

Reflections of Peter Lyman from Madison Alumni and Friends

Steven Fink (JMCD '82) –

I am so saddened that we have lost Jack, Doug and now Peter in such a short time, at such young ages. My grief, I am sure pales in comparison to that of their families and friends and I can only hope that their students honor their memories by living lives consistent with the teachings of these wonderful men. With fond memories...

Bob Dorigo-Jones (JMCD '85) –

Thank you for sharing the sad news of Peter Lyman's passing with Denise and I. I have many fond memories of Professor Lyman. As my senior seminar instructor, he taught me the importance of "thinking outside of the box" long before that phrase became commonplace. Those who know Peter know what I mean.

A short story about one experience I had with Professor Lyman reveals how he truly encouraged his students to challenge traditional beliefs about learning in order to develop their own identity. I was not one of the more intellectually gifted students at Madison, and I constantly thought I needed more life experience to fully appreciate the lessons of the great philosophers. Therefore, I concluded my senior seminar with Peter by giving him a one-paragraph paper that briefly summarized my feelings at the time about philosophy.

In my paragraph, I told Peter that I believed the two greatest philosophers who ever lived were Socrates and Jesus because of their impact on future cultures. I then stated that since these two philosophers did not spend their time writing, like other philosophers did, but instead chose to leave their mark on the world through their actions, that I would follow their example and go live my life rather than "waste" time writing about my thoughts. That was it. Peter didn't chastise me for my unusual paper but genuinely encouraged me to leave school and practice what I said. Fortunately, he also gave me a passing grade so I could do just that!

Today, I am president of a nationwide "issue advocacy" organization aimed at reforming the civil justice system, and my job sometimes requires me to debate well-known law professors and lawyers on national television and radio. However, I am not a lawyer. I also wrote a book published earlier this year by Time Warner Books and which recently nudged books by political pundits Al Franken and Bill Maher out of the fifth spot on a Barnes and Noble bestseller list. However, I am not a gifted writer. What I do have is confidence of my convictions, and Peter Lyman was a special person because he helped give me the confidence to challenge conventional thinking.

I will always be grateful to Peter for helping me develop that confidence when I was at a

crossroads in my life. I will also be eternally grateful to James Madison College for giving its students amazing teachers like Peter who encourage them to “think outside the box.”

Jud Cole (JMCD '72) –

Wow.

What a stunner.

I remember Peter well - sitting cross-legged on a table lecturing - Thomas Hobbes and Leviathan - "Merleau-Ponty is the true path...."

Keith Baynard (friend of Madison) –

My world will never be the same.....

Burton Gerber (friend of Madison and BOV member) –

My condolences to you and your colleagues at JMC upon the death of Mr. Peter Lyman. Clearly he was a major force in our college.