



Sharon Burnside, colleague at the Ottawa Citizen and Toronto Star

On a good day, Jim would stand in the doorway of his office at the *Ottawa Citizen*, face the newsroom and bark. On a very good day, he would bark and howl. One of the many wonderful stories about Jim, published in recent days, quoted *Citizen* staffers who said he defused tense moments when he “barked like a mad dog.” Well, I beg to differ. I always thought he barked for joy.

Jim and I – and many others in this room today – once worked together for five years at the *Ottawa Citizen*, trying to make a great paper.

Jim, the editor, tackled challenges at the newspaper and in the newsroom like his alter ego, Jim, the cyclist – with a determined, fierce, relentless energy. He pumped like crazy, hung on for dear life and loved the ride. The rest of us did our gasping best to keep up.

He was a great editor for the same reasons he was a great columnist, and we’ve all been sharing the adjectives for days now . . .

He was curious, fearless and completely engaged in whatever he did. The newsroom and the newspaper were guaranteed his best. His intelligence ranged deep and wide, he was passionate and compassionate. Reporters and editors and publishers were guaranteed his interest, his enthusiasm, his ideas . . . and his ideas . . . and his ideas . . . and his ideas.

His rare talent for seeing patterns and links, then making sense of them, made him the best strategic thinker I ever met and a gifted analyst when he wrote.

Yet he always shared the stage, along with its “opportunities” and successes.

Life in the newsroom was stressful; life in the newsroom is still stressful; life in the newsroom will remain stressful. Laughter kept us going. As you know, Jim was a kind of comic savant – the lines were out of his mouth faster than he could think them and best when unexpected.

The *Citizen* once sat on the edge of town, and tucked behind it, down a service road that wedged past a parking area at the back of the building, was a small mall that housed a furniture store called Dante’s.

Jim and I were returning from a meeting somewhere and headed for the back parking area when a lost driver stopped us. She asked, “Can you tell me where to find Dante’s?” “Yes,” Jim answered. “But first you’ll have to go to hell.”

Talent and intelligence don't count for much without integrity. Same goes for journalism. Jim was a great editor because the newsroom could count on him to do the right thing when it was hardest to do the right thing.

He spoke truth to power, he practised what he preached and he took the high road.

One evening long ago, there was another sorrowful occasion, when the editors who worked with Jim at the *Citizen*, gathered for his good-bye dinner.

He spoke to us at length that night and I've never been prouder of him, and that's saying something. Despite his own despair, he said not a single, bitter word. What mattered, going forward, he said, was for us to continue to make a difference by doing great journalism.

And then he did just that.

In closing, as Jim would say – Fly straight.