

Russert will be missed

Analyst was a thoughtful leader

Maybe it's just the people I hang out with. When my friends and family heard the news of Tim Russert's death, they felt as stunned as I did. The comments I heard over and over were, "I feel like I lost a friend," or "It's like a member of my family died."

We all witnessed these reactions throughout the remarkable tributes to this man, the outpouring of love and respect, for this life cut short.

I listened to the memorials feeling like I knew Tim personally. Through the years, "Meet the Press" was on my Sunday schedule in India ink. If I missed it on NBC in the morning, gratefully I caught the show on MSNBC later in the day. Throughout the primary season this year, I listened to all the political commentators, always waiting though, for Tim Russert to give the straight scoop.

How many times on Tuesdays did we all wonder how in heck Tim – and the others – could be summing up into the wee hours, then appear bright as ever on the early morning shows, cradling those steaming mugs of coffee?

But much as I thought I knew all about this Timothy John Russert guy, much as I devoured his two books, I actually knew very little about him as a leader.

Listening to the tearful accounts of so many people who worked with Tim, that's when it became clear to me that he personi-

fied inspirational leadership – the only brand of leadership that works, period.

Authenticity is the essential factor in leadership. Without it, nothing else matters much. I don't think anyone in Tim's life, even among the millions of us who knew him only through his televised life, questioned his authenticity. He was the real deal and everyone who worked for him knew it. From his staff and associates, we heard hours of evidence that he cared about them personally, their spouses and kids, grandparents, probably even their next-door neighbors. They also knew he cared about the professional growth and success of everyone on his staff. As Mary Matalin said on that airing of Meet the Press the Sunday after Tim's death, he was ambitious, but just as ambitious for others' success as his own.

Tim modeled accountability, preparation, integrity, collaboration, open-mindedness and being fully alive in the present. In his approach to his own job he clearly demonstrated his expectations for his staff. He walked beside them, a partner as much as a boss.

Tim Russert's enthusiasm for sports is legendary. It is chronicled in many ways, including his seat on the board of the Baseball Hall of Fame, and The Tim Russert Highway leading to Rich Stadium in Orchard Park, New York, the home of the Buffalo Bills. Even more so, in the "Go Bills" we heard him say at the closing of

Meet the Press during football season.

Of course he knew all about my Rule Number One, have fun. The networks could have televised another full week in Tim's honor, a week packed with stories of Tim's great gift of humor, the sparkle in his eyes and ever-ready laugh.

He gave us a giant and lasting impression of what it's like to love life and the people on this planet.

An ancient Sufi poem I've had for years in my "stuff I like" folder reminds me of Tim Russert, the honest, fair and fun Irish guy that we'll all miss forever.

*"I am happy even before I have
a reason.*

*I am full of light even before
the sun or moon
can reach the sky.*

My dear companions

*We have been in love with God
for so very, very long.*

*What can we now do
but forever dance."*



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