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For thirty years, I've been marvelling at the effect Jim Travers had on people in his day-to-day life. Just to give you an idea what I'm talking about, even the security guards in our building were weeping last week when they heard of his passing.

As you all know, you only meet a character, a person, like Jim once or twice in your life. He had a legendary sense of humour, of course. What a friend of mine once called one of god's great jokers. His sense of humour covered the gamut from whimsical to inane to dark humour.

On the Liberal campaign bus in the spring of 2004, for instance, our first stop was a walk-about at a garden centre in Charlottetown. As the bus pulled up, the liberals announced they had a serum handy to treat allergic reactions if anyone suffered a bee sting walking among the flowers.

Well, Jim thought that announcement was hilarious and, a day or two later, went out and bought the liberal wagon master a large, stuffed bumble bee, which hung proudly from the ceiling of the Liberal plane throughout the campaign.

Another time Jim, Susan Delacourt and I were in a small turbo-prop plane on a seemingly interminable flight from Ottawa to North Bay. Coming in for a landing, we were flying so slowly that we hardly seemed to be moving at all. The door to the cockpit was open and we began to hear this tick-tick-tick sound like the noise from a car's turn signal.

Travers leaned forward and said to the pilot: "Excuse me, but I think someone is trying to pass us."

His humour had a dark edge at times, perhaps born from the defence mechanisms of foreign correspondents in dangerous situations. Just the other day, he was telling me that in Lebanon during the civil war, they used to joke that when you checked into a hotel in Beirut, the desk clerk didn't ask whether you wanted a water view or a city view. It was: "Do want the car-bomb side or the sniper side."

But the jokes of course were just a small part of what Jim offered us. He was a great friend, who could find time to come over – unasked – and help carry boxes when you were moving – he even helped me put my daughter Margot's crib together one time.

And above all, he was also as you know a superb, very *serious* journalist. He excelled as a foreign correspondent, editor and a national columnist whose

opinions were valued at every level of society. He was a great motivator and a great teacher.

I'm amazed at the number of people in the past few days who have recalled how much they learned from Jim, particularly as young reporters or newcomers to Parliament Hill.

And though I often thought that Jim secretly felt awkward in some social situations, his performance as a top-notch TV analyst always seemed effortless. It was fitting, I guess, because Jim liked to cite the definition of writers as "shy extroverts."

In any case, he always agreed with me that we were fortunate enough to share the world's best profession.

As a journalist and a Canadian, Jim was, as you know, deeply committed to democracy, fairness and human rights. And he never compromised or pulled his punches. No doubt his tenure as editor of the *Ottawa Citizen* would have lasted longer had he been willing to compromise on his beliefs with the paper's owners at that time.

And without belabouring the point, I should note that, in recent years, Jim had become very concerned about the state of democracy in this country. He after all, won a National Newspaper Award writing about that very subject last year. Although he always said the NNA awards were just a crapshoot, it was a fitting and welcome honour.

Jim had great strength and courage – qualities that have been admirably matched by his wife Joan during her family's ordeal in the past few weeks.

So we'll all miss him – as a colleague, as a force in Canadian life and, most of all as a friend.

You never know exactly what is in a person's heart. But for all the jokes and irreverence, I think Jim really was about something else: I don't remember how it came up but he once said to me there's only one reason why we're put here on earth – to help each other.