

Four years ago I was interviewing with Courier board members for a job opening. Somewhere during the line of questioning, my mind went blank. Bishop Hickey, sitting at my far left, made a couple of gentle suggestions to complete my thoughts. I had never met him, yet he filled in my thoughts so perfectly and kept the talk flowing. He had a friend for life.

Before dinner at the Courier's Christmas gatherings, Bishop Hickey would say a prayer. In those moments, thanks to his precious words and blessings, you felt it was the most important work - helping to keep people informed and connected throughout the diocese as well as the larger church.

Sometimes we Courier people would be concerned whether he was eating enough, especially because he would bring in cookies, candy and snacks that other people had given him. But that concern - for me, at least - was put to rest one day when we asked if we could take him out for his birthday. He pulled out his calendar and, ticking off all the lunch and dinner appointments he had, finally found an opening for us.

Kathleen Schwar,
Courier assistant editor

At my house, Bishop Hickey is and always will be the nice man who liked trains. During my tenure at the paper, my then-toddler son Joseph wandered into the bishop's office one day and began to admire a large glass locomotive engine on his desk. At first, Joseph was shy of this elderly stranger all dressed in black. But as we prepared to leave, Bishop Hickey presented him with the train and won a fan for life. Not till years later did Joe realize the "train" was actually a decanter and the "gasoline" sloshing around inside a bit of leftover scotch.

That's how I remember Bishop Hickey - a stern and proper-seeming man with a world of humor and fun inside, a kind and sensitive friend upon whose discretion and wisdom so many people depended. I'm sure he is enjoying a grand chat with the only being in the universe who possesses more inside information about the Diocese of Rochester.

Terri Parsons, former Courier staff writer and associate editor, who now lives in Oakmont, Pa.



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opportunity to build, and he got a lot of pleasure at seeing it grow and develop," Chapman continued.

"He enjoyed the paper immensely and also enjoyed immensely being around the staffers - the young people. Being around the staff as they put the thing together and it grew gave him another venture late in his career. It was great for him."

"How he loved that paper!" his niece, Mary Campbell Caldwell, exclaimed. "He would refer to (the staff) as 'My kids.'"

Working with the newspaper on a daily basis "was a shot in the arm for him for 15 years," Caldwell said,

Between the lines

Karen M. Franz, general manager

Disorientation, staff spread way too thin, disintegration of boundaries between work and personal life, and a pull-out-all-the-stops commitment to overcoming insurmountable odds. I'm the only one here who knows it, but the past week has been a lot like the very early days of the Courier's "new staff" on South Union Street. Life at the Courier, fittingly, comes full circle.

Back in those dark days, the other "Whiz Kids" and I struggled through our inexperience to help Bishop Hickey save this newspaper. In these dark days, we have struggled through our grief to produce a tribute to the man who has been the heart and soul of the *Catholic Courier* for the past 15 years - and a beloved mentor to us all.

We know this effort is inadequate - there's no way we could do justice to Bishop Hickey's memory in 20 pages or 200, whether we worked for seven days or seven years. But we've taken consolation this week in trying to repay him, in some measure, for all he has done and been for us.

You may have noticed that the articles in this edition lack bylines. That's because each one was a joint effort. Bishop Hickey often boasted about the family atmosphere within the Courier staff. I think he'd be pleased that "his kids" did this as a team.

I gave an interview to one of the local news stations on the day Bishop Hickey died. I talked about his extraordinary kindness, his patient leadership, his wisdom, his wit. But the reporter wanted me to talk about specific ways in which he contributed to the *Catholic Courier*. So I told him that Bishop Hickey had been an ambassador for the paper in various arenas, and that he had been an invaluable source of information for articles. That last part - probably the least significant aspect of his legacy to the paper, in the great scheme of things - was the only part that got on the air.

I can't blame the reporter. He was looking for something concrete, not the ethereal qualities I was trying to describe. Many

When I began working at the Courier in April of 1994, Bishop Hickey was most welcoming.

He made it a point to mention my parish (Most Precious Blood) and my pastor in our conversation. He immediately put me at ease and it was like talking

to an old friend.

A year later I had surgery and I was pleasantly surprised when Bishop Hickey came to the hospital to see me. Once again he put me at ease, and his blessing lifted my spirits. He came to the hospital a second time.

I count myself among the luckiest people in the world because I was privileged to have spoken with Bishop Hickey nearly every day of my workaday life for the past 11 years. Our favorite subjects were Irish politics, Irish Catholic history, and various and sundry U.S. political and social issues. Bishop Hickey was always willing to listen to my opinion - even when I

was completely unwilling to listen to his!

