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Remembering Sam Schuman

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Honors in Practice



REMEMBERING SAM SCHUMAN

September 16, 1942 – November 11, 2014



Some Highlights of Sam's Career in Honors

ADA LONG

At the start of his career in 1970 at Cornell College in Iowa, Sam Schuman taught and directed Shakespeare plays, and he also began his long and distinguished career in honors, attending his first NCHC conference in 1974. In 1977, he became Director of the University of Maine Honors Program and, during his four years there, hosted an Honors Semester on the Maine coast. In 1981, he became Academic Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina, where Anne Ponder was Director of the Honors Program. He and Anne co-founded NCHC's annual conference session called "Beginning in Honors" in 1986.

For most of the years from 1986 until his death, Sam remained a co-director of BIH, first with Anne Ponder and then with Ted Estess, and he remained exceptionally active in NCHC even though his administrative career could easily have taken him away from honors. In 1991, he became chancellor of the University of North Carolina, Asheville, just as he was taking on the major offices of vice president and, in 1992, president of NCHC. Starting in 1995, he spent eleven years at the University of Minnesota, Morris, first as academic dean and then, starting in 2000, as chancellor until 2006. Subsequently,

Sam—constitutionally incapable of what we call “retirement”—served in various academic and administrative positions back at UNCA as well as, for instance, at the University of New Mexico.

All the while, Sam remained one of the most dedicated and productive contributors to honors education, not just co-directing Beginning in Honors but publishing four editions of *Beginning in Honors: A Handbook*, three editions of *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges*, and, in the NCHC Monograph Series, *If Honors Students Were People: Holistic Honors Higher Education* (2013). He served as an honors consultant to over thirty-five institutions, co-facilitated three NCHC Site Visitor training workshops, and wrote twelve articles for *JNCHC* and *HIP*. He and Anne Ponder were guest co-editors of, and contributors to, the first issue of *JNCHC* (1.1) in 2000.

Sam’s books and articles for honors were only part of his academic scholarship. He wrote books on Cyril Tourneur (1977) and John Webster (1985), and he was a serious Shakespeare and Nabokov scholar his whole life, from *Vladimir Nabokov: A Reference Guide* (G. K. Hall) in 1979 to *Nabokov’s Shakespeare* (Bloomsbury) in 2014, just weeks before he died. He also published *Old Main: Small Colleges in Twenty-First Century America* (Johns Hopkins University Press); *Seeing the Light: Religious Colleges in Twenty-First Century America* (Johns Hopkins University Press); and *Leading America’s Branch Campuses* (ACE).

Two last mentions of Sam’s realms of accomplishment: he completed twenty marathons as well as numerous triathlons, and—most important of all—he was married for fifty-two years to wonderful Nancy, with whom his finest productions may well have been their son, Dan, and their daughter, Leah.

These facts of Sam’s life are overwhelming in their versatility and ambition, but most members of NCHC will remember Sam for his soft-spoken civility, intense focus, and quiet nobility. He has shaped the history of honors education and the path of NCHC, and we salute him as we hope and try to live up to his legacy.



In Honor of Sam Schuman

ANNE PONDER

(These remarks were delivered in somewhat similar forms at events in Sam's memory at Guilford College in November and at UNC Asheville in December of 2014.)

I trusted Sam as a colleague and a friend, and feel the loss of both keenly.

Sam and I—as literature professors and experienced administrators—had acquired an extensive appreciation for irony over the years, but someone so strong and attentive to fitness dying feels manifestly unfair.

Though I will glance at a bit at his work and his accomplishments—scholar, professor, academic leader, chancellor—it is the man, the athlete, the bicyclist that will provide my frame.

When Sam and I rode bicycles together, my stratagem as we approached significant inclines was to ask a complicated literary question so I could ride while he rode and talked, a collegial handicap, as it were. Once he discovered this elegant ploy, he would choose uphill when he wanted to hold forth uninterrupted—such as telling me about a recent trip he and Nancy had taken or how proud of his children, Daniel and Leah, he was.

More often, he would scout ahead, riding toward this or that summit, and wait at the top so he could ride at his own pace. Sometimes, such an exuberant

athlete was he, he would ride back to make sure that all was well and that I was making the eventual progress I always made. Of course, his bonus was that he got to ride the upper part of that hill again.

And he knew that a more sustained dialogue with me was more satisfactory on flatter terrain. Many of our rides were just that sort of biathlon—the “ride/talk”.

Sam wrote the way he rode—strong and quickly. And he was a prolific scholar as well as a college administrator. He might be out for a swim or a run or a ride at midday, but his day was underway early. He had gotten to the office, often having written out an idea or essay or talk before any of the rest of us arrived. His writing continued throughout his career including most of his final year.

Sam was a renowned scholar: Nabokov and Shakespeare, rare it was when a speech didn't include just the right phrase or reference to Shakespeare.

Sam was a memorable teacher and mentor: Whenever any of us needed a reminder about why we do this work, he would tell us about a student, a class, about someone else's intellectual triumph.

