

Marc Taylor Memorial Service

June 24, 2012

Comments by: Todd Ambs, President, River Network

Dr. Marc Taylor ~ River Doctor
1937 - 2012

You are one hell of a great man, Todd Ambs.

It was a very common send off that Marc would give me as we ended our frequent conversations over the last several years.

Needless to say, it always gave me a lift but I also always felt a bit guilty. Marc's enthusiasm for people around him and their ability and good intentions always reminded me of a bumper sticker -- you know, the one that says, "I hope that I can be half as good a person as my dog thinks that I am." I always thought that you could insert Marc Taylor in that quote and have the same affect.

Marc always saw the best in people and as a result, he inspired all of us to be better than what we even thought that we could be – what a gift.

I first met Marc about a decade ago at his first River Rally. Lynn Werner introduced us and I immediately felt a connection to Marc and to his unbridled passion for rivers – and to the special people who work so hard to protect and care for them.

Marc went on to be selected as a national River Hero, then served on River Network's board and twice served as the chair of our Board. His impact on our organization is evident by who is here from River Network today. We have board members, past and present from North Carolina, New York, Iowa, Massachusetts and Illinois. Staff and volunteers from Oregon, Vermont, Maryland and Wisconsin. One board member drove here from Toronto this morning – she has to be in Chicago tomorrow.

Every year River Network brings hundreds of people together somewhere in the country for our Annual River Rally. Marc loved the event. Our work to educate, inspire and celebrate the actions of river and watershed advocates from around the country was right up his alley.

This year in early May when, for the first time in a decade, Marc couldn't attend the River Rally, we sent him a get well card – over 300 people signed it!

So I truly come here today on behalf of literally hundreds of people from around this country. It is no wonder – If you were at a Rally with Marc you probably met him – especially if you were a bit shy. Marc said that he liked to search out those folks at the event who seemed a bit lost, a tad ill at ease, and Marc of course would make it his personal mission to make them feel welcome, valued and a vital part of the river and watershed movement.

His intellect, enthusiasm, compassion and genuine interest in who you were as a person shown through in Marc within minutes of meeting him.

They don't provide a definition of exemplary doctor's bedside manner in the dictionary – they just have a picture of Dr. Marc Taylor.

Or as I liked to say, if there was going to be a nuclear holocaust soon that was destined to wipe out all life on the planet and Marc Taylor told you about it, you would be OK with that.

One of our Board members from California who couldn't be with us today sent along these thoughts. She felt that the anonymous author who penned these words could well have been referring to Marc:

*The world needs men and women who cannot be bought;
whose word is their bond;
who put character above wealth;
who possess opinions and a strong will;
who are larger than their vocations;
who do not hesitate to take risks;
who will not lose their individuality in a crowd;
who will be as honest in small affairs as in greater;
who will make no compromise with wrong;
whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires;
who will not say they do it 'because everybody else does it;'
who are true to their friends through good and bad, in adversity as well as in prosperity;
who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning, and hardheadedness are the best qualities
for winning success;
who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular;
who can say 'no' with emphasis, although all the rest of the world says 'yes.'*

Whenever I find myself feeling down about people and all of the evil and hatred of which we as a species are capable, I think of Marc and know that humans can rise to extraordinary heights of compassion, kindness and caring.

His friendship has given me the gift of hope -- my heart is lifted from the mere act of knowing him.