He also had the greatest collection of "clean" jokes I've ever heard, and I relayed nearly every one he told me to family and friends. But his easy wit masked a brilliant mind that understood both the value of diplomacy and the need for occasional assertion. He could combine both traits in a manner that allowed him

When I returned to work I learned Bishop had been concerned that I did not look well at all on his first visit. After his second visit he announced that I looked much better and he was relieved. I guess he felt he needed to see that I was all right.

to be a leader without any trace of authoritarianism.

During the Rochester ice storm of 1991, my cat and I camped out in Bishop Hickey's office for a couple of days because the power in my house was gone. He never complained to me about it, but I do recall my boss telling me it might not be a bad idea to remove the litter box.

There are so many mem-

adding that Bishop Hickey always was eager to fill his family in on news about the staff.

Some years after the Courier's reorganization, "He told me his association with the Courier and its board and staff was one of the greatest joys of his priesthood," Bishop Clark said.

Bishop Hickey also became a champion of the newspaper's editorial integrity. Although some people expected him to keep a tight lid on the reporting of negative news, he chose not to do so. Instead, he allowed the young reporters and editors to approach controversial stories according to standard principles of journalistic ethics.

"He was a good mentor for the paper within the (diocesan) system," Chapman observed. "He advocated on behalf of its editorial independence. He was not a censor. He didn't get excited over some of the things that occurred. There were a couple of front pages that bothered him, I think, but he was like an understanding parent saying, 'Well, they're not always going to get it right.'"

Whenever he felt the Courier was unfairly attacked, Bishop Hickey rose to its defense - even after he retired as general manager in 1995.

"He had a great loyalty ... to the Courier. That was one of the things he very strongly defended at Priests' Council meetings," Msgr. William H. Shannon said. "He didn't speak up too often, but he did speak up when (the discussion centered on) things that concerned him deeply, and one of those was the *Catholic Courier*."

The Courier staff "once had an advocate on the Priests' Council," the monsignor continued. "Now (they) have an advocate in heaven. The future will show which has the greater importance."

observers quoted in this issue have accurately described Bishop Hickey as a humble, simple priest. Yet he was, at the same time, a complex individual impossible to capture in a sound bite. And as Msgr. William H. Shannon observed in a conversation with me last week, it's easy to list a person's qualities, but it's never possible to describe fully that which makes him unique.

One aspect of Bishop Hickey's uniqueness was his reserve. Though he clearly demonstrated his fondness for the Courier staff and me through countless acts of kindness and generosity, he always maintained a certain gentle formality. We all respected the distance - the invisible line, however subtle - he chose to maintain. But many things went unsaid as a result, and that fact has been a cause for some regret in this week since his death. Courier staffers, past and present, have taken the opportunity in the vignettes appearing on these pages to tell the world what they might have liked to tell the bishop face to face. Now it's my turn.

When my husband and I learned in early 1998 that the baby we were expecting was a boy, my first thought was to name him Dennis in honor of Bishop Hickey. But before I even mentioned the idea to my husband, I realized that doing so might cross that invisible line. So we instead chose names from my husband's family and asked Bishop Hickey to preside at the baptism, which he graciously agreed to do in March.

Many people know that two themes ran through many of Bishop Hickey's homilies: the *Catholic Courier* (of course) and encouragement for vocations. As he prepared to baptize our son, Bishop Hickey voiced a prayer that Robert might ultimately discern a vocation to priesthood. I certainly had not considered that possibility until you said the words, Bishop, but if our son were to become half the priest you were, I could not be a prouder mother. I love you.

Bishop Hickey shared with our staff his many gifts; knowledge, humor, dedication, service and food.

He so often brought cookies and candy that were given to him, as he said he really enjoyed them but could not possibly eat

all those treats and felt the Courier would enjoy them. He would take great joy upon his return to the office to see every morsel was gone!

Mary DiPonzio,
Courier office manager

ories I have of him, but one thing people should know is that he always seemed to wear his suits thin, and I think it's because he spent much of his spare money on others.

But most of all, I'll remember how he came to my mother's wake last year, and how deeply it touched my father that a bishop would come to Syracuse for a funeral of a family member. It was in those

moments that I think Bishop Hickey most embodied his role as an apostle of Jesus Christ, which, in the end, comes down to being a friend of all souls. I doubt I'll ever be as good a man as Bishop Hickey, but I know I could have been a lot worse if I had never met him, and I thank God I knew him as long as I did.

Rob Cullivan,
Courier staff writer

