




John Knauss during the christening ceremonies for R/V Endeavor in 1977.

and a host of other people, including University colleagues and visitors.”

I believe that sums it up very well – an outstanding leader with great vision who cared very much about the

people who worked for and with him. URI and GSO are very fortunate indeed that John Knauss left California for Rhode Island almost 40 years ago. All of us who were or are at GSO say simply “Thank you, John.”

Acknowledgements

I would first like to acknowledge John Knauss himself for being a shining example for me of both an excellent leader and a truly fine person. When I had the unenviable task, but great honor, of following John as dean of GSO he told me he would never second guess any decision that I made. And he never did! For that I am eternally grateful, as I know there were many times when he could have done so very easily. I also want to thank all my former colleagues at GSO for many discussions about GSO over the years. Special thanks go to Dale Krause, Michael Pilson, and David Schink for their insights and discussions during the writing of this paper, and to Ken Hinga for finding the illustrations that have been used. 

John is a member of a rare breed: academic administrators who are natural leaders. Today, as higher education enters a period of change and more intense competition, there is an argument swirling around the higher education associations as to whether we need leaders rather than managers. The answer, of course, is that we need people with both skills.

John is a great manager. During my years at the University of Rhode Island, we were beset by a range of problems that tested our managerial skills to the utmost – from our emergence as a research university to surviving a recession. Whether mastering his budget, building a new building, contracting for a ship, or making the Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO) run smoothly everyday, John was a master.

But, to me, his role as a leader was even more impressive. From a small, almost primitive laboratory, he built a world renowned academic enterprise. His clear and articulate vision was the rallying point. His persistence and determination was the engine. His integrity was the moral compass. His natural openness was the bedrock of his warm relationship with all those GSO touched.

John's enjoyment of life and work swept along those around. I was always not only impressed with how hard everyone worked, but also with how much fun they had in the process.

John was, simply, the best academic administrator that I worked with in the course of a long career.

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