One of his former students and one of UNC Asheville's graduates, who is now at Stanford, wrote me and said, “I really do think about him often when I work with students, when I'm faced with an ethical dilemma, when I think about the purpose of an undergraduate education . . .”

Sam was an extraordinary leader: If you want to know anything about small colleges, about religious colleges, about honors programs, Sam “wrote the book” on each and more.

As Ada Long would say, “I always count on words to help in times of grief, and this time they don't.” She made it possible for me to know about and quote from other NCHC leaders.

From Len Zane in Nevada: “Sam was one of those very rare individuals who could profoundly influence a discussion by talking quietly and infrequently while listening intently.”

Jeffrey Portnoy in Georgia: “Perhaps the grandest gentleman, scholar, diplomat, and genuine good guy most of us have ever known.”

Joan Digby in New York: “Of all the people I've known in NCHC, Sam was the king of benevolence and intellect. He went out as a hero fated by a mythic serpent. He is with Hercules in triumph and for us an inspiration.”
Yep, Joan is an English major too.

Colleagues sent quotations from Donne and Browning and Shelley as well as Shakespeare about Sam.

Early in my career, I worked for Sam and later he for me—several times in our professional careers, including inventing a national conference on Beginning in Honors and leading it annually for a decade. Over more than half of my professional career, he and I edited and published each other's work. We did consulting and evaluation engagements in small colleges around the country.

It was Sam's characteristic way to turn the perspective on a welcome message to new students and explain the beauty, elegance, practicality, utility of the liberal arts because they are simple *and* because they are complex.

The final work we did together, earlier in 2014, was a dual-authored essay, in honor of a retiring colleague we both admired, on "the public liberal arts."

Sam served as Chancellor (that is president) of two of the finest public liberal arts colleges: the University of Minnesota Morris and the University of North Carolina Asheville. During his professional career he served, at various times, as chancellor, dean, acting provost, and professor. And such fine work.

Last fall, UNC Asheville recognized Sam by naming the Sam Schuman Fitness Area in his honor. Many of us and all of Sam's family were there to thank him. He enjoyed that occasion, continuing to use "his" machine regularly in his fitness area.

During the years when Sam and Nancy were in Minnesota and Chris and I were in New Hampshire, Sam and I kept up an email competition for who was having the worse winter. Elaborate scoring, bragging about snow depth in feet and the number of white-out conditions we'd trudged through on our way to work, and colorful descriptions of frigid temps. Some years he won; some years I did. In the end, it was a draw, we decided. That jovial topic was the extent of the competition between us. Our discussions of each other's work made the work better and made us both pleased with the enhanced quality of it.

So, I miss my colleague and friend. I know we all do, but we are so lucky to have known him.

And so, this summer and fall, as Sam began to leave us, I pictured him on his bicycle and remember him now clearly when I am out on my bicycle rides.

I remember him. He is riding out Old Oak Ridge Road or challenging himself with the ridge lines and views from the Blue Ridge Parkway in the approach to Pisgah and beyond. He is up the next hill, just around the next curve. He has conquered elevations in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. He has obtained the summit on the Going to the Sun road in Glacier National Park.

ANNE PONDER

I can see him clearly, as I remember him—where we would expect him to be—riding on ahead.

Remembering Sam

TED L. ESTESS

He was sitting alone at the table in a small room in the Conference Center in Williamsburg, Virginia. We both had come on a pristine fall day in 1974 to our first meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council. Neither of us knew anyone associated with the organization. I sat down beside him and introduced myself. He replied with that distinctive, slightly nasal-pitched voice, “I’m Sam Schuman from Cornell College in Iowa.” I remember thinking that he was the first person from Iowa that I had ever met. Little could I then know that being from Iowa was but one of many ways in which Sam Schuman would, for me, prove to be unique, irreplaceable, unforgettable.

In part, then, it was out of necessity that we hung together throughout the conference, beginning with lunch and dinner that day. Believe it or not, both of us were reticent to press ourselves on persons whom we did not know. A touch of ontological shyness in both of us, I suppose. Over the next three days, we played our usual roles of modestly alienated observers. We were both adept at looking at nigh everything through slightly ironic eyes. Both of us—he better than I—knew how to be quiet, present yet inconspicuous.

Thus began a friendship between Sam Schuman and Ted Estess that lasted for forty years. It became an annual ritual that we, along with a few other persons, gathered for dinner the first night of the annual meeting. One year I led the group to Joe Garcia's Mexican restaurant in Fort Worth. As we wound our way through the crowded kitchen to our dining area, Sam seemed game but unaccustomed to be walking among tables loaded with bowls of refried beans and guacamole. Arriving at the table, he asked, "Estess, what kind of place have you dragged us to this time?" Another year, at the suggestion of a taxi driver we landed in a gaudy Italian place on the outskirts of Omaha, Nebraska. Thousands of those little white holiday lights hung from the ceiling; dozens of pieces of gaudy statuary divided the space. Next to our table was a fountain that featured a peeing cherub.

