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Not Forgotten

August 9, 2008 By [Frank Gannon](#)

We have recently lost three outstanding members of our Nixon family — [Anne Armstrong, Clay Whitehead](#), and [Peter Rodman](#).

In 1971 RN named Anne Armstrong co-chairman of the RNC. In 1972 he appointed her Counselor to the President with Cabinet rank. During the Ford administration she was, for a brief but memorable period, our Ambassador to the Court of St. James'. The London [Telegraph](#) particularly noted her outstanding service there.

Anne Armstrong left Britain maintaining that her time there had been “the greatest year of my life”, and left behind a reputation for great diplomatic skill combined with memorable elegance and charm.

The [Weekly Standard](#) celebrated Tom Whitehead’s pivotal contribution to modern communications and the way we live now.

The Man Who Brought Us Cable

Clay Whitehead died last week, at the comparatively early age of 69, after a long battle with cancer. His name is not likely to resonate with the public, but Whitehead was one of those people, briefly in public life, whose influence was decisive, even historic—and decidedly benign.

An MIT-trained engineer and administrator, he was the first director of the old White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, during the Nixon administration, where his agile brain and conservative politics antagonized the Democratic Congress and Washington press corps of the late 1960s and early '70s. But it was Whitehead who fought for, and achieved, a market-based “open skies” policy for communications satellites and cable television licenses, ending the monopolies controlled by the federal government, and leading to competition, variety, and abundance on the airwaves.

The televised world we inhabit today—hundreds of channels, C-SPAN, Classic Arts Showcase, ESPN, Turner Classic Movies, the Weather Channel, Fox News, Animal Planet, you name it—is

made possible by the work of this smart, personable, dedicated man whose premature death we note with regret.

Here, in full, are Henry Kissinger's thoughts about his friend Peter Rodman, as he told them to [Time](#). They are especially meaningful in view of the *Washington Post*'s rather querulous obituary.

A man of towering character and intelligence, Peter Rodman, who died of leukemia on Aug. 2 at age 64, served as foreign policy adviser for five Republican Presidents, from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush. Rodman epitomized the essential continuity of American foreign policy.

He understood that service to the country requires confronting certain realities and that you cannot use one truth as an alibi to neglect another. He was never partisan. He had a certain innocence about national service: he believed that if he stood for the right thing, people would give it consideration. When he didn't get that consideration, he didn't sulk but moved on.

I first knew him when he was my tutee at Harvard, and after he finished law school, I took him into the White House, where he soon made himself indispensable. Within a year or so, he was responsible for preparing materials for every negotiation and was always at my right hand.

Of course, we didn't agree on everything, but Peter's views were thought out with precision and presented with great decency. The only subject on which we truly disagreed was baseball: despite my best efforts, he remained a devout Red Sox fan, while I'm an avid Yankees fan.

Peter—who was like a son to me—was a good friend and a man who adored his family. He was extremely devoted to his wife and two children—and rabid about his dog. He was a man who possessed the rare combination of capability, moral strength and unselfishness. Much of the debate about foreign policy tends to group people into realists or idealists, but this is not a meaningful distinction. To conduct foreign policy, you have to understand the world as it is, but to avoid stagnation, the country also needs a vision of the future. The essence of Peter Rodman was a combination of both.

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