

Memorial by Greg White shared Dave Fredrickson' Memorial, 6 October 2012

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The Lab

Part of what made Dave important was the gravity he produced, the same kind we see here today, in the bringing together of so many good people. This is how Dave made Sonoma State the central hub of California archaeology for 20 years.

Sonoma opened its doors as a permanent campus in 1966, just in time to catch the big wave of the Boomer generation. Dave assumed the task of organizing a new Anthropology Department in 1967, when the school was little more than an arrangement of minimalist concrete bulkheads laid-out on raw, bulldozed earth, and overflowing with students. Dave lectured to undergraduate classes of 100 or more, and he and his colleagues had all they could do just to manage the flow and craft a four-field program on the run.

As the wave crested, Dave saw endless value in a sort of archaeo-regionalism (I think of it something like Gary Snyder's Bio-Regionalism) focused on the counties of Lake, Mendocino, Napa, and Sonoma, the "North Coast Ranges." With the help of his students and colleagues, Dave cultivated relationships in this four-county area with planners, landowners, and developers, people faced with newly crafted environmental legislation instructing them to do things like "archaeological survey" and "mitigation of impacts," imperatives that left them vapor-locked and apoplectic. Dave's kindness really paid-off in this context. He showed them how these mysteries could be solved, in an affordable and timely fashion.

Dave also foresaw the profound effects that the new legislative would have as it filtered down to regulation, agency policy, and then on-the-ground common practice. There were new jobs and legal imperatives. The archaeological endeavor was clearly going to be wrenched away from the exclusive control of academia and placed in a new context where today's students could be tomorrow's professionals and leaders. Dave added course work on law and regulation, internships, and guest speakers from government and professional practice. First and foremost, though, he found projects through his contacts in government and private development.

These projects, what he called "bread-and-butter" projects put students on the ground in professional roles, in the lab with materials to analyze, and in positions of responsibility on projects embedded in county, state, and

federal permitting activities requiring a professional product. Many of the first BA graduates took these skills to professional, career positions in government created by that same new legislation, and others proceeded to graduate school, where the practical experience gave them a big leg up.

The books from these first years show money from field projects went almost entirely to student income and expenses. Other entries show Dave donating \$500.00 on a monthly or bimonthly basis, targeted for operating expenses such as lumber for shelves and report covers, and often, additional wages for student labor. I recall going out on a 1974 survey near Ward Creek in Ron King's old 1961 International with Dave's credit card in my pocket for gas and receiving his personal check at the end of the project.

Around this time, Dave created a place on-campus, a hub of activity, the Anthropology Lab (The Lab). In 1973–1975 The Lab was confined to a narrow half-room on the second floor of Stevenson Hall, often so packed it was hard to breathe. In 1976, The Lab expanded to the adjoining room, which still had to be vacated for classes.

In 1977, Dave successfully instituted an MA Program in Cultural Resource Management. The new program gave Dave and his colleagues a new cadre of committed and passionate students, and freed faculty to activate more rigorous courses of instruction. The new MA attracted top-notch students who stayed, finished, and gained a great deal of high level of experience. In 1977, Dave also finalized the contract for cultural resources investigations at Warm Springs Dam/Lake Sonoma, a major, multi-year contract in partnership with UC Davis. This gave Dave the funds to hire a full time administrative aide, former student Marilyn Sisler.

In 1979, Dave seized new territory in the basement of Darwin Hall, a concrete cave hung with ventilation ducts and drain pipes that managed all at once to be both dank and vibrant. In 1981–1982, Dave secured space for collections and lab activity in the campus corp yard and built a steel-framed sheet metal building sprayed inside with gray insulating foam.

Dave directed most and some years all our attention to the North Coast Ranges, which was also The Lab's logistical backyard. Many of Dave's lecture courses and graduate seminars focused on the region. Because the entire region was within our immediate reach, we didn't have to wait until summer to get training and experience. We could make day trips to supplement classroom instruction, and take short-notice jaunts to thesis sites just down the road. Dave made sure we understood the region was our laboratory; we were obliged to try out higher-order ideas derived from the larger discipline. It was remarkable how often even the local day-trip projects produced

approaches, discoveries, and opportunities that served our vital research goals.

By the mid-1980s, Dave implemented his vision for restructuring “The Lab,” from a multifaceted organism of free-flowing personnel, to the centrally-administered group of independent organizations that exists today, the Anthropological Studies Center (ASC).

Under Dave's leadership, the ASC completed 50 –250 projects each year of operation from 1977–1992. Contracts for archaeological services generated annual income averaging around \$400,000.00 per year through the mid–1980s, and reaching peaks of over \$1,000,000.00 through 1992. On average, around one-third of this amount went to student wages, the remainder going to staff and expenses.

The Student Experience

Dave's unique teaching style was a combination of his personal warmth and a blue-collar appreciation of archaeology as a worthy labor. Dave's ability to attract and nurture students was a product of his natural capacities as a teacher; however, his knack for influencing students toward productive careers was a direct product of his own experience in the work-a-day world (as he called it). He loved the work, he deeply believed in the existentialist notion that “you are what you do,” and he conveyed these things to his students through opportunities that kept everyone very busy.

His goodness was subtle and profound, and I noticed it most in his demeanor and habits of language, which were incredibly forgiving. I learned things from him that I only really started to understand after becoming a father myself. He intrinsically recognized that, when someone comes across the room to talk it could be the only thing the thing that sticks with them, the reason that person came to school that day, and the one thing they'll take away with when they turn to go. Dave always stopped, listened, and cared.

Dave also never began a reply with the word “No.” This insidious academic habit that kills curiosity found no home with him. A student might ask a confused question, and Dave would never say, “No, I think you'll need to re-read that article.” Instead, he would say, “That is very interesting. I've never heard it expressed that way.” And if someone made a charged statement, in those days these were often unconsciously racist or sexist remarks, Dave would guide the class through the history of the concept expressed, teach us why it failed as an anthropological notion.

Dave taught us that “Words Count.” He felt that language had a cutting edge. He cringed when he heard someone use the popular 80s term “Politically Correct,” an idea that fails as an anthropological notion precisely

because language can be a systematic conveyance of culture change. Those new words of the 70s and 80s signaled new dimensions of mutual respect, and a cultural declaration that we would no longer deny THE FEW the same respect we grant THE MANY.

His students loved Dave. In the heydays of The Lab he was omnipresent, generating opportunities, offering a constant sounding board for ideas, an arbitrator of conflicts even before they happened, and prone to congratulate us for thoughts that hadn't even crystalized in our own heads. Dave taught us to put everything we do into a larger frame of reference, and he would explain by telling stories. Every dig, survey, sample, or plan was expressed in terms of some deep history of California archaeology, its products and purpose. He often had us circle our desks or sit around one big table. He told us his story, the story of The Lab, and the purpose of the program so many times that we recognized the cadence and settled in to enjoy with knowing winks and grins. He also helped us with our own stories. In this sense, The Lab was like a campfire, and it glows in all our memories. We all listened to Dave's stories and one another's stories and took them to heart. We learned to care for one another. Many of us were better people when we were there, and all of us learned what it takes to be a better person while we were there.

We will miss Dave very much.