In Memoriam

A Tribute to Al Jacobs

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Al Jacobs, a much loved professor emeritus at Menlo College who passed away February 12. He was instrumental in creating the Mass Communication program. In addition to being a beloved teacher, he was a noted performer in the community, giving poetry and interpretive readings all over Palo Alto and Menlo Park. Al was a renaissance man, and life was his art.

“We dearly miss Al. Throughout his lifetime of dedication to education at Menlo, he exemplified the qualities of an incredible human being. Although he is no longer with us, his spirit shines in the memories of those who were fortunate enough to have known him.”

G. Timothy Haight, President, Menlo College

“Al will forever be in my thoughts because of his special mentoring relationship with my son, Casey (Class of 2003). I fondly remember seeing Al and Casey sitting out on the main quad each Friday, eating their lunches and talking about film and drama. Tim Haight often speaks of how every successful student has a faculty member that inspires them to new heights. Al was that faculty member for Casey. The Menlo community has lost a treasure, but he will live on in our hearts forever.”

Bob Wilms, Director of Admissions, Menlo College

“I once administered a final exam for Al when he had to miss a class. He bought me a very nice book as a gift. He was very considerate to his colleagues and everyone. He had written part of a novel titled ‘Death of a Dean.’ He said it was a good murder mystery because so many people wanted to kill the Dean—students, faculty and administrators. He was one of the kindest people I’ve ever met.”

Professor Doug Carroll

“Al Jacobs (AJ) was the most remarkable man I’ve ever met. He was a brilliant thinker, an incredible teacher, an effective mentor, an enlightening entertainer, and a gentle spirit. His broad intellect was awe inspiring. His compassion was pervasive. His mild manner and sweet demeanor enveloped all those who crossed his path in a warmth of human kindness that touched the soul. He walked in goodness and permeated love. There are so few people like him. He made the world a better place just by being AJ. He will be sorely missed.”

Professor Marla Lowenthal and Bill Workman

“Al was a true teacher, friend, and mentor, and one of the most generous people I ever have ever known. Without him I would never have found the courage to do some of the best things I have done in my life—including to direct plays, and to move to NYC to study theater. AJ did so much to help me find my own voice and his voice was with me every step, even reading at my wedding. I feel a deep void in his absence but keep trying to fill it with memories of his warm laughter, and the welcoming cries of ‘Sweetie’ which seemed to be his term of endearment for nearly everyone he knew. Al truly lives on in the souls of all those he taught as well as those who, while not technically students, learned about friendship and kindness just by knowing him. He leaves a legacy of love for art, literature, and friendship.”

Kim Greene Treger ’92

“A.J.,’ as some of us called him, never entered a room without bringing sunshine in with him. His very presence emanated warmth and good feeling. It’s not surprising that his death has cast a cloud over a huge segment of society because he literally had thousands of friends and admirers. I felt privileged to be among those who not only knew him, but loved him. When he was a guest lecturer in my Shakespeare class, I saw how insightful he was, but the focus was never on him and what he knew. It was about us and how he could draw insights out of us and our observations. In an evaluation of my teaching one student even questioned why I was the teacher of the course when he was so much better. I was not insulted by that statement because I saw my own shortcomings in the classroom when I watched him in action. Of course he laughed when I shared that comment with him, insisting that I was a wonderful teacher myself. He was that kind of guy. I will always be grateful for his critical reading of my works in progress. I don’t think I’ve yet fully realized that he is gone from our sight.”

Professor Marilyn Thomas, Colleague