

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Koby Marowell



Finding a New HOME

Early in the morning on Feb. 19, Beth and I packed our four children into the family van for the five-hour trip from our home in Pittsburgh to Adrian College. The final presidential interview with the Board of Trustees awaited us and we would experience it as we have so many other things in our lives...together, as a family, united and supportive.

Our ride to Adrian was filled with much anticipation and excitement.

"How many people will be in the interview room?" my teenage son asked.

"Forty," I said.

"What do I say if they ask me a question?" my ten-year-old daughter nervously asked.

"Tell them the truth," Mom said from the front seat.

"You mean they might ask us questions?" my second son said. "I thought this was Dad's interview."

"They probably won't, but you never know. It's always good to be prepared."

"Dad, if you don't get the job will you feel like a loser?" asked my sixteen-year-old with all the profundity and fear that only a teenager can muster.

"Only if I don't do the best I can," I said.

When we entered the beautiful Hickman Board Room, the trustees sat behind long rectangular tables. The atmosphere was electric when Chairman Gary Valade asked the first question. Several other questions followed until trustee Kurt Darrow proclaimed that the children had watched their dad answer enough questions and it was time for a vote.

As we exited the room my third son whispered that he was confused by every question the trustees asked and he was surprised that I knew the answers. I wasn't sure if I should be proud or humiliated by his comment.

After a few minutes passed we were escorted back into the room. As our family began to sit down at the head table to hear a decision rendered by the chairman, the entire board rose in unison to give us a standing ovation.

The job was ours!

The support and emotion of that moment continues to grip me even as I write this article. The best of Adrian College crystallized in that moment: Adrian is a loving, supportive, kind, and compassionate community that cares about people and openly welcomes others into the family.

Since Feb. 19 our family has been the beneficiary of the best that Adrian has to offer. For all of your kindness we say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts we say thank you. And we look forward to many wonderful years ahead as we move forward with you to make Adrian an even better educational institution.

Warmly,

Jeff, Beth, Jake, Carter, Taylor, and Julianna Docking

EDITOR'S LETTER



I'm meeting the widow of **Richard Pokriefka '84** at a pancake house in Sterling Heights, and I'm a little uneasy.

Dr. Pokriefka died three years ago in the prime of his life, from a heart attack at the age of 40. He was an incredibly well-respected physician, a devoted father, and a man who didn't have enough years for all the good he did.

At Homecoming on Oct. 15 he will receive the Alumni Humanitarian Award posthumously, and so I'm trying to tell his story. His widow plans to spend the day walking me through his footsteps, the clinics, the hospitals, to meet his friends and patients. She's essentially going to unpack his story for me to examine, and I wonder how emotionally difficult it might be.

I come in late and tell the hostess I'm meeting someone. "Is her name Beth?" Yes, I reply, and she leads me to the booth where Mrs. Pokriefka is waiting.

Everything goes beautifully. Beth does

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I read the summer issue of Contact and was impressed with the coverage of President Caine and his 16 years at Adrian College. What a wonderful idea – a president who cares about students and is interested in them even after graduation.

Also, congratulations on the article about Dr. Elizabeth Crosby in the winter issue. She must be one of the most famous grads of Adrian College, if not the most famous. She was a distinguished professor of neurology at the University of Michigan Medical School and trained some of the finest neurosurgeons in the United States. She became a great scientist even though discriminated against.

Martha R. Seger, Ph.D.
Ann Arbor



LETTER

from the

Alumni Board

Homecoming is right around the corner, Oct. 14-16, to be exact.

But first, a little about me.

About a year ago I got a cell phone and unplugged my land line. Last Christmas I got an MP3 player no bigger than a lipstick case that holds 400 songs, and CDs became passé. For Father's Day I got a GPS unit, and now – thanks to satellites whizzing through space – I can tell exactly where I am on the globe within a few feet.

Finally, for my birthday this summer I got satellite radio, and now I can indulge my every musical whim, 24/7, at the touch of a button. In short, I'm plugged in.

For all that is exciting and liberating in this smorgasbord of choice, there is an equal and somewhat ominous temptation: to recede into oneself.

As slick as that new MP3 player is, I need to remember it does nothing to improve me. It simply reflects – and organizes and plays in 128 kbps high-quality stereo sound – personal tastes that already exist.

And I need to remind myself not to let the functionality of a cell phone slip into an excuse to indulge ego with a needless call back to the office, or alleviate boredom while sitting through a delay at the airport. And that poring over the instruction booklet for that powerful GPS unit shouldn't replace a game of pitch-and-catch with my son.

Excuse me, John, but what were you saying about Homecoming?

Hold on, I was just getting there.

You see, there are things that technology cannot and should not replace. They are the human relationships that sustain us, that give our lives context and keep us grounded. To the point: Have you ever seen two people dancing together in those frenetic iPod commercials?

As cool and seductive as new technology is, it cannot take the place of face-to-face contact, especially with people who helped you build the memories and character that color your life even now. Sure, it can be a bit intimidating to come back to campus after many years, or even decades, and face people you've lost contact with. It might even be daunting to know you may have forgotten some of the people who were meaningful to you then, or vice versa.

But one of the consistent themes that have emerged in the last few years I've spent on campus is how sturdy, and forgiving, those human connections tend to be. And they are not as rooted in the past as you might imagine. (Umm, sorry about that night we put your Yugo on top of Pellowe Hall...)

If you've been away awhile, I encourage you to attend any of the myriad events on the calendar, and especially to stop by the alumni tent at the Homecoming game. You'll be surprised to learn how little it takes to rekindle the connections.

And for those who've forgotten the way, the coordinates for Maple Stadium are N 41° 53.700', W 84° 02.197' – just follow the arrow on your GPS unit.

John Hiner '82

President, Adrian College Alumni Board

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the driving, answers all my questions, makes the introductions, keeps us on schedule. People let me in and tell me about a man they loved and respected. A picture begins to emerge, and for one day I come as close as possible to the life of a remarkable Adrian College alum.

I wrote the story (see page 13). The purpose of this magazine is for stories like that. But I still don't think I completely understand who Rik Pokriefka was. It takes more than a day to find that out. I wanted to learn more, but I had other deadlines and a new president at the College to worry about. All I could get was a glimpse.

One thing I can say is that Rik Pokriefka is the kind of guy I'd like to be. He is one of that rare class of people that seems to get more out of life than the rest of us. His curiosity and intelligence were boundless, and so were his talents for medicine and business. He was full of vim and mischief, and the type of compassion that puts everything else on the back burner (including basics like food, sleep, and in the end, good health). He sacrificed; he burned bright.

But more than wanting to be him, I want to meet him. I spent the day walking in his footsteps, through his neighborhood. I looked into the eyes of his close colleague and witnessed him struggle not to cry right there on the busy hospital floor.

These were the people who knew him, and who will never be the same for it. There was a tinge of pain in their faces that easily broke into smiles or laughter. Everything was measured by an urgency to tell his story, tell how he was different, try to capture someone who was so many things to so many people.

I spent the whole day trying to get to know him, and I suppose I started to look forward to it. It seemed almost like at the end of our exhausting day chasing his ghost, Beth would drive me back to the pancake house to get my car and he'd be waiting in a booth, tired and in doctor's clothes, waiting to talk to us.

Waiting to give a little more.

Brad Whitehouse, editor of Contact