in my mind, the crown jewel of the building achievements of Cramer Reed. He set out to develop a retirement community, which stressed positive physical and intellectual activities in an environment of excellence. The Cramer Reed Center at Larksfield is representative of the best of such facilities in the nation. Larksfield residents as he viewed them should not accept a diminished lifestyle as they move to the facility.

Even Cramer was impressed by how this has worked out. In the twenty years since Larksfield Place was built, 16 residents have lived in their apartments to the age of 100 and beyond. One hundred years of independent living!

Some of his institutional building accomplishments came in the form of programs. Cramer was the founder of the Shepherd's Center, at East Heights Methodist, for example.

I once accepted an opportunity to serve as a board member for Lifeline. During the orientation program for new members, we were told that Lifeline was initiated in Wichita by Dr. Cramer Reed.

I bugged him on that one. I told Cramer I was getting assignments on agency boards which he began. How could this be? Are you inventing these stories? He smiled, shrugged and patted me on the arm. Two weeks later, I attended a Rotary luncheon and as a matter of coincidence sat by Cramer. I don't remember the speaker's message, exactly, except that on one occasion he referred to the famous OK Corral, of the movie

“Gun fight at the OK Corral.” As the speaker continued, Cramer leaned over and said to me, “I’m not sure you are aware of it, Jim, but I created the OK Corral.”

This list could go on, even though I have never actually seen a resume of Cramer Reed. When I do, I will surely find glaring omissions. We would all suffer that fate, I’m sure.

In lives like Cramer’s, there is a vast web of relationships and influences invisible to all but a few. Cramer on occasion could do things no one else could do, because of the depth and breadth of his reaches, influence earned over long years.

Communities are made better because of such men and women. Fran Jabara has correctly noted that it seems as though Cramer retired six or eight times, each time to re-emerge in a substantially new way, using his older knowledge, adding energy and new ideas, gathering more names, making more plans.

Here is one example: When Phil Frick agreed to serve as a full-time person to get Exploration Place off the ground, Cramer was the first person he called. Why? Phil was wondering whether Velma Wallace might conceivably have an interest in Exploration Place. Why call Cramer Reed? Apparently he knew that Cramer and Geney were close friends of Velma Wallace. In the last days of Dwane Wallace, Velma asked him who he would like to have spoken at his memorial service. Dwane said without hesitation, “Cramer Reed.” In the years that have followed the loss of Dwane Wallace, the Reeds and Velma have always been very close friends.

Cramer promised to think about it and approach Velma if that seemed appropriate. He made the call and Velma was interested. The result was a gift of such magnitude it anchored the entire project. Velma has often said with a smile that “Cramer was the only one who could have talked me out of that much money.”

I believe that it was because of the size of this gift that Cramer felt he should accept an offer to serve as a trustee. He did and worked tirelessly for eight years to help Exploration Place succeed. I believe even in this audience, only a few people would be aware of the funding connection of Cramer Reed to Exploration Place.

Harry Corbin resigned as president of the University of Wichita, in May of 1963, just after the university’s successful efforts to enter the state system. It was the responsibility of the Board of Regents of the University of Wichita to replace him. Who was its president? Cramer Reed.

The discussion was intense as to who should succeed President Corbin. Surely it would have to be someone with enormous political skill. The Kansas Board of Regents had just voted 9-0 to keep Wichita out of the state system! The new president would have to face certain hostility. Maybe a former legislator might work. Cramer saw this differently. He wanted a scholar with a reputation of scholarly activity. Professor Emory Lindquist was asked if he had any interest, because he was a former college president, but he said he had none!

When some members of the Search Committee were visiting with David Henry the president of the University of Illinois for his suggestions, Henry said. Don't you have a man on your campus who is a former president? Yes. A former Rhodes scholar? Yes. A published scholar? Yes. A master teacher? Yes. "Then you by all means should hire him" said Henry.

In spite of Emory's refusal to be considered, the Search Committee met again and unanimously voted for him. Now the hard part...was getting him to accept. Cramer described chasing Emory all over Europe by telephone, where Emory was on vacation with his family. Finally, Cramer persuaded Emory to come back for just a day to talk about the matter and Emory agreed. Eventually Cramer prevailed. Unbelievable! Emory accepted in what has to be the most unique presidential appointment letter in the history of American Higher Education. He told Cramer, "I have come to the point of reluctantly accepting the post offered at least for a term long enough to cover the transition period. My decision is based exclusively upon the assumption that an emergency exists and that no other solution is available. If so, I will in faith do the best I know in the assignment."

Cramer was right. A scholar was needed and Emory was superb. He also added demonstrable organizational skills and a capacity for preparation and hard work. When Emory left office in 1968, questions about the university's place in the system had been dispelled. Who among us knew that Cramer Reed was almost solely responsible for the selection of the eighth president of Wichita State University?

Think of the stories that could be told. In the end, though, we come back to the reason we are here today, to say goodbye to Cramer Reed. Yet every end is a beginning. We see both beginning and ending as Dr. Ernie Crow begins to leave Cramer's room in

the Care Center at Larksfield for the last time, saying goodbye to his medical colleague and warm friend of more than 60 years. As they exchanged glances, Ernie said Cramer gave him a pure Cramer Reed moment. He said to Ernie, “Are you O.K.”.