

A Remembrance of Al Manson

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During a job interview for a chair position in the Division of Statistics at UI in 1997, I met a motivated man talking about his impressive future goals and wonderful action plans. He had a deep voice showing his determination, a sound smile echoing his broadness, and sharp eyes reflecting his insights. I immediately noticed a man with the potential characteristics to lead our newly established Division of Statistics. His name was Al Manson and he became our first formal chair of the Division of Statistics.

We soon came to know him professionally as a capable colleague and personally as a good friend. He was very supportive to the Division as a whole and especially to me when I went through the tedious tenure and promotion process in 1998. He said what he meant, he meant what he said, and nothing much beyond what was necessary.

Our conversations were basically on the collegiate level, and were not very personal most of the time. After he was diagnosed with cancer, I could not wait to ask him during a lunch: "Do you think of spiritual things at times?" He replied: "I think of spiritual things everyday." I was kind of surprised at the moment because we seldom had any interaction or communication on this level since his arrival at UI. I knew the reason later on during his memorial service. He was actually becoming more aware of his Christian faith and the importance of his personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ during his later years.

He was a man of responsibility. Even after he got sick, his concern was more on the Division of statistics than on his health. During a lunch that we had in late November, he was more interested in talking about ways to minimize the impact of the budget cut problem to the Division, than to talk about his health condition.

He was a bold man and began to share his feeling more during his later times. On one faculty meeting he said, "I have no fear of dying. I know that I am right with God. I am looking forward to work everyday until I am not able to. I love my job." It took a lot of courage for him to share his heart at an intellectual-oriented business faculty meeting. He was brave enough to share his belief and his personal relationship with God in front of the entire faculty. He delivered what was in his heart calmly, naturally, and spiritually. Spiritual reality suddenly

became so real and true for a spiritual man looking into eternity on earth. He surely set up a good example of successful leadership: to lead with your whole being; your mind **and** your heart.

Toward the end of the 2001 fall semester he was working hard to finish the two classes in spite of his fast falling health. Especially toward the last few weeks of the semester, he was really trying hard to devote his last bit of energy to the students and to the Division. Although he was feeling weak during the last week of the semester, he still came back to support the SAS Enterprise Miner Software 3-day workshop.

His contributions to the Division and to the University of Idaho were much and in many ways we can measure. He was more than a dear colleague, beloved professor, wonderful friend ...

The day prior to his death (January 10th, 2002) Polly and I had the privilege to visit him in the hospital. He looked pale and tired, yet no expressions of pain. He was conscious and his eye was still sharp. His hand looks much thinner yet with strength. For all the entire duration of our visit, he had the strength to hold our hands really tight. We told him that we were proud of him and he was fighting a good fight. We wrote a card to him and he reads intently. It said: "Al, our dear brother in Christ: Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." We are so encouraged to see his faith in God and trust in Jesus Christ was ever stronger than all the past five years.

He never forgets God and his family even during the time of his suffering. On his hospital bed he asked us to pray and we prayed together. He firmly and repeatedly said three words I would never forget **In His Hands**. Surely he is in God's good and gracious hands now. We are proud of him.

It is comforting to know that he didn't suffer a prolonged period of pain as most cancer patients did. He passed away peacefully. He is in good hands now as he said. His story of living in fantasy land where there is no pain comes true.

He will be remembered by all of us. We shall miss him in many ways.