

Mr. Reliable

by Tom Soboleski

He was "the ultimate 'Mr. Reliable,'" said Jack. "When Roger had to do something, you never heard from him again until it was done. No matter what the crisis was, to him it wasn't a crisis." Roger worked during several outages on the Steam Generator Team with Jack and others.

Pete, who also works on the team, said Roger "didn't want any recognition. He would just get it done."

Roger died unexpectedly on Saturday. Roger was hired at the Carbon-Free Power Plant in 1980 as a chemistry technician. He attended night school while working and obtained a bachelor's degree in natural sciences from ABC State College in 1986. He was promoted to chemist later that year. After several years in the Chemistry Department, Roger looked for a new challenge and transferred to systems engineering in 1999, where he was a Technical Specialist II.

Coworkers unanimously describe Roger as a very easy-going, nice guy. "He was a quiet, low-key guy, a private person," said Bruce. "He enjoyed his motocross and motorcycles." Roger also owned a 13-foot whaler that had a 1940s engine. "He loved to rebuild old engines. He recently bought a 1950s vintage engine and we kidded him that he was upgrading."

Besides Roger's main hobbies of motocross and mountain biking, he also ran road races, roller bladed, and went to the fitness center every day. Chemistry technician Marty sometimes rode with Roger and said that Roger just told him last week about some new mountain biking trails he found at Miller's Pond. "He was a hard worker who wanted to get home and mountain bike. He was a good, strong rider," Marty said.

Chemistry technician Terry goes back to 1984 working with Roger in plant chemistry. Terry recalls Roger as "a great person to work with, very helpful."

He was also “a very good outboard mechanic,” Terry said, and “a lot of people would bring in their motors for Roger to fix.”

Roger’s preference for keeping his personal life private meant that some of his work acquaintances weren’t aware of some significant aspects of his past. For example, Terry said he just learned very recently that Roger was a gymnast in college and was so accomplished that he was chosen as an alternate for the U.S. Olympic team.

Wendy works in Roger’s secondary systems group and said Roger always showed a personal interest in people. “He always asked about your family and how things were going. He always showed concern. We also used to kid with him,” Wendy said, “because Roger loved to go to the dump and rummage. We would joke that he probably had five old engines in his garage.”

Nice, helpful, quiet, amusing, good egg, hard worker, reliable, great to work with, very easy-going. This is the portrait Roger’s coworkers painted of him. He was valued and loved by all who worked with him.

Wally, who heads up the steam generator team in outages, said, “Roger is going to be missed on the team. He was a good team player. He always hesitated and took time to make sure he was doing this right. There wasn’t any-thing he was afraid to do.”

Roger leaves his wife, Claire, and two children, Ashley and Todd. Roger’s daughter was a national champion in cross-country and track and field while at high school in the early 90s. Ashley also worked at Carbon-Free in licensing for a period of time in the late 90s.

Calling hours are tomorrow from 3-6 p.m. at the ABC Funeral Home, 356 Main St., Somewhere, USA. The funeral service and burial will be private. The family requests Donations in Roger’s memory may be made to the American Diabetes Association.