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In Memory of Clem Mulhair

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On October 22, 1989, Clem Mulhair, a senior veterinary student at Iowa State University, took his own life. The following are excerpts from the eulogy delivered by Dr. John Greve at his memorial service.


This is the simple skeleton of statistics that describes Clem's life, but it does not come close to describing all the things that Clem meant to us who are here tonight. We who are here remember him as a student, as a friend, as a classmate, as a person who did things, as a person who cared about animals.

I was asked to give a eulogy, from the Greek “good words”, which is a formal oration to praise highly a person in memoriam. However, I would rather mention some thoughts I have about Clem that describe my feelings about the worth of this man and why I felt he was my friend. My remarks will be in a sense of fond remembrance of Clem, not an effort to canonize him.

I first met Clem when he was in my medical terminology class in 1986, when he was a VM1. During the first sessions, I was startled by this seemingly brash, even boisterous, person. Soon I came to really enjoy his banter. Repartee became a hallmark of our relationship over the next three years. What at first seemed like brashness, I came to think was really the outpouring of enthusiasm. I suppose I liked this man because of his enthusiasm and rather quick sense of humor. He and I had some things in common. We used to laugh about his dubbing me his “father figure” because his own father had passed away when Clem was a preteenager, and I enjoyed the role, because I liked him a lot. Of course, it was not a true father/son relationship, but I feel it was the kind of relationship that I would like to see develop more often between all faculty and students - the one-on-one mentorship. He worked for me on a parasitology project for one year. He was a good, reliable, and serious worker. I felt fully
confident in him and allowed him to carry the load alone in my occasional absence. But the nature of the work did not prevent our chatting and joking while working. I looked forward to his daily burst upon the scene as he blew through the door into my labs with his lab coat tails flying behind. The almost stentorian, yet melodious, "Hellooo", still echoes in my ears. I am sure that my departmental colleagues knew when he was in my lab, because sounds of our repartee bounced up and down the halls. The work that he helped me with led to a publication by Dr. O'Brien and me in the ISU Veterinarian. It was on the prevalence of parasitism in dogs admitted to our veterinary teaching hospital. Clem's participation in the project was not acknowledged in the article, but it was vital. The article stands as a monument to his enthusiastic assistance.

Clem was a young man who was bright and seemed to take an interest in his studies. What faculty member wouldn't like that? Yet, if one were caught trying to snow him or not performing up to his standards (either of which he would soon recognize and not tolerate), he might emit a spate of comments snide and nigh onto scathing. His clear, friendly greenish eyes would turn steely, and his puny, wispy mustache (that I teased him about) would twitch. "This is science?" I recall him crying more than once when summarizing to me about what he was not pleased. I was a "scaethes" on occasion, too. Yet there was respect for this straightforwardness that he showed. His straightforwardness is another reason why I liked him. It was this characteristic of his that led to a widely held feeling among the faculty that Clem was as open as they come—not devious—what you see is what you get—no pig in a poke. He was special lad to me, and I miss him.

During his life, Clem Mulhair had a positive influence of one degree another on many people in the college. He was fun to be around. I suspect that everyone here was a friend. It is important to remember him, each in his/her own way, and it is a very personal sort of thing. How should Clem Mulhair be remembered? That is not a multiple choice question with only one right answer. We all have different thoughts on this. I've already told you how I will remember him. How about you? Clem has become a piece of each of us, and he has made an impact of one magnitude or another on all our lives. For now, all I can say is, "Goodbye, Clem, old friend."

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