But it was in the councils of NCHC that Sam and I really got to know one another. Our sense of irony bound us together as we suffered through the inefficiencies of meetings of the Board of Directors. Sam didn't suffer inefficiency lightly, but his intellectual and personal manners were impeccable. He reserved his *sotto voce* grouching for me during the breaks.

Yet when he spoke in a meeting, he did so with insight, common sense, and respect for those with whom he differed. It was common, then, for Sam's thinking to carry the day. He surely holds the NCHC record for having accomplished the most for honors education by way of the fewest words.

When Sam initiated Beginning in Honors, he kindly enlisted me as one of the leaders; consequently, this was the component of the annual meeting in which I worked most closely with him. When he took a break from honors to assume larger leadership roles in higher education, I missed Sam, as did many others. Something had gone out of NCHC. Yet he was exercising his considerable leadership skills in offices that called forth the best from him and that allowed him to effect positive change wherever he went. Would that the universities in which I have worked had had leaders with Sam's insight, perspective, generosity of spirit, firmness of character, and depth of educational vision.

Sam Schuman could not be bought or intimidated. He was clear about his fundamental principles; he adhered to his priorities, especially with regard to the nature and importance of liberal arts education. He knew budgetary realities, and he insisted that much could be done with little and much could be wasted on cockeyed projects. He believed in the education of the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. He possessed what the Greeks had in mind when they spoke of *phronesis*—practical wisdom, good judgment,

the capacity to choose the appropriate course of action whatever the circumstance. He practiced the virtue of *sophrosyne*—prudence, temperance, moderation, discretion.

Over my forty years of knowing Sam, I never heard another person speak an unkind word about him. That's another record he holds in the annals of NCHC. Sam all but instinctively knew that the poison we really need to avoid is not that which we put into our systems but the poison that we allow, through language, to come out. That's why, I suppose, Sam always left those of us who have a penchant for gossip somewhat frustrated.

And that's why, in part, it was difficult to know Sam as closely, intimately, personally as some of us may have liked. He kept his own counsel. He held himself—his troubles, problems, peeves—to himself. He focused on the tasks at hand with an eye toward resolving problems and reconciling differences. For combining clarity of over-arching vision with good judgment, he beat any educational leader I have ever known. At the same time, throughout his professional life, he was writing one article after another, one book after another. I can't explain how he was able to do it except to say that Sam was exceptionally talented and highly disciplined.

In the last email I received from Sam, he wrote, "My oncologist says things are winding down." Then he added, "Somehow it seems all right. Your old friend, Sam."

I wish I knew the perspective on suffering and death out of which Sam wrote these words, but I don't. We never spoke that personally. We didn't have or find the time. His words, though, comfort and console. They suggest that Sam was at peace with what had befallen him. He had accepted what life had given him to undergo. So must it be for us who knew and loved him and who will miss him as long as we live.

Sam was a Shakespearean, and thus it would not surprise me that, in facing the end of life, he may well have turned to some of the Bard's verse. Perhaps at some point he recalled Prospero's melancholic words in Act IV of *The Tempest*. After all, Sam was, if anything, honest, courageous, clear-eyed. Prospero begins by saying, "Our revels now are ended." He goes on:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

Somehow it seems all right.

Living It

BERNICE BRAID

Sam Schuman spoke more and more about the “whole student” in recent years, but those of us who knew him decades ago, when NCHC’s Honors Semesters just got started, had a dramatic instance of just what this meant. Sam directed our only summer project, the 1978 Maine Summer Semester, in which one of my own students participated.

They explored Acadian culture, they explored the natural environment of the Acadian culture, the Coasts, and inland Maine, they studied and they lived the synthesis of place. But for me the most interesting moment came when, after the entire program was over, Sam invited anyone who wanted to join him to climb Mount Katahdin—because he believed even then, in 1978, that wholeness meant doing, not just reading about or imagining. And they went, and they found both the Semester and the climb amazing. All of this I know about because my student has never forgotten a moment of that magical summer and talks to me about it still.

Sam believed that it’s important to live it.

Editor’s Post-Script: Sam described this Honors Semesters experience as his “favorite NCHC memory” in the 2014 booklet of the NCHC Fellows. Here is what he wrote:

One summer, early in the Honors Semesters venture, I hosted a summer honors semester on the Maine Coast. Two fine instructors taught courses on Maine Coastal Ecology and on the Acadian culture of Eastern Coastal Canada. I taught a kind of introductory anthology of interesting bits and pieces of Maine history, culture, geography, etc. It was a wonderful group of students, and a fine pair of colleagues. We had the usual crises, the usual romances, the low points and the high ones—including a hike to the top of Mt. Katahdin, the Northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail. It was a splendid summer.

