

JAMES A. GRAASKAMP COLLECTION OF TEACHING MATERIALS

XI. PERSONAL LIFE

- I. Tributes to Graaskamp After His Death on
April 22, 1988
 1. Selected Letters of Sympathy and Remembrance
Sent to Jean B. Davis

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS RECEIVED BY
JEAN AND FAMILY AFTER JIM'S DEATH

Dear Jean and Family:

I'll share my saddest and happiest moments with Jim (our class of 68/69 did not call him Chief - that came later).

In 1974 Jim visited Phoenix. We spent an entire afternoon touring the metro area. We stopped in Mesa to visit my home and family. We were headed back to his hotel and Jim turned to me and said, "You have a lovely family. You know my only regret in life is that I'll never be able to experience the love of a woman and have a family."

He was almost teary eyed. I was at a total loss for words. I was so sad.

My happiest memory was the day I heard of your love for each other and that you had children. It was his one desire come true. He got it all!

Greg Lee

Dear Jean:

I can say of Jim, as of few men, that his work was so profound that he will truly be with us forever. How a man who couldn't walk could lead a parade which will continue to grow. How he opened doors to his students' minds and then sent them into the world to continue his work is amazing.

If ever a man rose above trying circumstances to fly with eagles, it was Jim.

Jim Potter

Dear Jean:

We have all lost a piece of ourselves. Chief was a truly unique and great man who shaped an entire industry. He was a man who shaped my life.

We would all like to live forever. Chief has achieved immortality. He lives in the minds of thousands of graduates like me everyday we work. He achieved more in life, however short, than most people ever achieve, even without his "handicap". He has been more than just an influence on my career, his life inspires me whenever I feel overwhelmed. For a man so physically constrained to have had such a wide-ranging impact is inspirational. I hope to achieve half as much in my life.

We all miss Chief dreadfully, but his memory and influence will really live on and that is as much as anyone can accomplish.

Kevin Wall

Dear Jean:

My three years of working for and learning from Chief were the three most valuable educational years of my life. I was looking forward to some day confronting Chief in a court room as I had watched him in court numerous times and he confided in me some of his methods. Although even knowing all of Chief's tactics, I am still confident that he would have burned me.

Paul Reilly

Dear Jean:

James A. Graaskamp had a huge influence on my life. Here I am, new in Madison, and this gentleman hires me for my first actual non-music job in five years. Under his direction, I learned a lot, and most importantly developed some badly needed self-confidence. I also learned a lot about a lot of different things. Mainly I learned that an honest person can accomplish a lot. Of all the things that struck me about him, it was his honesty. This enabled him to see clearly, and comment honestly on what he saw. His life (for the six months I knew) was a gift. What I received from him in this time I'll carry for the rest of my life. I wish him luck.

We are building a foundation right now. More than anything, it is a foundation of love and family. I am getting to know my fellow workers and all, in a way I never thought I would. It seems like every time I call someone for an answer (that I normally would have gotten from Jim), I discover a new member of my family. This includes you, Jean. We have lost a great friend, and I am sad for that. We seem to be finding each other. That makes me very happy.

George Helmke

Dear Jean & Mrs. Graaskamp:

I can't begin to measure the positive impact and influence that the Chief had on my life. He was a unique man that I was blessed to know. My greatest sadness is all the people that never had the opportunity to meet him now never will.

Allen Hill

Dear Jean:

For what it's worth, I want you to know how much I have appreciated and respected Jim - as a teacher, mentor, and most importantly, as a friend. What has impressed me most about Jim is that even though he commanded respect from Wall Street to the Far East, he still took time to get to know a young, idealistic student (and now a struggling mortgage banker). His influence has helped me realize that striving towards ideals is a worthy endeavor because the end result is excellence.

Karen and I recently welcomed our first child into this world. We named him Taylor James Huggett. When he is old enough to understand, we intend to tell him from where the "James" comes.

Jeff Huggett

Dear Jean:

Jim was a special person in my life, more special than I ever told him. He was, in fact, a surrogate father to me - someone I looked up to, learned from, respected, and loved dearly. Any successes I have had in life are due to Jim. I met him at a very difficult time in my life, and he inspired me to live and to achieve on the highest level, just as he did. Jim was the greatest man I've ever known and the most influential person in my life, and I only regret that I could not be with him at the end to tell him "Thank you for all you have given me."

My heartfelt condolences go to you during these difficult times. Be brave and be strong, for Jim would have it no other way.

Ken Livadas

Jim:

We will sure miss you!

You have now joined the stars!

We who are left here have learned discipline, laughter, drive and to never give up; no matter the odds. Yeah, Jimmy, there's a lump in my throat!

Bobby Jensen

Crew of 1959-60-61

To All of Jim's Family:

In your work and your play, you will sometimes be advocates and sometimes adversaries. May I leave you with this thought as Jim expressed it at the East High School Graduation in May, 1987:

"Ninety-nine percent of all people are handicapped in some way. We all have emotional and physical scars ----- So I would suggest that we all be kind and giving to one another..."

Jean B. Davis