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Jurek Limon was a great man. This is no surprise to anyone who looks at his long list of accomplishments—his many publications in a variety of genres, his extraordinary teaching, and his visionary creation of the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre. If anyone had doubts as to how people in English studies might bring benefits to society at large, his discovery of the site of this theatre and the long road to completing the building so magnificently should allay those doubts. Jurek gave back to society far more than most professors ever dream of doing. This was a mark of his genius, a feature of his greatness.

He was also a great friend. Jurek was always helpful, sympathetic, companionable. All this came very naturally to him, and while it might be expected of any friend, he was more than just that. He reached out to people in a distinctive way. There was a special quality to his friendship—he seemed to instinctively know the inner fears, drives, and desires that his friends felt. And he responded to these in an empathetic, active way. He tried to see the world from the viewpoint of his friends, as if looking out through their eyes onto the world. And then he helped in genuinely creative ways, ways that indicated he really knew what his friends were going through and aspired toward.

Jurek also gave to his friends the gift of his other friends. Jurek seemed to know everyone and seemed to know what we all liked, what we were working on, and what other people who might be doing similar things were engaged in. He was always wanting to introduce me to someone new, someone working on something that would interest me, someone who might in turn find my ideas and projects valuable or intriguing. He was a master networker, but he networked not for his own benefit, but for that of others.

He never took others for granted, never did things halfway or automatically, or without considerable thought and effort. He put the same level of energy and the same level of discipline into making things good for his friends as he did into making his scholarship exact and insightful. Even a simple dinner party hosted by him and his wife, Justyna, was elevated to a level of beauty and delight that put his guests at the center of a wonderful event. At the same time, a simple stroll with him along Bohaterów Monte Cassino Street could occasion funny insights and incisive imaginings.

It is terribly strange and sad to be in a world without Jurek Limon's presence. I'm sure he could help us through it. But he is not here to do so! He'd probably say he has no need for hagiography. Just keep doing your good work, I'm sure he would say. Be true to your dreams, believe in yourself, work with others, and enjoy life at the same time. That last element is very important: he was a man who genuinely seemed to enjoy being alive, who seemed in many ways more alive than most people ever dream of being. Thus the thought of his passing is ultimately not just agonizing, but confusing, even counterintuitive. How could this have happened?

But it did happen, during this terrible pandemic year, and he's gone. I can only look to his example and my memory of him for some sense of how to live just now, how to re-envision the world, and how to make it a better place. He lives on, to an extent, in all of us, and we need to cherish that which he left behind and build on its essence, making it as much as possible our own, and striving to awaken and kindle some greatness within ourselves, for that will be a part of his legacy.