

Here is a little bit of Ankeny trivia most people do not know. One of the longest streets in Ankeny was named after two local developers. One side of the proposed street was owned by each, and when the City asked them for a name, they decided that they would combine their names to name the street. Charlie Triplett and Rod Lein combined to form Trilien Street.

Most people in Ankeny mispronounce this street name. Technically it should be pronounced "Tri-Lynn", but most people, including me call it Tri-lean". The reason I am talking about this street that runs very close to my house is because one of the developers, Rod Lien recently passed away. Rod is one of the first people I met when we moved to Ankeny. Along with the help of his daughter and son-in-law Judy and Rick Peterson, they built the only house we have ever lived in here in Ankeny.

Rod Lein is an Ankeny success story. I don't know for sure, but I am guessing that he inherited his entrepreneurial spirit from his father who ran the Ankeny meat locker. He was an Ankeny High School graduate and from what I understand a very good athlete. In his short 74 years in Ankeny Rod is responsible for several projects including Briarwood Golf Course and First Realty of Ankeny. He started a newspaper called Ankeny Today, which is where this column was first published. But Rod's true gift to Ankeny came in housing for people over 50.

Oakwood Terrace, Mallard Creek Townhomes, Maplewood Condominiums and Mill-Pond Retirement Campus are projects that carried Rod's special touch. Rod was always very gracious to me, making me feel like I was the most important person in town. I am guessing that he made a lot of people feel that way. He was very supportive of the bank, giving me opportunities to earn his business.

As small business owners and managers we all need to have some of Rod's best characteristics. We need vision to build what other people might not see as a need. We need to make our work quality work that will pass the test of time. We need to give others the chance to earn our business. Not give it away, but earn it like a good business partner should. Trying to emulate his best characteristic is probably the hardest; we need to treat each person that we meet like they are the most important person in town.

Not everyone always agreed with Rod or supported all his projects. Rod didn't see those people as obstacles, he saw them as challenges. An opportunity to learn, change and grow. When Rod found out that the cancer he thought he beat had come back, he faced his remaining short time, and preparation for the next life in the same manner he lived his life, straight forward and looking at the problem as a challenge.

Rod leaves us a lot of ways to remember the good things he accomplished in Ankeny; his wife Dee, 5 children, 13 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. He leaves us with those notable projects that were built for others. Most importantly he leaves us with an example on how to be entrepreneurial and look for the good in others. Thanks Rod, we will miss you.

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ankeny.