

Director of Purchasing and Warehouse Dies

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Tom Hippie, director of purchasing and warehouse for Citrus College, passed away in his sleep from complications of diabetes and a heart related illness on December 27. He was 61.

Hippie, who was hired at Citrus in 1998 as the Director of Purchasing and Warehouse, was always known as a private person to most of the people who worked with him here at Citrus.

Hippie was responsible for purchasing all the equipment throughout the campus, such as office furniture, and he also helped coordinate bidding for new construction, building modifications and renovation.

At a memorial held in the Handy Campus Center on Jan. 4, Hippie was eulogized as a kind and caring person. He was described as a problem-solver and who respected and nurtured his employees.

Jeff Eichler, environmental health and safety program supervisor remembered Hippie as jovial. "He was very straightforward...I guess one could say he was never up for BS," Eichler said. "I really came to appreciate his wealth of knowledge. He was certainly an interesting person."

During the memorial, Mike Harrington, director of facilities at Citrus College and Hippie's best friend, joked that he really "didn't want to deliver a eulogy because Hippie "Would find some cosmic way to kick my butt."

Hippie, the youngest of about 14 children, was raised on a farm in Minnesota. His parents died while he was young, and Hippie moved to Barstow to live with his aunt and uncle.

He attended UC Santa Barbara intending to be a teacher, but Harrington said, quickly decided to change his profession after becoming aware of the sheer number of children he would have to teach.

Chief Engineer Jim Pierce, a 35-year employee of Citrus College, remembered Hippie as "very helpful and so knowledgeable. He always wanted his way. He wouldn't always let us do what we wanted, but that sort of comes with the job description."

Judy Proctor, purchasing assistant, said Hippie's death came as a surprise to everyone but observed that he had been in declining health during the three weeks prior to his death.

"His mind was like paint remover," Harrington said. "If you wanted to know the unvarnished truth, let Tom swirl it around in his mind for a while and...Viola!"

"Tom was just so easygoing. He didn't get worked up about anything. He had a deadpan sense of humor, and he treated everybody very well," said Bob Lopez, senior buyer at Citrus. "His death came unexpectedly. We're all so deeply saddened and disappointed."

A scholarship has been established in memory of Hippie. Those who would like to contribute to the Thomas O. Hippie Scholarship Fund may contact Citrus College Foundations at 626-914-8825.

Harrington said he remembered Hippie once saying "Working here at Citrus is damn-near perfect. And most people don't know that."

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