Unsung Hero

JOHN KNOX

One of my unsung heroes of American higher education has died. Sam Schuman rose out of the ranks of honors education, when it was still a thriving and funky world, to become a leader for the kind of education that deserves the name. He was forced out of his position at UNC-Asheville too soon, the casualty of some of the villains in that state. Before he left Asheville, though, he made time to have lunch with me and with my wife when we were in town and I was a young graduate student trying to figure out how to unite the worlds of meteorology and honors education. Last June, Ada Long, my honors mentor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, let me know that Sam was sick with lung cancer despite being a non-smoker and inveterate runner. I wrote him and told him of his impact on my life despite just one or two encounters but many words of admiration from Ada over the years. In my message I wrote,

At the risk of intruding on you at a very difficult time, I wanted to express my deepest appreciation for your leadership in honors and in higher education. My road to my present position was anything but smooth and linear. Without the relative handful of those who have

lived lives of real integrity in the academy, I'm not sure I would have stuck it out. As it was, the tenure-track position that I landed at UGA at age 43 was the very last one I was ever going to apply for before going into another line of work; I was losing out in job searches to people young enough to be my own students. People such as you and Ada and Anne Ponder, and others through the years (e.g., I was a correspondent with Page Smith of UC-Santa Cruz founding fame, in his last few years) have made it possible for faculty like me to still dream dreams and make college something more than a business transaction or a website for our students.

I'm on the outer edge of your sphere of influence, but your "ripple effect," as Robert F. Kennedy described it below, has changed my life. I thought you should know that.

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

— Robert F. Kennedy

Sam responded the next day (June 13, 2014):

This is a very sweet and gratifying message, to say the least. As Ada told you, I am struggling with a terminal health situation, and, in such a position, it is especially heart-warming to receive an unsolicited communication like this. Ripples are very much on my mind these days!

I'm glad to learn that you have a good position at UGA, and know you will create more than a few ripples of your own!

Thank you, Sam Schuman. You were the kind of professor and administrator that we need more of in American higher education, and you faced your terminal illness with the kind of dignity and self-effacing nature that is also rare these days. You will be remembered.

A Legacy for Generations

RAE ROSENTHAL

In the fall of 1988, I had a new PhD, a new job, and a non-existing honors program. I knew literally nothing about honors education. I arrived in Las Vegas for my first NCHC conference and went immediately to Beginning in Honors. The first person I met was Sam Schuman. Like many before and after me, I left his BIH session, which he led with the equally indomitable Anne Ponder, with reams of notes and a great deal of enthusiasm for the task ahead.

At every subsequent NCHC, when I received my program the first thing I would do was check to see what sessions Sam was leading and, regardless of topic, go where Sam was. This strategy never let me down. Always, Sam had something wise, thoughtful, and useful to say; always, he led the follow-up conversation in a way that fostered participation and depth. He was that uncommon person who both spoke well and listened well, a combination of skills that is shockingly rare.

Actually, I suspect that one of the many, many reasons I admired Sam so much was that he reminded me of my adored father, and in my lexicon there is no higher compliment. Like my father, Sam was a game-changer without ever

raising his voice, without denigrating others, and with a remarkable absence of malice. Having served under more college presidents than I care to count, I have often dreamt of what a pleasure it would be to work at an institution led by Sam (although I must say that I now delightfully find myself, in my final years, working for a president whom I admire endlessly). Those of us who have been in this business for the long haul know how all too rare that is; those who have had the good fortune to serve under Sam know how lucky they are.

Many years ago, I attended a Composition and Rhetoric conference at Penn State; at the end of the conference, the achievements of a retiring faculty member were recognized. One of the speakers said of her: "I have never known her to do or say anything that would have been better left undone or unsaid." I had not thought of that powerful remark in years, but in thinking about how I might best capture my thoughts of Sam, those words came back to me. I don't remember that woman's name or anything else about her, but I do know that those words are also so very true of Sam Schuman.

Sam's good work will last many generations.

Sam and Sam-I-Am-Not

JEFFREY A. PORTNOY

Sam Schuman was not only the best of us but represented the best of what the National Collegiate Honors Council is and does. At my first NCHC Conference in Baltimore in 1990, I became a devotee of Beginning in Honors, one of Sam's most brilliant gifts to NCHC and to honors administrators and faculty. I attended BIH sessions faithfully, ultimately becoming a regular co-leader of one of the two BIH workshops for colleagues from two-year institutions. Through the years, I remain grateful for that solid foundation in honors and for my initiation into the practice of sharing information, which was and remains the lifeblood of BIH and NCHC.

One of my earliest personal memories of Sam, however, occurred at the pool of an NCHC conference hotel decades ago. Sam was swimming in one of the lanes. His freestyle stroke was meticulous and smooth and quick as he notched lap after graceful lap. In the next lane, I thrashed my way through the water as I still do, breathing improperly or holding my breath and reaching wildly, then changing strokes in mid-lap like some hapless bug trying to stay afloat. When I read the first draft of *If Honors Students Were People: Holistic Honors Education*, I understood that Sam's adeptness as a swimmer was

part of his life story. In the monograph, he writes, “When I was a little boy, I always wanted to be a gym teacher when I grew up” (67). That Sam was an unabashed fitness fanatic underscores the significance of his helping to establish a wellness facility for the university and the community while serving as Chancellor at the University of Minnesota, Morris, and having the new athletic center at the University of North Carolina, Asheville, dedicated to him in 2013. He was a Renaissance man like his two favorite authors: Vladimir Nabokov and, literally, William Shakespeare. His final book was on those two authors (Bloomsbury 2014), and Sam once served as President of the Vladimir Nabokov Society.

