



In Memoriam: C.D. “Curly” Johnson

Sir Isaac Newton once wrote, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulder of giants.” On May 4, one of the tallest giants of school counseling, Clarence Johnson, passed away after a long illness. Curly himself saw farther than most of us ever will. He saw the future. His concept of results-based school counseling predated the accountability movement by decades. He promoted the use of data years before most school counseling professionals knew what data was, much less how to use it.

Along with two other giants of school counseling, Norm Gysbers and Bob Myrick, Curly was part of the first class of school counselors trained under the National Defense Education Act in the wake of the launch of Sputnik. Their work was the basis for the ASCA National Model. Curly was a teacher, school counselor, director of counseling, and trained countless school counselors for more than 50 years.

Like many, I considered Curly one of my favorite people on the planet. He liked to exude a rough and gruff demeanor, but beneath it he was one of the most kind and caring people I knew. I remember talking with him about counseling theories once. Curly was a firm believer of existentialism and I told him I didn’t really understand it. “It’s simple,” he said. “The only truth is, one day you’re going to die and everything up to that is your fault.” That was classic Curly: direct, warm and witty with profound underlying knowledge.

All of us in the school counseling community stand a little taller and see a little farther because of Curly. We will miss him deeply. Our thoughts are with his wife, Sherri, and their family.

– *Kwok-Sze Richard Wong, Ed.D.*