

From Where I Sit . . .

“DOES CHARACTER COUNT?”

The Year was 1976: America had survived the nightmare of Watergate, but the morale of our nation was hurting. A vice-president, and later a President were forced to resign from the highest offices in our land due to a lack of integrity and character in office. For the first time, perhaps in a long time, we were a people hungry for values again: For things that were right, and true, and fair. During these troubled days, a seldom-heard-of man at that time from Plains, Georgia ran for President, and shocked a nation with his fresh appeal to these very virtues.

The joke around the nation in 1976 when Jimmy Carter was running for President was “Jimmy Who?” But soon they would be saying, “Mr. President.” Today that same “Mr. President” is a force of influence that has been felt around the world for his sense of TRUTH, FAIRNESS, and GOODWILL towards all men. Mr. Carter has demonstrated an answer to the question that I pose for you today: **“DOES CHARACTER REALLY COUNT?”**

Friends, if America counts, and man’s relationship to his fellow man counts, if righteousness which exalts a nation counts: then CHARACTER CERTAINLY DOES COUNT!!

It’s encouraging to find people who look for the qualities of TRUTH, FAIRNESS, and GOODWILL to others. We can no longer afford to be self serving if we are to continue to be the great leader in world affairs.

Someone has well said: “Character is what you are in the dark.” It is the measure of the real person, and not the outer image that he chooses to let us see. A man of character is a man who has to do what is right just because it is his inner nature to do so, and he must be true to who he is.

This attribute is well illustrated in the book entitled *Days of Grace: A Memoir* by Arthur Ashe where we read of the moving account of the tennis great who died of AIDS resulting from a blood transfusion.

He relates of the day in Dallas, in 1973, when he was playing in the singles final of a World Championship Tennis tournament. His opponent was Stan Smith, a man Ashe respected highly. On one crucial point, Smith stormed forward, racing to intercept a ball about to bounce a second time off his side of the net. When the point was over, Ashe was sure the ball had bounced twice before he hit it, and that the point was his. Smith said he had reached the ball in time. The umpire was baffled.

Ashe conceded the point, and later, after the match---which he lost--a reporter inquired how he could have taken Smith’s word on such an important point?” Ashe’s reply serves our point well: “I wouldn’t take just anybody’s word for it, But if Stan Smith says he got to the ball, he got to it. I trust his character.”

Our responses and our choices must be so second nature that people will already know what we will do, just based on our character.

. . . Terry Broome

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