If Honors Students Were People was the last of three monographs that I worked on with Sam in my position as General Editor of the NCHC Monograph Series; the others were the fourth edition of *Beginning in Honors* in 2006 and the third edition of *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges* in 2011. I like to think that Sam and I developed a wonderful rapport when collaborating on texts. His writing was always smart and wise and often profound, and I could always count on his prose to be delightfully quirky in places, sometimes flittering with commas so idiosyncratically placed as to leave me quizzical at their placement and the logic behind it. Sam handled my emendations and me as the ultimate gentleman would: he let me moderate the quirkiness in places and left the commas and the machinations of MLA to me, and our gentlemanly duels over the occasional passage were more genteel and scholarly than “duelistic.”

Sam finished polishing *If Honors Students Were People* while undergoing debilitating medical protocols for lung cancer that would buy him time but no hope for a cure. He battled on courageously and without complaining to me about my seemingly endless questions, working when he had the wherewithal while trying to lead, as he called it, “a normal life.” His monograph was printed in time to debut at the 2012 New Orleans conference, which Sam told me in advance would be the last he would attend.

The final project that Sam and I worked on together also reached its culmination in New Orleans and involved opposing the movement by NCHC toward becoming a certifying body and thus radically altering the nature of the organization. Offering a letter in opposition to certification/accreditation from former NCHC presidents was the brainchild of Joan Digby and Ada Long, but the key to its influence was Sam’s presentation of it to the other former presidents and ultimately to the membership. The impact of the letter rested in Sam’s intellectual rigor and integrity and also his openness. The

letter was accessible to the entire membership, which is the way Sam liked to operate—in the open.

Sam was not just right, he was always measured, thoughtful, and diplomatic. The proponents of certification were his honored friends and colleagues in honors, and so were the opponents. He never uttered an unkind word in any of our exchanges. I, on the other hand, was not so genteel: I was confrontational, snarky, snide, and satirical. Sam was pure Shakespeare and a humanist; I was eighteenth-century à la Alexander Pope with a dash of Woody Allen. One telling comment Sam made was that opposing certification was voting against his own economic self-interest since he would likely be one of the people most often hired as a certifier and thus would benefit financially. In this and all things, Sam put community above self-interest. I worry about who will be able to take such stands in the future without Samuel Schuman on the scene to offer true *gravitas* and restorative judgment.

Both Sam and I were products of the 60s, and while neither of us could have played the other's role in the certification ordeal, we recognized that protests and opposition movements need both types of activists to fight such battles on multiple fronts. After the conference in New Orleans, Sam wrote to me: "My sense is that the tide has turned pretty completely against the certification movement, eh? If so, at some point, you and I might want to high five each other for our parts therein."

In presenting the presidents' letter, Sam was concerned about diplomacy and protocol, not wanting to upset NCHC's leaders who supported certification. I, on the other hand, can be a parody of myself as an aging geriatric hippie challenging authority when I think that leadership is not being forthright and candid. The stylistic and likely substantive differences between Sam and me hearken back to our years in Iowa in the 60s. Sam was a brilliant student at Grinnell College, a great private liberal arts institution near the center of Iowa. He left there a humanist and an academic: a Shakespeare scholar and future chancellor in the making. I, on the other hand, matriculated at the University of Iowa, where in a desultory fashion I majored in English and learned about protesting and civil disobedience. My friends and I would periodically hitchhike on Interstate 80 to Grinnell because the school hosted some wonderful blues and rock concerts with artists like Big Mama Thornton—and because we might meet some coeds willing to offer shelter from the storm. Unlike Sam's emergence from Grinnell, my departures from Grinnell were typically weary and hung over but with a smile and a narrative rich in details. Ah yes, the 60s. Grinnell launched him to the highest reaches of academe and

me to serving as a wayward editor on NCHC's Grub Street, albeit a contented one. Therein lies the difference: Sam/Not Sam.

During fall semester 2013, I knew that Sam was ailing, and his email responses to me became shorter and shorter: "I'm not doing very well, but your e-mails cheer me up." In my last emails, I tried to communicate to him how much I appreciated and admired him. I also told him about receiving the NCHC Ron Brandolini Award for Excellence at a Two-Year Institution as an excuse to send another email. It would be my last to Sam. I used this honor as an opportunity to thank him. Without doubt, my work as Co-Chair of the Publications Board and as General Editor of the NCHC Monograph Series was key to my being selected by the award committee, and that work was made possible by writers like Sam. I wanted him to know that.

Sam's response—our final communiqué—to my email about the Brandolini Award was brief, but I return it now to him for a resplendent and exemplary life and career: Samuel Schuman, "Mazeltov."

