

Are You Respected?

Think of the person you respect most and ask yourself why you respect them. Is it because of their career position such as law enforcement or clergy, or is it because of their character, their wisdom, or all of the above?

Recently I was complimented on my work ethic and I automatically thought of someone whom I have greatly respected for over 40 years. At first I respected this person because of her career position, but after four years as her pupil, I had a much broader respect for her.

Although she has since passed away, Mrs. Freda Tatlock taught me the skills and work ethic I still use everyday. To attend Mrs. Tatlock's class you had to want to learn. You had to be disciplined enough to abide by her rules. Rules like: a) girls had to wear skirts or dresses to her class; b) When you entered her classroom, you quit talking, went directly to your desk, sat down and faced the front of the class; c) both feet were to be flat on the floor at all times with one foot slightly ahead of the other; d) your hands stayed on your lap until instructed otherwise; e) you removed the cover from your typewriter, neatly folded it and put in the desk only when she said you could do so; f) no one took their text books from their desks and started typing until she said to.

Students and parents would be up in arms if a teacher tried to teach in this manner today, but it really impressed upon Mrs. Tatlock's students that typing skills alone aren't enough to get an office job. Appearance, communication skills and demeanour are equally important.

The dress code for this class prohibited mini-skirts, bare midriffs and cleavage. Mrs. Tatlock impressed upon her students that a modest business attire was considered the first indication to your client that you have a serious professional work ethic.

Having been taught this way, I can't help but get disappointed with some of the so-called professionals in businesses today. Have you been waited on lately by a female that doesn't have cleavage showing? I recently was in an office where one of the staff was wearing ripped jeans along with a low-cut shirt. It's human nature to not respect someone who doesn't appear to respect themselves or their employer by dressing in such a manner.

Employers are just as much to blame as their slovenly or scantily dressed employees. It seems some employers don't care what impression is being made by their employees. It's a fact that, in this life, you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression.

If you judge fashion by what is available in the clothing catalogues now, then I guess the fashion for 2008 is the plunging neckline. It's pretty hard to explain to young ladies that a neat and modest attire is more likely to denote professionalism and win them the respect they deserve, when the clothing industry itself doesn't promote modest dress. The clothing industry would have us believe that professional dress is outdated.

I realize that my opinion here may come across as rather prudish, but I have seen Mrs. Tatlock's teachings about business perceptions proven over and over again. Customers and co-workers alike respond more favorably to employees who dress and act with an attitude of respect. Respect for the customer, respect for their employer as well as respect for themselves.

At the risk of having employers and employees around Rocky phone me and give me a piece of their mind, (including my own editor, Stu) I am going to make a suggestion. Cut out this column and put it in your wallet or pocket. If you find yourself offended by some employee's attire, give this column to their employer to let them know how you feel. If you need more copies, I will be happy to supply them for you.

If someone complains to you that they don't feel respected, check out how they dress - it could be a clue.