

## In My Opinion...

### Dean Says:



Charlene Kidder

## An Example For Us All

At the time of this writing, almost a year has gone by since **Philip Kleinman** of AFA Protective Systems, Inc., one of the true leaders of the Fire Alarm Industry, passed away after a long battle with cancer. He was 72 at the time of his death.

Looking back over Philip Kleinman's life, he had always championed the cause of high standards of quality. Whether it was in conjunction with the yarn business that had engaged him as a young man. Or, in the very successful telephone answering service business that he later ran. Or, especially in the even more successful fire alarm and security business in which he and his brother-in-law bought a controlling interest in 1969.

Philip Kleinman's familiarity with telephone company practices gave him a decided edge in making wise business decisions relating to central station service. Since central station communications use facilities leased from the telephone company, his experience from the answering service business allowed him to maximize his negotiations.

It was no surprise that this experience led Philip Kleinman to introduce one of the first efficient multiplex systems. In fact the product achieved such a cost-effective delivery of service, that he began to sell it to other alarm service providers. If anyone ever establishes a Fire Alarm System Museum, the exhibit will certainly have to include an AFA Centrak multiplex system.

Wisely, Philip Kleinman encouraged his two sons, Robert and Richard, to pursue higher education that would prepare them to manage the growing entity now known as AFA Protective Systems, Inc.. Robert earned a law degree. Richard successfully completed certification as a Certified Public Accountant.

With his two sons at his side, Philip Kleinman could continue to concentrate on maintaining a high level of quality. He could expand the technology of delivering alarm service appropriately. And, he could grow the business over time so that it would realize a tenfold increase in sales.

Most importantly, in achieving these significant goals, Philip Kleinman would do so without once sacrificing his personal integrity, high sense of moral responsibility, and deep determination to perform as a true business professional.

I met Philip Kleinman for the first time at a meeting of the Central Station Electrical Protection Association. The Association's President, Stan Lott, had recently introduced a marketing cam-

paigned called "Five Star Service." In my talk on improving the quality of central station service, I gave each of those stars a catch phrase. Those phrases described five elements that construct quality central station service.

As I left the meeting room at the conclusion of my talk, I heard a voice behind me calling my name. I turned and a thin, well-dressed, quite distinguished business man introduced himself as Philip Kleinman. He complimented me on my talk and encouraged me to keep holding high the banner of quality.

Later I would meet his sons, Robert and Richard, and I would have other opportunities to speak at length with Philip Kleinman. With each talk, my admiration for him grew. As I observed the employees he had gathered around him, I began to realize that he truly did inspire a professionalism that had become a major motivating force in their lives.

I last spoke to Philip Kleinman a few weeks before he died. He had rallied once again in his more than 20-year battle with cancer to attend the B'Nai Mitzvah of his two grandsons, Evan and Jared, Richard's sons. As we stood talking in the aisle of the synagogue, I realized that the cancer had weakened him considerably. Yet in his voice, I heard the same enthusiasm that I had first heard long ago when he encouraged me to champion the cause of quality. And, his legendary sense of humor had remained fully intact. I remember this last conversation well; how very proud he was of Robert and Richard, their wives, and his grandchildren.

And now, he is gone. How truly fortunate the Fire Alarm Industry should feel that such a man as Philip Kleinman lived among us and held up such high standards.

His legacy continues in the corporation he molded. Each new quality installation, each bit of well-delivered service, each answered phone call, each prompt dispatch to the fire department or police department serves to memorialize him.

Rest in peace, Philip Kleinman. Your high standards lead us still. □

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