A Precious Garland for Sam

JOHN ZUBIZARRETA

NCHC. Phoenix. 112°. Middle of the day. Sam Schuman in his jogging outfit and running shoes, cheeks and neck flushed from the heat, making the rest of us feel sluggish and shamed as we watched him from inside the air-conditioned comfort of our conference hotel. How Sam managed his daily routines along with his many other commitments and pastimes will always amaze me. Even in the throes of a busy honors college review that I conducted with him and our friend Hallie Savage, Sam never quit: he insisted on his exercise no matter what, the same kind of dedication he gave to all his work and personal relationships. He will forever be as an Olympian in my estimation, deserving of our most precious garland for his unmatched loyalty to honors education and to each of us as colleagues. In the poem “The Municipal Gallery Revisited,” W. B. Yeats pays tribute to his many dear friends: “Think where man’s glory most begins and ends, / And say my glory was I had such friends.” I will always think of Sam now when I revisit that poem.

The World Needs More ‘Whole People’ like Sam!

JOHN KORSTAD

Most of us think of ourselves as fairly open-minded, tolerant, and respectful of people who are different from us, and aware of our own and others’ strengths and weaknesses. I thought of myself that way until I met Sam Schuman during an NCHC meeting in 2004. Sam struck me as someone who knew almost everyone in honors and who humbly and quietly spent time investing in others. When I heard that he was writing a book about faith-based college honors, I invited him to visit Oral Roberts University. He came for two days in October of 2007 and included ORU in his 2009 book *“Seeing the Light”: Religious Colleges in Twenty-First-Century America*.

I was privileged to interact with Sam through Beginning in Honors workshops at several NCHC meetings, when he attended three Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) Honors workshops, and when he shared in our sessions on “Spirituality and Honors” and “Sustainability and Honors” at NCHC meetings in 2011–13. We kept in regular email and Facebook communication until shortly before he died on November 11, 2014.

Part of Sam’s contribution to the honors community was understanding the importance of whole-person education, as poignantly reflected in just a

part of a talk he gave at the “Hearts & Minds: Honors Education in a Christian Context” workshop at Indiana Wesleyan University in July of 2009:

Let me begin, inevitably, with the question which is surely in the minds of some of you, and which has occurred to me as well: “So what’s a nice Jewish boy like you doing in a place like this?” I’m actually going to spend a few minutes answering that question, not because my particular story is especially interesting, but because it turns out that the boringly biographical in this case, is easily transmuted and generalized into some interesting observations about faith-based colleges and universities, their place in contemporary American higher education, and the role of Honors within them.

[What secular university Honors can learn from faith-based college Honors:]

It is precisely that opportunity to think deeply about themselves and the really big questions that, to turn the tables, we in the world of non-religious higher education can learn from you. I am fascinated by the studies of Sandy Astin and the Institute for Spirituality in Higher Education at UCLA. Putting aside, for the nonce, the “spirituality vs. religion” matter, Astin and his colleagues have found some fascinating information, which should give those of us in the secular collegiate world a lot to think about. They discovered that the great majority of college students want their college experiences to have a spiritual dimension. 3/4ths of them are searching for meaning and purpose in life, while in college. 8 in 10 believe in God. 2/3rds pray. Students at all sorts of institutions—large and small, public and private, religious and secular—want college to help them seek the answers to those big questions. They want to go beyond what Astin calls the “external” truths. They want to know not just *what* the “big bang” theory of cosmological origins is, but *why* it happened. Interestingly, this research group has also discovered that around 81% of all college professors, again at religious and non-religious schools, consider themselves spiritual people; 64% of professors across all of American higher education are self-described as “religious”. But the great majority of them do not believe that fact has any relevance to their professional lives. They are, to some degree or another, believers in a world of the spirit, but they think that world should never intersect the world of the classroom. They have, if I may continue my

rather lame example, some thoughts about why the universe came into existence, but all they should mention in class is the physics of the big bang, never the metaphysics. If all this is true, it means that students want something; that we have it; and that we are keeping it away from them! You aren't. I mentioned earlier as a characteristic of your institutions a caring for the whole student, mind, body, soul. We need to learn from you how to use the collegiate experience to cultivate our students as integrated, whole humans. As long as we say that our job ends when class is dismissed at 50 minutes after the hour, and that during class we will only permit discussion of that which can be seen and touched and proven by logical deduction, we are only doing part of our job. Again, I would argue that Honors Programs may be the very best place for us to start heeding this call, at least in part because Honors Programs tend to have, rightly or wrongly, a reputation for being quintessentially cerebral; and Honors students are frequently defined by solely intellectual criteria. If we're going to start thinking about an education which acknowledges the body and the spirit as well as the mind, we might as well start with us geeks.

