

The Legacy of a Winner

“There are two kinds of pride, both good and bad. Good pride represents our dignity and self-respect. Bad pride is the deadly sin of superiority that reeks of conceit and arrogance.”

—John Maxwell

Relationships are not win-lose.

For a large chunk of my life, I cared about winning. I expected to win at board games, bridge, bowling, tennis, collegiate debates, chess and probably even tiddly winks.

No win ever seemed to satisfy. While I wanted to beat my sister at games, I remember feeling bad that she didn't win. When I won forensic debates, I hoisted the trophy but witnessed images of despair in my opponents.

Along the way, tennis coaches scolded me after a loss, “Remember how this feels. You don't want to feel this way again do you?”

Honestly, coach, today, I feel just fine. I have good memories of the match and as I look over my shoulder, I remember losses more than I remember wins.

Relationships are built without the need of a scorecard.

My most cherished memories in tennis came in a summer of matches with Dr. Joe Iverstine. He was my statistics professor in a required MBA statistics class. In the summer of 1977, we played tennis three days a week at noon, in the heat and humidity of southeastern Louisiana.

We seemed evenly matched, but I think he won often. I didn't care. I loved spending time with him. He was one of the best

teachers I knew throughout all of my college course work. I tried throughout my teaching career to model his art in the classroom.

Dr. Iverstine and his wife, Kay, were killed in the horrific Pan American plane crash in Kenner, Louisiana, in 1982. Flight 759 crashed one minute after take-off from New Orleans. When I heard the news of Joe's passing, my thoughts went to our times on the courts. I recalled how gentle he was with students and, though passionate about winning, he always rooted for me to win at tennis and in the classroom. He was tall and powerful but lived as one inferior to others.

Real loss happens when we lose people from our lives. When a love leader is taken from us by a career move or finally in death, perhaps it's just fine to feel a little good pride. It's an honor to learn, grow and pass on the legacy of godly leaders.

"A man who has friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).