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Remembering Papa Lyman

20 September 2005 — Lyman W. Newlin

Remembrance by John Laraway (Blackwell) <John.Laraway@Blackwell.com>

“In 1967, I was a wet-behind-the-ears sales rep for Prentice Hall. Lyman was the Office Manager and buyer for Richard Abel Co. in Zion, IL.

Lyman had a reputation of being hard on sales reps since he saw so many and he didn’t “suffer fools.” I would visit him in the spring and fall with the new catalogs so he could make his order.

I was nervous because of his reputation and because he had so much experience in this business. (I knew he had been the Technical Book buyer at Krochs and Brentannos in Chicago.)

In I came with the fall catalog. Lyman sat behind a big desk. He wore bow ties then and smoked a pipe, which gave him an even more formidable look.

I would give him a copy of the catalog and sitting down in front of him, I would open my copy and begin to recite explanations about the titles listed therein. I began to rattle off descriptions of titles not paying much attention to what he was doing. When I looked up, I could tell he was quite a bit ahead of me in the catalog. He was writing a number next to each title and circling it. These were the quantities he wanted to order. I realized he wasn’t paying any attention to me. He knew what he wanted and he knew the list better than I did! Just sat back down, shut up and waited for my order. After he finished marking up the catalog, he handed it back to me and took me to lunch. He didn’t put me down or make any remark about me being a “rookie.” He was too much the gentleman. I also realized he was a very warm person. We got along almost from the beginning. Over the next: almost 40 years, I don’t ever remember a cross word with him.

He and I worked together for many of those 40 years and we spoke regularly about family, work, food, football, books and just about anything else you can talk about. He was a true friend and mentor.

I’ll miss him, but I won’t be sad since I have too many good things to remember him by.

If we’re lucky, someone like Lyman passes though our lives ... and I was one of those lucky ones.”

Pictured above is Lyman, at a Charleston Conference, posing with friends.
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