

CHAPMAN | Honoring Glasscock, who did so much for the Manhattan community

- Jeff Chapman Contributing writer - Feb 13, 2023

Kent Glasscock, my long time friend, mentor and all around good guy is retiring from K-State, but he will continue to serve this community for many years even if behind the scenes.

Since I no longer live in Manhattan and have no political aspirations, I will tell you with bias and without filter how great I think Kent is and why Manhattan has been lucky to have him.

For those that don't know the guy I fondly call "The Governor of Riley County" let me tell ya...

While he stands tall, he is always awkwardly leaning down to the level of whomever he is talking to. He's a friendly dude and likes to get right in there and listen. He's got this soft voice and kind of a goofy laugh, which we all think is great, especially if you're the one who makes it happen. I can assure you now he just giggled and said, "Chappie, you're a hoot!"

Many will say great things about him as a leader and politician and citizen of Manhattan, and while all of that is true, here's the real Kent.

He's hilarious. I once heard him imitate Steve Martin's Wild and Crazy Guy to near perfection and all of us in that room were doubled over in laughter until it hurt.

He's extremely smart, well read and so humble that, as he would say, "There ain't a word for it."

Kent has a degree in English. Once in front of about 1,000 people after being introduced he acknowledged his education, "Now there's a degree that doesn't put food on the table." Then asked how many others had the same degree. Three hands went up. His response. "Looks like we have a movement."

Kent is an excellent public speaker. It came in handy when he ran for office. He speaks softly and slowly and makes people listen in. He uses humor and real facts and examples in history and has the ability to quote others very well and blend them into make you feel like you learned something at the end.

He used to give a talk to Leadership Manhattan that I begged him to do the 12 years I served on that board. "Every dang year," he would say. His talk was about getting involved and doing your part in your community and he told this great story about the colorful senator from Louisiana Huey Long. Long was a radical and was influential in many political things in the 1920s and 1930s, and while his politics were controversial, he was successful until he was assassinated in 1933. Long's documented last words were "God, don't let me die. I have so much to do." Kent's message was don't regret missing your chance to serve, to carry out an idea, to do your part while you can.

Kent and his brother Terry both served as mayor of Manhattan and were involved in about every board or organization in town. The reason was their parents Bill and Frances Glasscock instilled in them early that community service was a necessary part of being a good citizen. Frances would regularly ask Kent, "And what else will you be doing?"

Let me take a second to mention Frances, who was the greatest campaign mom of all time. She must have baked 10,000 chocolate chip cookies during Kent's time seeking and in office. She was a wonderful and spirited woman, and don't you dare speak ill of

her boys! She was definitely the example of energy and will to win that gave Kent that extra edge when he needed it.

Here are some things Kent helped do in my mere 35 years of knowing him. He was one of the few people in Manhattan to ever pass a quality of life issue and see it through. If you enjoy Anneberg Park, that was a Glasscock success. There are going to be many others who were part of these things I mention, but too bad, this isn't about you, so bear with me.

When Gov. Bill Graves needed a budget that would pass and make everyone happy, he brought in Kent to do it and if you look back those were pretty great times economically for Kansas. Kent helped hundreds of people all over Kansas run for office. His model for campaign strategy and structure were the recipe for many election night successes. I borrowed from Kent and have used many of those same tactics over the years also to great success.

The redevelopment of downtown Manhattan, the Flint Hills Discovery Center, and the attraction of NBAF and so many other businesses in town were partly because of efforts he made, often behind the scenes. Lyle Butler, retired Manhattan Area Chamber president, once called Kent a "one-man chamber of commerce." The entire entrepreneurship and commercialization process in this city were in infant stages when Kent stepped in and used his leadership and political capital to jump-start them and weave them into the fabric they are today.

Kent and others were instrumental in recruiting good people to run for office, too, and many of them turned out to be pretty solid leaders. I won't mention names here because you might think my definition of solid is different, but the bottom line is Glasscock was a community influencer before it was cool.

Kent is a God-fearing man and great husband to Janna and father to two sons who will hopefully begin to feel that civic instinct to get involved and make a difference in the community like their dad.

I'll close this Kent Glasscock lovefest with: Kent will often tell people he likes with joy in his voice, "You're a Great American!" and thank them for being so, but I am here to tell ya my friend: You are a great Manhattanite, a great Kansan and without doubt a GREAT American, but this retirement is merely a milestone because you, Mr. Speaker, have so much left to do.

https://themercury.com/opinion/chapman-honoring-glasscock-who-did-so-much-for-the-manhattan-community/article_7dc752a1-2fda-5936-8e4b-db007f66dc40.html