

A Celebration of John Arthur Marcum

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By Mary McMahon

I had the privilege of knowing John for over 30 years. Working with him I learned how complex a puzzle it all can be, how to approach issues in an inquisitive and open manner, and how to keep personal life balanced with professional endeavors.

I came to UC Santa Cruz in 1980, after work with Jim Coleman at UCLA. When I decided to move, Jim said that the only person he knew at UCSC was another political scientist, another Africanist. So Jim introduced us.

John was then serving as Academic Vice Chancellor and coincidentally had a position open for an assistant. Luckily I was hired, knowing little about UC central administration, but full of enthusiasm, and as a recent Berkeley grad interested in learning about the *dark side of public higher education*.

Watching John, one saw how a good high-level administrator can work – he was an open listener, an astute diplomat, thorough in preparation, yet always approachable and real. For each decision, he would read all information available, make yet one more phone call, consult and carefully weigh both sides before a decision was made. It was a period of limited money, a time of many conflicts, and an era in which some wonderful seeds were sown for UC and UCSC today.

His example was balanced and human – despite long hours, it was weekly breakfasts with colleagues in the coffee shop, reports about Gwen’s basketball

game the night before, updates of Andrea's role in the school musical, Eddie's research project in class, and Arthur brought into the office dragging his backpack and jacket, book in hand, for that early meeting when it was too early to go to school. As evidence of his care of students, I recall his bringing in fresh juice, fruit, and fresh baked rolls that spring Santa Cruz morning to student demonstrators to close out the ethnic studies hunger strike.

I helped John with historical research for his book on *Education, Race and Social Change in South Africa*. I TAed his international relations classes and supported his initiative to provide tuition-free study for black South Africans pursuing degrees throughout the UC. It was a vision for social transformation made real.

Later at Education Abroad was the chance to support his vision for UC engagement and collaborative partnerships around the globe, with John still always ready to listen, eager to promote the mutual agendas, open to cooperation. In the words of my co-worker Linda York, he demonstrated "the ability to balance cultural compassion, sensitivity, and respect with the need to ensure our students receive the very highest quality of educational experience the world has to offer."

His vision was played out in the establishment of joint academic programs with partner institutions around the world: from Barbados to Turkey, Vietnam to the Netherlands, the Great Cities programs, and a Sweden summer program. Again in the words of my colleague: "It was a dialog, a partnership, a relationship, a joint endeavor. It was not the imposition of our needs and priorities on the rest of the world."

And in his eagerness to get UC visible in the world, as Jud King explained he helped UC open offices in London, Mexico City and Shanghai.

But others remember simpler impressions: the ever-present baseball hat, the rumpled dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up, a Blenders juice smoothie as his lunch of choice, a report about what he heard on NPR on the drive from Santa Cruz in the blue Mazda that drove up and down the California coast year after year – seats filled with newspapers, files and books.

During my first year here at Santa Cruz, I got married. To this day, I remember his toast to me at the office shower: “May your marriage bring to you a long-standing and true relationship, as mine has brought to me.” Luckily for me, that has been true.

A 1994 holiday office party at his Santa Barbara home was a baby shower for my son who now goes to Berkeley. On my 2007 Shanghai city search for queen bee royal jelly, John went with me, not judging my crazy obsession, but open to experience an impromptu walk through the Chinese streets. As always -- supportive and open to new experiences.

John and I met most recently at the November 2012 event honoring his 17-year tenure as Executive Director for UCEAP. It was a pleasure to have had a chance to hear him speak once again about his interests and recall ways in which we staff had helped to turn that vision into reality.

And once again in personal conversation, we shared our latest professional efforts (his research work on Mozambique, UCEAP program developments in Africa), stories of what each of our now grown kids were doing, and in listening, support one another.

Over this summer, I was preparing to send John an email expressing thanks for his example, the wisdom and support, and the recent introduction of my daughter for career advising from his son. Unfortunately that email was never received.

But may he hear us celebrate him today.