

# Tim Myrick: a testimony of life

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on January 14, 2015)

"We had hoped for a Myrick miracle when Tim was faced with a devastating cancer for which he found no answer. But a different kind of Myrick miracle is likely to prevail. Tim was a community saint, and he and Teresa were the greatest of soul mates. He would see a need, like a hole in the wall, and deploy his talents, time and treasure to plug it. He was an inspiration, a leader, a role model, a volunteer extraordinaire. If more of us would rise to the occasion and be like Tim, his legacy would live on as an amazing Myrick miracle," said Carolyn Krause, a friend from ORNL and First Presbyterian Church, where he taught teenagers in Sunday school for 25 years.

I remember when I first met Tim. I knew he was special and I knew I wanted to understand him and what drove him toward volunteerism and community service. You see, I made a commitment in 1998 when I completed Leadership Oak Ridge and took a ride-a-long with the Oak Ridge Police Department. I wanted to focus more of my attention on community service. It was a serious commitment, but I had no idea how to go about it. I needed to see a role model.

My attention up to that point in my life had been on my family, my church, and my personal interests. So, I set about looking for anyone from whom I could learn how to be effective in volunteering for community service. Many people helped.

Tom Row was one of the first people to see my desire as he helped me get involved in United Way of Anderson County. Carol Smallridge helped as she led me to serve on Leadership Oak Ridge's board as well as the East Tennessee Regional Leadership board. Paul Wasilko helped as he introduced me to Rotary.

Tim helped me as he showed me his skill on the Aid for Distressed Families of Appalachian Counties board. He modeled effective leadership in so many ways. When the organization needed an executive director for an extended period and there were no candidates available, Tim did it. I mean he took on the full time job of directing the organization while also serving on the board and working at a day job as well.

That demonstrated his amazing ability to keep many responsibilities balanced and to do all things extremely well. I watched him with intensity and with admiration. He never complained, just did what needed doing.

An example of his amazing use of his God given leadership ability, he agreed to serve as a loaned executive from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to serve the project for upgrading the Oak Ridge High School a few years back. That was amazing service as well. He also taught a class there for some years and kept that up as long as he had the strength.

I also saw him provide water for locations where there were no safe drinking water. He did this in Appalachia and also in other countries. He thought big, but understood that even big ideas started with small actual steps.

He also was a dedicated and devoted Habitat for Humanity volunteer. He literally worked on every single house ever built by Habitat for Humanity of Anderson County. He is responsible for me seeking service on that board as well.

Tim and Teresa could often be seen at the Oak Ridge Farmer's Market at Jackson Square, well Teresa was there, Tim was most often playing tennis but would show up in time to assist Teresa take down and load up. That was his way, never waste a moment or opportunity, yet get the job done seemingly without effort.

In addition to his service on ADFAC and Habitat for Humanity, Tim served on the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board, was a legacy member of the National Parks Conservation Association, a member of the Tennessee Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, a Sunday school teacher of senior-high students for 25 years, a mentor for a Boy Scout troop, and finally as a member of the steering committee, he was co-

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chair for the design and construction of the new Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church building, which was dedicated in October 2014.

The last house he and Teresa worked to build for Habitat for Humanity of Anderson County was the "Myrick Build" where he gladly joined forces to help raise the money and then helped do the actual build. This effort was done during what he knew might well be his last few months to live...yet, he did it with gusto.

Tim was selected for the Anderson County Starfish award and I was fortunate enough to be there when he accepted that award. It may have been the first of several awards given him after he announced his bout with "The Beast" as he called the cancer. I was also fortunate to be there when he was presented the "Bill Wilcox Bow Tie" award by ADFAC.

Again, an emotional and moving occasion, which he handled with his usual humble nature and self-effacing demeanor. Yet, I could see the gleam in his by then very weak eyes. It gave me such joy to see my role model and friend loved by so many members of his community.

The funeral service was a final well prepared, by Tim, occasion. He wrote the entire service almost a year before it was used. That is so "Tim" to be prepared for everything.

Among the many meaningful things said about Tim, one that struck a chord with me was "Remembrance 'Passions,'" by Rev. John Stuhl. I knew many of Tim's passions, but not all. The list included many hobbies and activities, of course, but the passion for young people, nature and people in need rang so true.

All participants did great with what Tim had asked of them. Yet, I think Teresa's wrap on the service with "Remembrance 'Husband and Soulmate'" was something he did not preplan.

She rose to the occasion and showed the depth of their love that made all who heard her understand the strength and support that existed behind what we saw as "Tim Myrick" was in fact, as Tim always told me, a full team effort. The love of Teresa for Tim and him for her was evident in life and in loss.

Tim selected Ecclesiastes 3, "There is a time for everything..." Tim's "time" on this earth will long live in our memories as his testimony was so very strong. I miss him...

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Ray Smith and Tim Myrick with the ADFAC Bill Wilcox Bowtie Award (photo by Jamie Olson LaRose)

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Tim and Teresa with one of the many awards Tim received (photo by Jamie Olson LaRose)