

THE FRONT LINES

From the Shadow of the Golden Dome

By Dave Ashman

At a meeting a few weeks ago, one of the speakers told the following story of the legendary Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne. Like all legends, the facts may be open to interpretation, but the end result never changes: the hero finds a way to get the job done.

What Are You Willing to Do?

The story begins with Coach Rockne looking for a new assistant to join his staff at Notre Dame. The speaker tells of the meticulous nature of the head coach. "A disciplined man with an eye for details" is the description the speaker would like us to remember.

The coach had three candidates to

choose from, and they all had different strengths and skills. Rockne did not have a clear-cut idea of what football experience he desired in the candidates; however, he did know he wanted a person who could make decisions on his own. He felt strongly that the candidate must be able to make a commitment to the program and see it through to the end.

As the speaker tells the story, the coach decided to devise a test for the three candidates. The test had to show an individual's ability to make decisions and show what a person is willing to do to make the program stronger. Rockne decided on a simple and fair method to test each candidate. He invited each candidate to an interview in his office. He would meet each of them for about half an hour,



Rockne devised a simple and fair method for choosing an assistant.

and then each person would be placed in the test scenario. After asking all of his questions, the coach would walk each candidate to the door of his office. On the other side of the door, Rockne placed a piece of paper on the floor. The test was what the candidate would do next.

The first candidate was well qualified and had good credentials. After the short meeting, Rockne walked him to the door. The candidate walked right out and over the piece of paper on the floor. He never saw it.

The second candidate was also well qualified and had outstanding refer-

ences. After the short meeting, Rockne walked him to the door. The candidate spotted the paper on the floor and kicked it out of the way and under a table.

The third candidate was qualified but did not have the same depth of experience as the other two. After the short meeting, Rockne walked him to the door. The candidate spotted the paper on the floor, bent down and picked it up, examined it and threw it away.

Which candidate did Rockne hire? According to the speaker, he selected the third candidate. This candidate made a decision on his own and showed that he was willing to do whatever was needed, including picking up trash in the office. He did what others would not do. The moral of the story is that people who are willing to go just a little farther will make your program stronger. □

If you have a story or anecdote you would like to share, call (562) 425-2449 or write it down (include your name and phone number) and mail it to: Ashman & Associates, 3164 North Greenbrier Road, Long Beach, CA 90808.

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