

Very quickly, the four characteristics of the Wise Man include, "The Wise Man is humble--humble so that he can grow." "The Wise Man uses corporate methods," and I'll say more on that. "The Wise Man carries a vision like a jewel on his breastplate." And finally, "The Wise Man (in the words of the world, people often talk about the Wise Man as the one who knows a lot) is the one who, whatever he knows, evokes the knowing in those whom he encounters. The Wise Man is humble. My husband has two posters in our room this quarter. One of them doesn't have so much to do with the Wise Man. It goes, "We must all hang together or most assuredly we will all hang separately." The second one has to do with the Wise Man: "If you don't care who gets the credit you can accomplish anything." Town Meeting this quarter and in recent years has been an incredible journey for me. I was talking to a metro colleague who was giving a report on the Shaker Heights Town Meeting. It happened almost two years ago. That Town Meeting was one of those twelve-week jobs where everytime I went to a meeting they decided to cancel, so we did a song and dance and started over again. Three-hundred fifty or four hundred people participated in it. People talked about it as an incredible event and the only time Shaker Heights ever gathered as a total community for one event. They usually divide themselves into neighborhood associations or wards. Afterwards I was always humiliated by the Shaker Heights Town Meeting. We have a guardian there who just died because he got concerned about El Bayad and never quite re-engaged in Shaker Heights to do what he thought was follow up. About two weeks ago he was in a Sunday School class and the mayor of Shaker Heights was speaking. I don't remember the mayor thought all these committee meetings. I think he was at the Town Meeting, but I don't know him and I'm sure he doesn't know me or this guardian. But he was sitting there as the mayor opened his speech by saying, "Since the Town Meeting in Shaker Heights, these are the things that we have done." Our guardian nearly collapsed on the spot. But that is the way it's been.

A lady from Freeport, Ohio, who was a workshop leader for one of those small Town Meetings called me. I don't know how she ever got the courage to do it after only three hours of training, but she did an incredible job. They have since put together a community park in Freeport. She reported that someone from a community near Freeport called her and asked, "How did you get your park?" "We need something like that in our community." She answered, "It's been since the Town Meeting; it's all from the Town Meeting." "Well, could you come over and do one for us?" So she called us kind of panicky to say "They wants us to come over and do the Town Meeting for them and we're not quite sure how it happened."

Secondly, the Wise Man uses corporate methods. We see the contentlessness of the method as people in small Towns make decisions about their own experiences. If we had not experienced it in our jobs or in leading seminars, there is nothing like six or seven Town Meetings in a week, night and day to watch what happens to people. One method is room set-up. It seems every time they have a space and they have a microphone and they have all the desks facing the front. And we start over and re-arrange it. Our corporate method of room set-up gives people a chance. They don't even remember your name, but they start talking. The critical moment when they realize what they have said is theirs is when the document arrives. In one Town Meeting there was an 81-year old black man who can't hear. They would shout at him

every now and then during the workshop to get his input. At the end he stood up and said, "With my own eyes tonight I saw--it's right here in this document--I saw Malvern make a decision about our future that we've been waiting twelve years hoping someone else would do." Visi

Vision is the third thing. The Wise Man has the sign of life on his face wherever he goes. A quote from the Journal says, "he is clad in shoddy garments and wears a jewel on his breastplate." Whether or not I have on my new suit, I show up in town in a broken-down car. Of our one-and-on half cars, I was given the half to drive three hours to a Town Meeting. I am always late, but I started four and a half hours ahead so I would be on time for the meeting. My colleague and I got in the car and drove about 80 mph. The car started overheating. My husband said, "Don't drive it 50 miles after the red light comes on, stop." So I stopped and found a gas station. As the radiator started blowing I raced back because I had on my brand new blue suit. The mechanic said, "Lady you shouldn't even be driving this car. It needs this and that and..." I said, "What does it need to get to Malvern?" And he said, "Well, maybe this will do." So I went on down the road having lost about thirty minutes. Then I hit a gravel road and things started hitting the windshield. I said to myself, "I ought to be able to do a witness on this sometime." But it made me even more nervous. About three miles outside of Malvern, I had a blowout going 70 mph. I had sense enough to slow down the car and pull it over to the side of the road. I said, "We're three miles outside of Malvern, what are we going to do now?" My colleague looked at me and I looked at her and I said, "Well, we could hitch-hike." So we got out of the car in our blue suits, carrying all the posters and all the materials, then the last thing happened, the door fell off. I remembered all the things my mother said about hitch-hiking. But how can you get in trouble with all those posters and blue suits? A nice guy stopped and picked us up and we went into Malvern.

