



Topeka South Rotary Legacy: Ward Whelan

June 5, 1949 – Aug. 23, 2011

Ward was born in Topeka in 1949 and lived here virtually all of his life except when in college and for a year when working in Kansas City for Remington-Rand when he was just out of college. Ward passed away on Aug. 23, 2011.

Ward graduated from Topeka West High School in 1967. He attended KU from 1967 to 1971 and graduated with a B.S. in Business. He was a member of Sigma Chi Fraternity

Ward was married to Debbie in 1981 in Topeka, and they have 2 sons (Jeff in K.C. and Todd in Denver).

Some of Ward's hobbies were:

- He loved running and ran in 5 marathons: Kansas City, Chicago, New York, Dallas and Twin Cities
- Ward, Jeff & Todd ran in the Hospital Hill run in KC in June 2003, just before he was diagnosed with cancer in July
- He enjoyed golf and played as often as he could
- KU Alumni lifetime member
- Avid KU sports fan
- Fly fishing – began around 2008

Work:

- Ward started working at Whelan's Lumber part-time during the summers while in high school & college
- Whelan's Lumber was started in 1908 by Ward's great-uncle (brother of Ward's grandfather)
- Ward began working full-time in 1972 in the component homes division
- Ward took over the presidency of Whelan's Lumber in 1982
- Ward work at Whelan's Lumber for 36 years under Whelan's ownership + 2 years under McCray

Businessman's prayer, posted on the wall of Ward's office:

Lord, help me to plan with wisdom,
to guide with vision,
to lead with HUMILITY,
to listen with understanding,
to work with excellence,
and to succeed in a way that HONORS YOU.
– Roy Lessin

Ward's Volunteer activities/board memberships:

- Member of Rotary for 26 years
- Active member of the Topeka Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce Board
- Community chairman of the United Way Campaign
- President and member of 20/30 club
- President and member of the Board of the Boys & Girls Club
- Active member of the Topeka Homebuilders Association
- Stormont-Vail Foundation Board of Trustees, 1986 – 1998
- Stormont-Vail Foundation Board of Trustees, Chairperson
- National Board Member, Caradco
- National Board Member, Do-It-Best Corporation
- Cub Scout Den Leader, Pack 250
- Assistant Boy Scout Leader, Troop 7
- Eagle Scout Mentor, Troop 7

My wife and I knew Ward & Debbie from our association at church and were in a couple's Bible Study group together for many years. One of the true defining moments of Ward's life was when his cancer returned and they determined that they would not be able to successfully treat it. He remained very positive and upbeat, and didn't want people to feel sorry for him, but instead, he wanted to encourage and serve others. He was involved in a Cancer Support Group at our church, and wanted to use his cancer as a way to minister to and encourage others. Ward's faith was very important to him, and even more so as he approached the end of his life.

Ward's Mission Statement, created later in his life:

Through my actions at work, with my family and with others, I will be a beacon for the joy of knowing God. I will use my position in business, my experience with cancer, and my many personal relationships to move others one step closer to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I will work with excellence and endeavor to succeed in a way that honors God.

A favorite Bible verse, toward the end of his life:

My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever. Psalm 73:26

Prayer on a plaque by his bed for the last 3 months of his life:

This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words and give me the spirit of Jesus. Amen

– Book of Common Prayer, 1979

Legacy presented by Jeff Sorensen, Nov. 14, 2014

