



Elevating Leadership through the Humanities

He was not tall, but not short either. He had a "wiry" physique and never throughout his life gained significant weight-no middle-age paunch. He was not athletic, but appeared so. He had angular features, a strong chin, and a large nose. His hair was curly and only became grey late in life--he never lost one strand so appeared younger than his age as he reached his 70s and 80s.

He was very mechanical---when high-fidelity recordings (note that's hi-fi not wi-fi) became popular in the late 50s or early 60s, rather than buy the expensive record players, he built what was the forerunner of components: speakers, turntable, and rather primitive controls, perhaps with a radio included as well. He then crafted a wooden cabinet and table to hold it all. When he took up photography he built an full darkroom in the basement. My older brother wanted a car, so he and my father bought an English car (this was 1957) called a Hillman Minx, and given that it was English they were repairing something on it every week. Purchasing this car was intentional for my father if not my brother--my father wanted another mechanical puzzle he could solve.

He inherited (or was burdened with) a mini-department store (clothes, shoes, hardware, and because of his talents electronics and small appliance repairs) in the section of Atlanta where he was born, which had become all African-American by the time he and his brother took over "the store." So our livelihood depended on the small purchases of his customers. He treated every customer with great respect. I never saw him lose his temper, although he may have asked someone who was intoxicated to leave the store on occasion.

Christmas Eve was the biggest day and night of the year at the store. He stayed open until midnight to get the business that resulted from customers receiving bonuses or wages too late to get to the big stores. He stocked bicycles, roller

skates, wagons, along with extra new shoes and men's hats. When he arrived home, whether or not it had been a particularly good or not so good Christmas, my brother, sister and I received each received a sliver dollar. We did not celebrate Christmas because we were Jewish, but we celebrated the Christmas selling season.

People loved him. After he sold the store, and a second hardware store he opened by himself, he went to work in Atlanta's equivalent of Calvert-Woodley Liquors and became the same respectful and gentle salesman that appealed to customers who wanted to talk about wine or spirits rather than just rush in and rush out. It was only when his memory began to fail him that he had really retire.

My father had no temper to speak of. He never raised his voice, or got truly angry. He left that for my mother. He seldom said "Do this" or "Don't do that." He behaved generously toward others and by doing so set the example for his children. Some might consider him weak or lacking in ambition. When asked how he was doing, all through his life, he never answered "Fine," but rather "I can't complain." And he did not.

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