

Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words regarding Chief Frese.

Ten years and two weeks ago, I first met Chief Frese. The City was in the final stages of selecting a City Administrator, and Davenport had to choose between a 38 year old and a well experienced city manager who may have been a little too eager to tell everyone he was just a few years away from retirement.

The story goes that this kid from Wisconsin or Chicago or wherever the heck he was from was invited by Chief Frese to stop by the Central Fire Station just before the big public interview. The Chief imparted some of his considerable wisdom to the young man and sent him off to the interview.

Turns out the young man became blessed to be Davenport City Administrator.

One of the greatest blessings of being Davenport City Administrator, or being associated with the City of Davenport in any way, is to work with Chief Frese.

Here is the essential truth – you cannot work with Chief Frese without being charmed, inspired and humbled by the man. He portends to be stern, but his famous resiliency is infinitely exceeded by the stoutness of his heart. He plays the part of a simple man, but he is among the smartest, and shrewdest men I have ever met. He is the very definition of a leader. To be in his presence is to consider whether your own leadership behavior requires improvement.

Rather than tell stories better told in other settings, I'll pose a few questions and suggest a simple answer.

How do you express gratitude to someone who always believed, when others doubted, and through that belief gave hope to all ?

How do show appreciation for a leader always first to shoulder the burden, never seeking acclaim for doing so?

How do you recognize someone who cast themselves into harm's way countless times, for people he never knew?

How do you repay the trust and faith he showed in others – sometimes underserving – but through that trust and faith reformed?

How can you reward a man whose very presence led others to think – and then know – that they could try harder, and be better?

How do you compensate a husband and father for all the time away from home, in service to his community?

You really can't.

But on behalf of a staff long inspired by his dedication and selfless service, you are honor bound to say thank you and – on a personal note – when July 1 comes and you are freed after 10 years of the professional proprieties required of your positions, you call him a life-long friend.

Thanks, Chief Frese.