

Music, mermaids and molding leaders

Thank you, Dr. Rose, for your surprises and leadership lessons BY PAULA POLGLASE ('92, '96M)

I have no idea what the class was officially called. I do remember it was a 400-level management class, my first business class at JMU, and slightly intimidating for a senior speech communication major. In the fall of 1991, the class was held in the brand new business building, where the paint was fresh and the marble was shiny — a slightly different experience from the aging, yet beloved Anthony-Seeger Hall.

I didn't find the class in the course catalog; the information was passed on to me. To get into the class I had to call the office of the vice president for finance and administration, Dr. Linwood Rose. To even know to make that call, well, someone who had been in the class before you had to tell you about it. In my case it was Jeff Smith ('90) and Cindy Leeson Huggett ('91), the two previous presidents of JMU Student Ambassadors.

The unofficial name of the class could have been "The Leadership Challenge." That was the name of the book by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner that we used to explore leadership styles. Dr. Rose and Dr. Mark Warner team-taught the class. Most of the students in the class were student leaders — Miller Fellows, SGA officers, Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council officers, and Student Ambassadors. We weren't learning theories, we were learning leadership skills and immediately applying them into our student organizations.

I was familiar with Dr. Warner but did not really know Dr. Rose. He came to every class dressed in a suit. He was formal and a little intimidating at first. However, he was quick to talk about his sons, tell stories about his job and offer perspectives on our leadership challenges. And, he brought the music. I had never had a class that started with music each week. Dr. Rose had the smallest, most powerful speakers I'd ever heard and started class each week with jazz, or *The Little Mermaid*

About the Professor JMU President Linwood H. Rose has led Madison into a position of national prominence. He began his JMU career in 1975 and has worked in every division on campus. He was appointed president in 1998 and retires this year. Under his tenure as president, more than 10 new academic programs were implemented, 25 buildings were constructed, enrollment grew by 37 percent and a Phi Beta Kappa chapter was installed. Asked of what he is most proud, Rose says: reducing the student-faculty ratio from 19:1 to 16:1, a graduation rate in the top 10 among public universities, and student overall satisfaction rates above 90 percent.



Paula Polglase ('92, '96M) says JMU President Linwood H. Rose modeled the best leadership by loving his students, the people he works with and James Madison University.

soundtrack or classical selections — he surprised us. In fact, one week when he had to be away we didn't quite know how to get started — there was no music.

We watched *Dead Poets Society*; we were led through an experiential visioning exercise while classmates lay on the floor. We listened to guest speakers who were respected campus leaders. JMU women's basketball coach Sheila Moorman told us that when it came time for her to choose a point guard she didn't choose the most

experienced player or the most athletic — she chose the best leader. We talked a lot about that decision.

The most impressive thing about this class was that our teachers were respected leaders. Dr. Rose and Dr. Warner were obviously good friends and they were having fun. They were also very serious about their own leadership development and about ours. The lessons on visioning the future, modeling the way and encouraging the heart resonated the most with me.

While there was no way for us to know that our professor would become the JMU president seven years later, none of us were surprised when he did. The process he undertook to bring in students, staff members, professors and alumni to create a shared vision for JMU could have been taken right from the class that he taught.

When I recently searched for my "leadership challenge" textbook it was right where I expected, on the bookshelf in my bedroom. Twenty plus years later, it is the only textbook from college that remains on the shelf. The paper cover has long since disappeared but the highlighted text and dog-eared pages are reminders of how important this class was in my leadership development.

Kouzes and Posner share in their book the secret of success: "Just possibly the best-kept secret of successful leaders is love. Leadership is an affair of the heart, not of the head."

Thank you, Dr. Rose, for modeling the way by loving your students, the people you work with and James Madison University. *mp*

About the Author Paula Harahan Polglase ('92, '96M) is a public affairs associate in the JMU communications and marketing office. She has also worked in residence life, student activities and annual giving. She advises her sorority, Sigma Kappa, and currently serves as president of the board of Harrisonburg's Explore More Discovery Museum. She and her husband, Geoff Polglase ('85), deputy director of JMU athletics, have three sons.