

A Sad Farewell to The Computing Center's First Client

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By Larry Baum

This past Saturday The Computing Center said a sad farewell to our first paying client.

Our dear friend, David Flinn unexpectedly passed away on December 23rd.

(<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/theithacajournal/obituary.aspx?n=david-galbraith-flinn&pid=187650477&fhid=>

As our business got started back in 1978, finding that initial customer, particularly one who was willing to pay for our goods and services was all-important. With that first paying client we became "real". For us, that first client was David Flinn.

Thirty-nine years ago Dave took a chance on our fledging computer company with our focus primarily on using computers within small businesses. We started out providing him and his various businesses with billing and basic accounting software initially via access to mainframe and mini-computers. As the years went on and small computer technology became "faster, better, and cheaper", we provided Dave with desktop computers for his offices and home, then laptops, wired and wireless networking all the way to today's tablets and smart-technologies. Our technicians and engineers regularly visited his home and offices to make sure that everything worked just so. Dave became a familiar and welcome face in our offices too. Interactions with him were always friendly, good natured, and professional.

As we grew, even though Dave was no longer our largest client, he remained important to us - and taught us that clients of all sizes are critical to our success. Our "service first" philosophy and treating all clients, whatever the size, with the same attention, comes directly from our early and continued interactions with David Flinn.

Along with being a client, Dave also gave us advice. Not just on the specifics of what he wanted and needed from us for his businesses, but how we could become better known in the community and how to find and nurture new clients: "Join the Chamber of Commerce" and "Join Rotary!" were just two of his suggestions.

Taking Dave's advice to heart, The Computing Center joined the Chamber of Commerce shortly after we formed the company. Over the years our involvement in the Chamber increased with Mary Stazi and I being board members, several staff members serving on various committees, and our helping the Chamber build its first website.

I was a bit more reticent about joining Rotary. I would be the youngest member. I didn't like the idea of no women in Rotary and weekly attendance was essentially mandatory. Dave, being a past Rotary president, assured me that there would be women members within 5 years (he was close - it took about 7 years) and the club would be OK if I missed a meeting or two. And he agreed that there should be more younger members too. So, I joined. What I found were a lot of people very interested in the new small computer technology and how it could be leveraged within their businesses. I learned a lot about giving back to the community - just as Dave had done. And I wasn't the youngest member for long. Mike Brown and Dave's son, Dale joined soon after and were younger than me. Today, the children and grandchildren of some of those Rotary members are now Rotary members - all giving back.

As you read Dave's obituary, there's a lot of reminders of what one person can do within a community and the impact they can have. David Flinn had a very meaningful impact on everyone he came in contact with especially on The Computing Center and on its founders. He will be missed.