Another example of Sam's emphasis on the importance of whole-person education is reflected in his reply to an email interview by an ORU student for our honors program's newsletter, *Gestalt*, when we asked his opinions on the value or drawbacks of a whole-person education. Here is part of Sam's reply:

I teach earlier English literature. It seems to me bizarre that anyone could teach Chaucer and "The Canterbury Tales" without focusing seriously on Chaucer's vision of life as a pilgrimage, from the profane to the sacred, the tavern to the shrine. "The CT" is a profoundly religious document, from start to finish, and there is no way to do it justice without taking its religiosity seriously. Similarly, Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is a play in which the hero comes to learn that "there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." That "there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (a New Testament citation, of course). To teach Shakespeare and "Hamlet" without religion is to deform what is arguably the greatest single work of English literature!

Students come to college looking to find some of the answers to life's "big questions." By and large, most American colleges shirk their responsibility to help with that spiritual quest, I fear.

I can honestly say that I have never met a more gentle, humble, scholarly, and encouraging person than Sam. To me, he exemplified what an open-minded, tolerant, and respectful “whole person” should be like. As I told him once in an email, I looked to him as the person I most respect (and aspire to be like) for his combination of humility and academic excellence: “I appreciate you as a friend, NCHC colleague, mentor, and Brother in the Lord (in God’s Divine way of knowing what’s truly in each of us).” Thanks to Sam, and shalom to Nancy, family, and friends. My goal is to live a life worth living, as Sam did.

Sam's Challenge

RICHARD BADENHAUSEN

I remember many things about the remarkable Sam Schuman. The quality I most appreciated, though, was his humility. While many of us feel compelled to call attention to ourselves, Sam had the self-possession that comes from smarts and accomplishment, so there was no need for him to make a fuss in front of others.

A few years back, he and I found ourselves early to one NCHC session and we were being questioned by a new honors director about whether it was worth the expense of bringing students to the conference. Sam, who had forgotten more about higher education than I'll ever know, deferred to me. I launched into a passionate defense of how much students could learn at NCHC—how they develop as leaders, network among academics, present papers, connect with students from other programs, challenge themselves in new environments, and so on. I suspect I was showing off just a bit for Sam. Once I had finished, the new director turned to Sam for his opinion on the matter. Sam pointed at me and said simply, “What he said.”

That anecdote reminds us also that Sam cared deeply about students. Whenever he was available, he volunteered to chair one of the Student

Interdisciplinary Research Panel sessions at our national conference. Even though he held many important administrative positions, he enjoyed being with students and urging them on during the learning process.

Similarly, he always encouraged his fellow honors administrators and challenged them to become more a part of the university's administrative structures. At one NCHC panel that featured Sam discussing honors administration to a packed crowd—people always showed up when Sam had something to say—he compared honors to the quiet little child who sits in the corner of the room feeling good about himself but also hoping no one will notice. In his understated yet urgent manner, Sam called on us all to have the courage to stand up and be noticed on our campuses. While he never needed to draw attention to himself, Sam knew that the work we do with high-achieving students was worthy of such recognition. The best way we can honor Sam is to continue to engage passionately in that important calling.

Connections and Character

ARON REPPMANN

Sam Schuman was a person of generous, bridge-building imagination, using his insight into people and institutions to establish interesting and unexpected connections among them. With his career already distinguished and his reputation within NCHC immense, Sam followed the trail of his research on small colleges beyond the boundaries of his own significant experience and sought out new connections with those of us working in honors education at religiously affiliated colleges. Before long, he was offering fresh and challenging insights into what these colleges and the state-sponsored institutions he served could learn from each other. He offered these insights not only in publications such as *Seeing the Light: Religious Colleges in Twenty-First-Century America* and *If Honors Students Were People* but in provocative presentations, committee discussions, and hallway conversations at conferences as well as in correspondence, phone calls, and visits.

Along the way, I also personally benefited from his invitations and suggestions that helped me to discover elements of my character and experience that could be put to wider use, especially when they could be combined with others' gifts in unexpectedly fruitful ways. NCHC will continue to be a

ARON REPPMANN

thriving, challenging, and interesting organization if we who received the gift of Sam's generously imaginative, connective attention continue to cultivate and share it.

“God’s Plenty”

ADA LONG

Ever since I first heard Sam Schuman speak at a National Collegiate Honors Council conference in the early 1980s, when I was a brand-new honors director, he has been for me—and for many others—an inspiration and an ideal, my Beowulf of honors. When I speak of Sam, I often sound like a star-struck student because Sam more than anyone else reminds me of what I loved and valued about academia before I entered it. While too many others succumbed to self-promotion and rankings frenzy, Sam was always steadfast in his passionate commitment to the highest ideals of education. In one of the many essays he submitted to *JNCHC* and *HIP*, Sam wrote that “teachers need to love their subject matter, and they need to love their students, and they need to love bringing them together” (*JNCHC* 6.2). This triad of teacher, student, and subject matter always stood and still stands at the center of Sam’s values and achievements. He believed in it; he exemplified it as a teacher and scholar; and he promoted it as a colleague and administrator. His example was not flashy, but it was ceaseless and persistent, resulting in a major influence on higher education throughout the country during the past four decades.

