



Ronald Zemke

August 19, 2004

Zemke Ronald E. Zemke Ron Zemke, a well-known business writer and consultant, died Tuesday after a long illness. He was 62. Ron was president of Performance Research Associates, a Minneapolis consulting company he founded in 1972 to conduct organizational effectiveness and productivity improvement studies for business and industry. He was a consultant to many 'Fortune 500' companies, including Wachovia Bank and Trust, Citibank, and American Express Financial Advisors. He was author or co-author of 38 books, senior editor of Minneapolis-based 'Training' Magazine, and a syndicated columnist with the American City Business journals. Ron's best-selling 1985 book 'Service America! Doing Business in the New Economy' is widely credited with starting the American customer service revolution. His "Knock Your Socks Off Service" series of 11 customer service books spread his service gospel to millions of readers. He also co-authored 'Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers and Nexters in Today's Workplace' and 'The Service Edge: 101 Companies that Profit from Customer Care.' Ron's wit and wisdom - and passion for sharing them - led to a four-decade career as an author and public speaker. He was an astute observer of business trends, and his vivid prose and distinctive style earned him recognition throughout the management world. In 1994, he received the Mobius award from the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals and was named one of America's "new quality gurus" by 'Quality Digest Magazine.' In 1999, he was given the Thomas F. Gilbert Distinguished Professional

Achievement Award by the International Society of Performance and Instruction. Ron was born March 7, 1942, in Sterling, IL, to parents Mae Elizabeth and Elwood Ray Zemke. He attended Sterling Township high school, where his diverse interests were already evident. He was a member of the National Honor Society; the science club; the wrestling team; and the orchestra, jazz band and pep band. He graduated from Cornell College in Mount Vernon, IA, in 1960 and completed graduate work at the University of Minnesota. In both high school and college, he was a conference wrestling champion. In May 2002, he was named a Sterling high school distinguished alumni for his achievements in high school and his successful business career. Ron served on the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Orchestra and was a vice president of the Board of Directors of Theatre de la Jeune Lune. Ron's diverse interests made him a memorable teacher, colleague and friend. He traveled widely and enjoyed hiking in Tuscany and Montana. Ron was a gourmet cook, enjoyed fine wines, and good jazz. Ron is survived by his wife, Susan; mother, Mae Zemke of Sterling, IL; brother, Douglas (Ellen) of Decatur, IL; sister, Marcia VanDeVelde (Dale) of Washington, WV; brother, Jon (Anita) of Mokena, IL, and 13 nephews and nieces and many others who loved him very much. Memorial service Friday, Aug. 20, 1 PM at Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church, W. 50th St. & Knox Ave S., Mpls. Memorial donations may be made to the American Cancer Society or Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church West, Victoria, MN. Washburn-McReavy Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

Tribute Wall

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“ I was Ron's room mate at Cornell college. We both had pledged Delt, which was the athletic party group on campus. I remember many times when Ron came back to the dorm a bit inebriated and very happy singing and having a good time. I helped get him to bed. In the morning we would tease each other and I would sing made up jingles to him till he got out of bed and could make it to his first class on time.

Ron taught me to appreciate rare meat when we ate steak on a wrestling team trip. I complained that my steak was always tough and Ron correctly pointed out that well done steaks were always tough. I did not believe him and he then conducted a test by blindfolding me and then feeding me small pieces from my well done steak and his. This test put me on the path to loving steak cooked rare. Ron's insight on how to convince me was pretty clever.

We double dated and I my first date with the girl who would become my wife of more than 50 years was on a double date with Ron.

We had a lot of good times and comforted each other during bad times as we went through college. I think about Ron every now and then and do miss him.

My wife sent me this obituary for Ton. He has been gone a long time and I am writing this to let anyone out there who may see this that Ron is still missed.

Lee Olson

Blythewood, SC

Cornell College class of 1966

Lee Olson - February 21, 2020 at 08:33 PM

RC

Lee, Ron was my room mate and you were my pledge son. I went to see Ron in Minneapolis about 20 years ago. He was a psychology major and I remember he took abnormal psychology and would come to our room in Merner and tell me he had every abnormal condition he studied. Dick Chambers, Cornell class of 1965.

Richard Chambers - September 30, 2020 at 09:43 PM