

A Loss for the Hospitality Community

Mourning the death of my old friend, Michael Birchenall

Most of you only knew Michael from his picture in this magazine over the years. Most of you enjoyed his candid and always on-point editorials and learned a little something about hospitality as you read. I know I did. Not just from his writings, but in my case, for having known him as a friend of 30 or so years. I cannot remember when I first met Michael, but I remember so much of what he said, how he said it, how sincere he was, and how much I learned from him.

I googled the word hospitality, as that is what I write about, and



sometimes need to remind myself of its definition so that I am true to the meaning.

Today I looked at the synonyms, and there was Michael. Over and over and over. The synonyms? Friendliness, warm reception, helpfulness, warmth, kindness, congeniality, geniality, cordiality, courtesy, amenability and generosity could not sum up better the person and persona that was, and in my heart and mind, still is Michael Birchenall. He always seemed happy to see me. Always greeted me with a smile. Always went out of his way to fulfill any

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promises or commitments he made, and not just to me, to be sure, but to everyone he touched. And he touched so many people in his professional and personal lives. His living after all, was taking pictures. He never said, "Say cheese," that I can recall, but his pictures told the story: smiling faces. Because that is what he knew how to do — make people smile. Make people happy.

Michael's illness took its toll over too long a period of time, painful and agonizing for him, I know. Yet,

he showed interest in others, in me, whenever I saw him or spoke with him. Until now, when I can just feel his friendship, daydream his laugh, and take great satisfaction and comfort in having known and grown with and because of him.

I love you Michael. Always have. Always will. Rest in peace.

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