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Adele Hall's uncommonly common touch shaped Kansas City

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I thought I was a big shot when I attended George H.W. Bush's inauguration in 1989 and was given a bleacher seat on Pennsylvania Avenue to watch the parade.

Then I looked over and saw Adele Hall being escorted into the presidential box. Now that's a big shot.

The funny thing about Hall, though, is that you never would have known that she was a big shot. She had an uncommonly common touch.

Since the stunning announcement of Hall's death, I've found myself smiling, as I remembered her common touch as well as her achievements.

It was humbling to watch Hall in action from afar. It was apparent that she didn't give a hoot about being the center of attention. She just wanted to make sure that whatever project she was working on was a success.

If, for example, it helped for Hall to be in the limelight to make a charitable event a success, well, then, OK. But she was just as happy being a behind-the-scenes soldier doing the grunt work that's crucial in every charitable endeavor.

The United Way, Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics, the **Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art**, the University of Kansas Medical Center and the **Salvation Army**, to name just a few, benefited from her leadership, as well as her elbow grease. Come to think of it, so did the poor, the sick and the helpless generally throughout Kansas City.

Hall was unfailingly gracious. But when it came to helping those in need, it's fair to say she could be fierce, single-minded and a force with which it was unwise to trifle.

Sure, Hall had the might of Hallmark Cards behind her. But it was her mighty talent that assured that the corporate muscle wouldn't be wasted.

I don't pretend to know how Hallmark Cards operates its business. It's had great leadership forever. I'd bet dollars to doughnuts, though, that Adele Hall played a major role in the company's reputation for being compassionate and a great place to work.

The announcement of Hall's death touched the hearts of the influential and powerful, along with those of people in great need ... the sick child at Children's Mercy, the homeless man looking for a hot meal and the poor single mother in the urban core.

Adele Hall, the woman with a common touch, accomplished an uncommon amount of good for Kansas City.

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