

A Word From the Publisher

I know after last week's front page, I'm sure everyone is a little apprehensive of what I may write now! Last week was tough and now I can just get back to sharing. I, for one, am not a fan of the cold however, I was glad that it got chilly so I could wear the few Christmas shirts I have. Of course, most are long sleeves as it's supposed to be cold at Christmas...ok most places!

Last week, I shared briefly about how the Westside Journal was created. It was from the vision of the late Mark Thompson. Last Monday, I received a phone call of his passing. Mark had been dealing with cancer, completed a bone marrow transplant and recovered well. About a month ago, he was cleared to travel back to Callahan and visit Florida Sun Printing, the Westside Journal office and a few others. It was from complications that he passed away last Monday.

My story with Mark was actually lifelong! We all grew up in Callahan. His dad, Jim Thompson, owned Florida Sun Printing (FSP). FSP was one of those places that many high school students began their work careers, as my brothers Dub and Mark did. My brother Mark, was close friends with the Thompson brothers, Mark and David, through their school years and following. I've shared that my first job, other than babysitting, was a dental assistant for Dr. P.W. Shaffer. Dr. Shaffer's best friend in the world was Jim Thompson. Isn't it amazing how God places people in our lives from long ago? Little did I know years later, I would be working for Mark Thompson, a dear friend.

Mark caught wind that I was looking for a job and called me. He asked me to come and talk with him about being a salesperson at FSP. What...I asked. You can go out and ask people to bring their printing needs to FSP! Still, I was cautious. I didn't know anything about printing much less to sell it to someone. With Mark's confident spirit, he said, "You used to sell dental work to people

and encourage them to get a crown or whatever!" I quickly responded, "That was different!" Long story short, I took the job, and with his encouragement and direction, did okay.

A few years later, is when he presented his vision of starting a newspaper to me. Again, he had it all planned out. FSP can print and design it; Carrie, who was in journalism in college at the time, can write; and you can sell advertising! Just like that. He had a plan and masterfully put it into action. We had all the pieces, now let's make it work. And it did and it has. About a year into it, Mark asked if Roger and I wanted to purchase the paper and we said yes.

Little did I know what this 'little paper' as many call it, would do. What an impact someone's vision has turned out to be. Several times, through the years, I continued to call Mark and ask his opinion for this or that when I struggled. He always seemed to have a suggestion of things to try. He was not only a dear friend but a mentor for direction with our paper. I'm thankful for the guidance, even though sometimes he was pretty frank with things, but that was Mark. That was one thing about him that you didn't have to wonder about... you always knew where he stood on issues. His work ethics were amazing and he always ran a tight ship. He took my outgoing, crazy, young nephew Brent, and molded him into a business owner, who now is the owner of Florida Sun Printing. It wasn't an easy job, but Mark never gave up on him, as he never gave up on me.

I'm so thankful that Mark Thompson took a chance on me. I do miss his humor and uncanny way of trying to make a difficult issue okay. He was an amazing friend, boss and business owner.

Each time we would talk he would always say, "You're doing a great job with the paper."

Dawn S. West