The most important part of this story is the shift I noticed when we got there. People don't ask me "who are you" anymore. People now ask "Why do you do this?" Which is an even harder question to answer. On this particular day I wasn't ready for that question. It was an incredible Town Meeting afterward we sat around and evaluated. This old friend of mine who is about 75 wrote the history of the community said, "Ever since you all have been here it has been like kindred spirits in the way, but what do you do this?" At that point I couldn't answer. My colleague who was in a Town Meeting a year and a half ago, and half crippled said, "Ever since the Town Meeting in my community I had never heard of this program before, but when I saw what happened in Wycliff I decided I wanted to share it with every community I possibly could." It was just the answer that was necessary at that point and I was grateful to be there to hear it.

But finally the Wise Man evokes other people's knowing. Every morning at breakfast one colleague in our House likes to sing a song about "Things Go Well in Lo Welap Lap." She has relented a bit because we give her a hard time about singing the same song every morning. One of the quotes in the Journal says the Wise Man hears people say, "We did this ourselves" as he goes across the world. It seems to me that song should say something like "We did this ourselves this fine day" or somethinglike that.

I want to talk for a minute about a town that each and every one of you has been in called Edina, Ohio. It is basically a collapsed community. It is not on main road and you have to make about four turns. One time we went there and we had to get someone on the CB radio to tell us which turn to make because it is not marked. It is a coal mining town in the mountains with about 1000 people. When they were talking about their history they named fifty-six businesses that had closed in the last 12 years. Thought some people live in nice houses, the rest of the community, the downtown, is collapsed. When they put up their images of the past, it was all images of old buildings -- the theatre and the courthouse. When they got to the present they talked about the empty theatre and the empty courthouse and the empty this and that and the square which isn't paved and they went on and on. A priest I met there, when I spoke of the past, present, and the future in the Town Meeting, said "Well Edina in the past wasn't much and Edina in the present is a mess and as for the future I don't think it is going anywhere." Five minutes later he said, "Sure I'll help" and started working. Everyone in that town said that no one would come from Edina to a Town Meeting. There was no point in having one, but they'd try to find about ten people. On the night of the Town Meeting I had the opportunity to travel with somebody just out of the Academy. I was really worried because she was expecting a whole lot from this Town Meeting but I wasn't expecting a whole lot from Edina. I told her that there were going to be about nine people there and the important thing was to carry the evening and that they would have a fine event and decisions would be made. We met on the third floor of the high school in a classroom. There was a lot of junk around so we got all that straightened out. I set up for about 14 so that it wouldn't look like it was too crowded. At 6:15 people started coming in and at 6:30 people came in and at 6:45 they said, "Mrs. Bushman, why didn't you set more chairs and why aren't we down in the gymnasium?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." The local organizer said, "I never thought I'd see it. I never thought I'd see it. I never thought I'd see it." We added tables and chairs until we had about 65 people, some of them fairly rowdy. Then we started the Town Meeting. One man said to me, "I just want to know one thing before you start. Do you have a college degree?" At the end he told me it didn't matter. At the end of the Town Meeting, someone asked, "Who did this, anyway, who was on the local committee?" This was one where I put the whole thing together--"You bring the coffee and you bring the tea and you bring the paper." The local organizer looked around and never even mentioned my name. Here I had a pilot blood in Edina. "Well, it was Alfred and Joe and George." I figured that was probably right. Then they said, "If we did this tonight, getting all these people out, we can do these proposals." They started setting up plans for their future. I'll end with two things about checking yourself as the Wise Man. If I were to say this as the Wise Man would say it, I would not tell you this piece of wisdom, I would suggest where you might go look for it. One place is to check yourself for the jewel on your breastplate, for the vision that you carry into every situation. Second, to listen to communities the first time and the second and the third, to listen to the people saying "we did this ourselves."