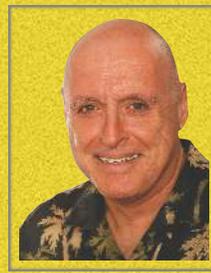


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 668 Learning to Laugh at Yourself Helps Build Relationships

Have you ever been asked to keep an eye on something or someone, while a friend or family member went off-island? Did the situation ever go upside down on you? I'm Jerry Roberts and today, I've got a story to tell about this, on The Extra Point.

It was probably the second year of the J.Q. Fanihi Show on KUAM 610. The program was going well. Advertising was rock solid, which made the late Jon Anderson happy. I was trying out new things on the air and just having a great time.

One day, Anderson introduced me to a tall, bearded man named T. Stell Newman. You might be familiar with that name, as it adorns the visitor center for the War in the Pacific National Historical Park, just outside the Naval Station main gate.

Newman came to Guam to establish the facility, but there was no park to begin with, It was just him.

I interviewed him several times, and he was a loose, funny guy, with an infectious laugh and sharp sense of humor. He wore one of those Smokey the Bear hats. He was extremely likeable and it was obvious he knew what he was doing when it came to park business. He would update me on his progress, and the running joke was that he carried the park with him in his truck.

He came on the air one day and gave me the latest report, then asked if I would do him a favor. He had to go off-island for business. He told me that he was growing the first tree that would be in the new park, and he was worried that it would die while he was gone, if it didn't receive proper care.

I told him I didn't know anything about trees or plants, and maybe somebody else would be better suited to do it. He said he hated to

bother me, but since we had developed this friendship over many months, he hoped I would agree to help him out. There was nobody else he could turn to. "Yeah, sure, I'm happy to help you," I said. He got excited and thanked me, and said he'd come by the day he was leaving, and drop off the tree and everything I'd need.

He did that a few days later, coming in after my show, giving me the tree which was in a heavy container. He also gave me a jug of tree food. He said all I needed to do was give it a little water, then spray it with the food, and the tree would be fine. Newman said he'd be back in about three weeks to reclaim his tree...in essence, the park.

Every day I sprinkled a little water on the tree and gave it the food. Stell was a good guy, I liked him, and I didn't want to let him down. I took care of the tree, er, the park.

After a few days, Anderson told me I should check on the tree because it didn't look good. He said the leaves were wilting and he thought it was dying. He asked if I was feeding it and I assured him I was. He suggested I might want to give it a little extra, so I did, but it didn't seem to help.

The tree got worse and after another week it looked horrible. Newman had already called to ask me if I was feeding it every day and if it was doing well, and I told him about the leaves. He said to keep feeding it because it was what he was going to use to start the park.

He got back on-island, called me and said he'd come by the next day to pick up the tree. When he got there, the tree looked horrible and — in front of Anderson — Newman erupted into a tirade of abuse. He called me totally irresponsible.

(Con't.)

He said, "All you had to do was feed the stupid tree, which you obviously have not done." He said my negligence had set the National Park Service back months. He grabbed the tree, looked me square in the eye, and barked, "I asked you for a favor because I thought you were my friend, and you killed the park!" Then he stormed out the door.

Jaw dropped, I was stunned. I began to tell Jon that I had done everything I'd been asked to do, and I didn't know why the tree had died. He just walked away, and said something like, "Man, I can't believe you did that."

Later that day, Jon came into my office and said, "J.Q., did you ever wonder what you were feeding that tree?" I said it was food. He laughed and said I was so naive...then told me it was plant killer. He had been in on the prank from the beginning. Jaw dropped again. He said, "Fanihi, you've been had," and walked away laughing.

I picked up the phone and called Newman. He answered and I got out the words, "You no good..." and he started roaring in laughter.

Then I joined him, laughing at both how gullible I was, and at his incredible effort to set me up, getting Jon involved as well. He got me good, and we had several good laughs over it.

I've made my share of silly mistakes over time, some of them embarrassing. My mom and my first mentor, Big Ed, were very clear in their advice — and here's the takeaway — never take yourself too seriously, and always have the ability to laugh at yourself...even when it hurts.

There's something else. When people see that you can laugh at yourself, it makes you that much more likeable in their eyes, and they can be comfortable around you. That helps to build workplace relationships.

Stell Newman was one of the best memories I had from those years. He was fun to be around, and people loved to see him come through the door.

His name is on that building just outside of Naval Station because a couple of years later

he was killed when a motorist hit him on the driver's side, after coming across the center dividing line, in Asan. I was asked by his wife to host his funeral service, and I told this story that day.

To learn more about the work Stell began, use your favorite search engine and enter "T. Stell Newman Visitor Center", and their site will come up. Then, go check it out.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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