In addition to his significant scholarship on, for instance, Nabokov, Shakespeare, and liberal arts education, Sam's books and essays on honors are original, solid, fascinating, and beautifully written, providing an invaluable service to every reader. His handbooks *Beginning in Honors* and *Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges* have been canonical in the burgeoning of honors programs and colleges during the past decades. Like everything Sam did, these books are genuinely useful, designed not to bring credit to himself but to the people fortunate enough to make use of them. They are tucked under the arms and onto the bookshelves of thousands of teachers and administrators across the country.

There is an old saying that a person who is willing to give others the credit rather than keeping it for himself can accomplish anything. Sam proved the truth of this saying time and again. Rather than claiming center stage, he prepared a stage where people can shine, a priority he acknowledged when he wrote in the recent booklet about NCHC Fellows that his greatest professional achievement was "to mentor and nurture several colleagues who have become valued and important leaders in American higher education," adding that he was especially proud that most of them were women.

Two examples come to mind of Sam's major achievements for which he probably got no credit. One was a retreat he hosted in Asheville when he was president of the NCHC, in my view the most productive meeting in the history of this organization. It resulted in a whole new awareness of organizational problems that people had chosen to ignore (one being the racial segregation characteristic of honors education) along with a corresponding new set of initiatives to address them. I suspect that few people know that the roots of many of NCHC's most important and progressive agendas go back to that retreat; indeed, I have heard subsequent presidents of NCHC take credit for them and probably have done so myself. What matters—to the organization, to its members, and to Sam—is that they happened. Sam didn't care about the credit; he cared about doing the right thing, and so it got done.

The other example was an Undergraduate Summit Sam convened at the NCHC conference in 2001, which brought together in Chicago college and university presidents, other higher education administrators, faculty members, policy makers, and organizational representatives from, for instance, the NEH, Phi Beta Kappa, AAC&U, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. As always, Sam did all the work and gave the credit to others while creating perhaps the most meaningful and open conversation about liberal learning I have heard in my career. Several essays by participants

were published after the meeting, but it was the conversation itself that was stunning: people talking and, more importantly, listening because the subject was interesting and important and in desperate need of serious attention. No one can measure the difference it made as all these people fanned out to all parts of the country and all kinds of educational organizations, but I suspect that what they took home, without remembering where it came from, was Sam's opening message, which ended this way: "Our undergraduate colleges offer places of a sort and scale in which our students can come to know themselves and each other, in which students and teachers live in humane proximity, with enough shelter to be safe and enough space to be free. We think this is a neighborhood we can't afford to lose." I think all of us at the Summit yearned for precisely that ideal, and Sam not only articulated it but brought us together to remind us that it matters. We then all went home, probably thinking that we were the ones who had made the points that Sam made and thus eager to bring "our" ideals back to life.

I will limit myself to one final point about Sam, which is that he loved the word "yes." I asked him to serve on every committee I have chaired for the NCHC; I'm sure he never had the time, but he always said "yes," and he always did far more than his share of the work—creating, for instance, the first proposal for an NCHC national office and executive director in 1999. I asked him to write essays for *JNCHC* and *HIP*, and he always said "yes," including guest-editing with Anne Ponder the very first issue of *JNCHC* and writing lead essays for other issues. I am just one of many, many people who always turned to Sam first when we needed somebody really good for an important responsibility (or somebody with enough sense to call for a break when the committee chair got cranky), and I have never heard of Sam's saying "no" in such circumstances.

The most exacting and difficult literary style is one that, to the reader, seems plain, spontaneous, and effortless. Sam wrote in that style, and he also taught and led in that style. He worked harder than any other teacher/scholar/administrator I know in order to communicate and connect to his larger communities and to create the "humane proximity" that was his goal in all that he did. He encouraged people to do their best work, and he left them feeling good about themselves rather than him. One of Sam's favorite phrases, which he quoted from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, was "Here is God's plenty," a phrase that describes his own life as he enlarged every life he touched. I am forever grateful that one of those lives was mine.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS TO “REMEMBERING SAM SCHUMAN”

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JOHN KNOX is Associate Professor of Geography at the University of Georgia. A member of the inaugural class of the UAB Honors Program, he earned a PhD in atmospheric sciences from the University of Wisconsin. He was named 2014 Georgia Professor of the Year by CASE and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

JOHN KORSTAD has been Professor of Biology at Oral Roberts University since 1980 and Honors Program Director since its formation in 2001. He spent two sabbatical years (1993–94) doing aquaculture research in Norway, supported by a Fulbright Fellowship. His current focus is on sustainability and developing biofuels from algae.

ADA LONG is Professor Emerita of English at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she was founding director of the university-wide honors program from 1982 to 2004. A past president of NCHC, she is a co-editor of *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* and *Honors in Practice*.

ANNE PONDER, a past president of NCHC, has served as president of Colby-Sawyer College and then chancellor of UNC Asheville. At both campuses, she focused on academic excellence, and an important part of this focus was staffing and funding for honors. She now consults with other campus leaders and boards.

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