

Paul D. Boswell: Mentor, Scholar, Educator, Colleague, and Friend

Lorene Pagcaliwagan-Davis

Good teaching is more a giving of right questions than a giving of right answers.

Josef Albers

It hardly seems ten years since I first met Paul. Having just arrived a few days earlier, I was relieved to see another fellow American who had already adjusted to Japanese life, while I all the while wondered how I would survive the next few minutes in what seemed to me a very alien land. I can now look back over time, and I always remember seeing that tall silhouette and strong build down the hall way as we both returned to our offices from our classes. His easy smile and gentle greeting reassured me that “home” was not that far away, and if I ever needed to speak to someone who would listen or help me navigate this new, complex, intriguing land, language, and culture, he had already forged his way and was more than willing to guide me, too. For that, I am most grateful, and it is in no small part why I am still here today. Thank you, Paul!

What has impressed me and continues to impress me to this day is Paul’s professionalism, intellect, and curiosity about life, language, and learning. It is rare to find Paul without a book reading about the brain, music, or Japanese. His infectious passion for knowing has inspired our students and has given them that same curiosity to explore, question, and never be satisfied with what they have just learned.

I had the fortune of observing some of Paul’s classes and felt challenged myself as to how to guide my students, rather than teach my students. Even in his lowest level classes, he was never patronizing, never condescending, always building them up, challenging them to understand, rather than dumbing down the language to make it easier for himself. He met their questions with more questions. Rather than teaching them what he thought, he taught them how to think on their own. Students enjoyed various movies and hearing language authentically while learning to communicate their opinions and ideas. They learned their thoughts were important, and even if those thoughts contradicted with the teacher’s, they would be welcomed, heard and respected.

As a professional, Paul has been an invaluable part of our team at the Center for Language Education. I have never heard him decline any request made to him to serve on a committee, participate in an event, or assist in some way. I have never heard him complain about anything that was asked or required of him nor have I ever heard him speak ill of anyone. He has a genuinely kind spirit, positive approach to life which has attributed I am sure to his youthful demeanor and longevity. He is someone everyone enjoys being around and will be sorely missed when he is set to retire in the next coming months. Though he will physically be absent from our halls and classrooms, his outlook and professionalism will always be with us and our students. We are certainly better people for having spent time with him, learned from him, and served with him. Thank you, Paul. You will be fondly remembered and greatly missed. We wish you, Karen, and little Naomi-chan all the happiness and joy life can offer.