

Professor Nathan Alexander Remembered

The following story was contributed by Dr. Nathan Alexander's high school social studies teacher, Lane C. Dowell. Nathan's dedication to his students and his enthusiasm for history were the inspiration for this journal. We continue to remember him as a beloved colleague, professor, mentor, and friend. He is still very much a presence in our lives and his legacy will benefit students yet to come.

As an aging, retired teacher, who had the privilege of hosting thousands of students over decades, I am often asked, "Do you remember me?" Pondering why I might recall some and not others remain an enigma. What I do know is that a handful are imprinted in my mind and often some stimulus will bring forth a very vivid event, which causes this crusty, old Irishman to smile as he savors a pleasant gift from the past. I will NEVER forget Nathan, who each day entered my classroom with a smile and a tremendous thirst for knowledge. He loved learning.

He challenged me to be a better mentor. Yes, Nathan was truly the student that politely pressured his teachers to "stay one page ahead of the class." Perhaps his most attractive characteristic was the courtesy and respect he paid his fellow man. I am sure he never featured himself a role model, but he definitely was and in so many arenas.

I can still see his face etched with that familiar smile, as he peered around the corner of my door after the bell tolled the day's end. "Have you got a few minutes, Mr. Dowell?" What would tonight's topic be ... politics, sports, which he dearly loved, or something he had read. I guess our 5th quarter discussions gave me the opportunity to know Nathan better than most. He never complained. I only learned of his affliction, with the dread disease that eventually claimed his life, when we had a chance meeting at a bookstore (in the history section, of course) only days before he would be confined to Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. His final words to me were, "Mr. Dowell (I tried to get him to call me by my first name, but...) let's get together soon for a Scotch and have a good talk." I still toast his memory.

His passion for learning and giving back to his students, so they might walk in his shoes, is so admirable. I am a better person for knowing Nathan Alexander.

Nathan, you are one in a million. Thanks for the memories, being such a phenomenal young man and a dear friend. You are truly a gentleman and a scholar that is admired, respected and loved.

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