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Like A Hand Print in Cement

Posted October 21, 2013 at 3:00 pm by [Hannah Shults '14](#)



Why do things happen like this? Why was Wednesday, October 16 just like the Wednesday before?

The day was the same. A few students did their presentations, he had his usual curious questions, we discussed the end of the sexism book, handed back papers and went home.

These were the last papers he ever handed back. My 9.2/10 grade was one of the last papers he read.

Dr. Robert Dardenne left a hand print in my cement. We called him Dardenne. Dardenne wasn't smart, he was brilliant. He wasn't kind, he was utterly compassionate for life and people. He wasn't just sensible, he was wise.

His educated perception on the world around him touched students, faculty and the whole USFSP body.

He would tell us that posting on Facebook about him is so silly. What kind of world is this where we express the deepest of emotion, the losing of a loved one, online? The movement of today's technologies never fazed him. He accepted the change as a transformation of culture.

On the first day of class this semester in his Media and Culture class, he was already sharing his wisdom and acknowledgement of today's technologies. He was talking about having cell phones in class and how it was absurd that we are so attached to "this little thing," he would say. He talked about an emergency, what an "emergency" actually is and how the meaning of one has changed so much. Now, anything can be an emergency to run out of class and pick up the phone, only to hear that your sister ran out of gas at the top of your street. He poked fun at the addiction to technology, but never rejected it. He had a special love for watching the movement of culture.

I will always remember what advice he has given me. On an article I wrote for class, he commented "You're a smart girl. You can do better." At the time, I thought to myself, "Jerk." But, he was so right. I know I can. I was being lazy and he saw straight through me. He was that kind of person. He knew his students, expected the best and graded exactly on that basis.

His classes were tough, but they were tough only for one reason. He wanted his students to learn, not just to understand.

I wish he was still here. I wanted to watch the movement of the journalism industry with him. As newspapers adapt to the digital world, I wanted to know what he thought about the changes now and the changes that are to come.

I am going to be thinking to myself throughout my journalism career, "What does Dardenne think about this?" He was so intuitive. I will always wonder what he thinks about the changes happening throughout the journalism industry.

I went to Dardenne's office on October 14 to ask questions about an upcoming AP Style exam. He dug through his thousands of books in search of an old AP Stylebook, commenting on the difference in size. He talked about how the Associated Press has made changes to the book just for business purposes, since now we can go online to resell the books. Of course, that's not making the publisher any money. All his little insights, I will carry with me.

I miss him terribly. Did I absorb every last bit of information he shared with me? He was so wise, knowledgeable and respectable. I get angry thinking about the students who played on their cell phones during class or laid their head down. They didn't understand exactly who was teaching. Dardenne deserved all the respect in the world and I owe it to him.

His wisdom and open-minded character will remain with me as I travel from college to my career. I will never forget Dr. Robert Dardenne. He helped me when I was confused, taught me when I was oblivious, and more importantly, never lost faith in me.

I will never have another professor like Dardenne. USFSP will move forward, but we will never be the same.

About the blogger



Hi! I'm Hannah, a Mass Communications major with a Criminology minor. I am on track to graduate in the Spring of 2014... now if only I had a time machine! Just kidding! I am a bargain shopper, Hybrid driver and animal lover. I love USFSP and I think I should tell the whole world that this is the best college on Earth. :)