



Remembering Frank Hoban

Years ago, I interviewed for a job I wasn't sure I wanted with a man who wasn't confident he wanted me

THE JOB WAS BEING SECOND-IN-CHARGE OF NASA'S Program Project Management Initiative (precursor to the Academy of Program and Project Leadership), and my interviewer was Frank Hoban.

Shortly after we exchanged typical pleasantries, Frank jumped right into discussing ideas, beliefs and goals. After twenty minutes he asked, "So, when can you start?" I made the second best decision of my life and accepted the job on the spot.

I remember a typical Frank remark when embarking on a new assignment, "Let's get started soon because we can do some really important things, and let's remember to have fun." Few days were as enjoyable as meeting with Frank over lunch and hearing stories of escorting Wernher von Braun to the Dick Cavett show, or working for George Low on the Low Cost Systems Office, or the early days of Space Station.

Frank came from a project world. He much preferred addressing real issues by working with the best people and staying focused on the customer requirements. When I first started with Frank, he informed me that the more time I spent in my Headquarters office the less effective I would be. The customers, experts and practitioners, were in the field—spend time with them.

He made that point personally by the way he used his last few weeks before leaving NASA. He escorted me on a tour of each of the centers. We met with all of the working groups and individuals who were so vital to the

project management community. I still remember him telling everyone what a wonderful leader I would make, and his strong insistence that I receive their support.

Frank had accepted a university teaching position. He felt it was time for a new adventure and assured me he would always be nearby to help—and he was. Over

the years we stayed close. One time, several years ago, Frank invited my family to his New Year's Day party. We went for a walk on the grounds of his beautiful home, the two of us, and he asked me how things were going. This was during a period of excessive travel and long hours. I knew he could sense I was burning out. He shared some of his experiences and then talked from the heart about the most important

thing being family. He warned me that it was easy getting caught up in the excitement of work and travel.

The last time I saw Frank was at the Goddard Space Flight Center. We had a few minutes to talk. We discussed possibilities, exchanged ideas, caught up on people and agreed to get together for lunch soon. Leaving, I noted how his eyes sparkled with energy, excitement and adventure. I knew he was planning the next big thing.

Frank was a big part of what makes NASA special. He was part of a hero generation that faced challenges, dreamt big and remembered to have fun. He embodied a love for family, country and NASA. I have always considered myself an extremely lucky person for having known him. •

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