

# Positively Speaking

By Mark Wilson

01/20/10

## The Measure of a Person

A few years ago, our family visited the birthplaces of two famous Americans on the same day - inventor, Thomas Edison and former president, Warren G. Harding.

When we arrived in Milan, Ohio, we immediately noticed that they were proud of their native son, Thomas Edison. A big sign on the edge of the small village proclaimed this was his birthplace. A statue of Edison graced the public square in the center of town. His family home had been restored, with a museum dedicated to his honor. Even the street lights were erected in Edison's memory, as was the Edison Family Restaurant, and the Edison Memorial Methodist Church.

Leaving Milan, I remarked that those folks sure were proud of Thomas Edison - especially considering the fact that he moved away in early childhood.

A couple of hours later, we arrived in Blooming Grove, Ohio, where Warren G. Harding was born.

We were amazed to discover the only thing to denote Harding's birth was a small, faded historical marker in the front yard of a farmhouse. "How does this figure?" I wondered. "Why does an inventor get a whole town to memorialize him, while a president only gets a dinky little sign?"

It wasn't about power. Harding certainly had much more clout than Edison. It wasn't about fame. Harding was recognized throughout the entire world.

My theory - I think it was about character.

Edison is known today for his persistence, creativity, and determination. He invented the light bulb after over a thousand failures. He's the one who said that genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.

Harding, on the other hand, is known today for the scandals of his administration, his dishonesty, his immorality, and his willingness to "bend the rules" to fit his agenda.

Edison had character - and the town of his birth still celebrates. Harding was a character - and he gets a sign by the chicken coop.

The moral - the greatness of a person is measured by integrity and truth. Your position in life is not nearly as important as your disposition.