



James R. Miller

August 25, 1938 - October 4, 2008

James Ralph Miller was born in Broken Bow, Nebraska on August 25, 1938 and, after a long battle with cancer, died in his sleep at home in Huntsville, Texas on August 6, 2008. While growing up, Jim lived in two other Nebraska communities, Dawson and Marquette, graduating from Marquette High School in 1956. He received a B.A. degree from North Central College in Illinois, attended Yale School of Drama in Connecticut and earned his Ph.D. in Drama and Literature from Tufts University in Massachusetts. Jim married Julee Ann Stone in August 1964 in Old Saybrook, Connecticut and they lived outside Boston where daughter, Lee Mary Miller, was born in April 1965. They relocated to Dallas, TX in 1970 when Jim took a position at Southern Methodist University, where he taught for six years. Eric Stone Miller was born in Dallas in March 1971. Jim moved with his family to Huntsville, TX in 1976 to serve as Chair of the Theatre Department at Sam Houston State University (SHSU). Under his leadership, the SHSU Musical Theatre Program was launched and is now ranked among the top five programs in the nation. During the 2003-2004 academic year, the SHSU production of "The Laramie Project" was one of only four full-length productions from across the nation chosen to perform at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts American College Theatre Festival, earning the department affiliate status with the Kennedy Center for that year. Known affectionately as "Doc" to his students, Jim was a source of constructive criticism, helpful suggestions, moral support and wry humor. He had a unique ability to identify people's

strengths and he actively encouraged all of his students to improve themselves. A firm believer in the importance of connections in the world of professional theater, Jim taught his students to maintain strong personal and professional ties among SHSU theatre department alumni. He possessed a profound appreciation for humor, truth, competence and beauty in its many forms. These attributes, coupled with an intolerance of sloth, sloppiness, incorrect grammar and poor manners, made him a remarkable teacher/mentor and set a formidable professional example for students and colleagues. Jim was active in the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA) for many years, in a variety of roles. He was awarded Educator of the Year in 1987 and the Founders Award in 1991. He was TETA President from 1989 to 1991. In 2006, Jim received the TETA Emeritus Award, acknowledging his tireless efforts to promote high quality theater programs across the state, which, in turn, produced high caliber students and exciting theatre productions in many Texas communities. Additionally, he collaborated with the Houston Grand Opera and Theater Lab among many other professional and educational institutions. He was an active supporter of the arts (visual, performance and literary) in Houston, throughout Texas and across the U.S. Jim retired in 2004 and enjoyed traveling and spending time with family and friends. His lifelong interest in plants spurred his involvement with the Walker County Master Gardeners Association, deepening his knowledge of plants and ecology and honing his gardening skills. Jim was well known, well liked and well respected. He will be greatly missed. He is survived by his daughter, Lee Mary Miller, and granddaughter, Emma Michela Giacomello of Huntsville; son, Eric Stone Miller, and daughter-in-law, Sarah Hart Miller of Austin; sister, Lois Stevens, and brother-in-law, Robert Stevens of Salem, Oregon; brother, David H. Miller, and sister-in-law, Jeannette (Jan) Satterfield of Elgin, Illinois; brother-in-law, J Hill Anglin of Yukon, Oklahoma; ten loving nieces and nephews and a large extended family. He was preceded in death by his wife, Julee Stone Miller (2004); parents Reverend Ralph Randolph Miller (1972) and Mary Charlotte Peterson (1974); sisters Arvilla Belle (1930), Ruth Lee (1978) of Omaha,

Nebraska, and Mary Anglin (2008) of Yukon, Oklahoma. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Jim and Julee Miller Theatre Scholarship Fund for theatre students at the SHSU Department of Theatre & Dance, Box 2297, Huntsville, TX 77341-2297; or to Thee Hospice of Huntsville at P.O. Box 6548, Huntsville, TX 77342-6548. A celebratory memorial of Jim's life will be held October 4th at 11 AM in the Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Tribute Wall



“ *James R. Miller*

November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM



“ *Friends and Family of Jim,
I did not hear the news of Jim Miller's passing until today, almost exactly a year later. I am so sad to hear this news. Jim was a friend and peer in theatre education to me while I lived in Texas. He was kindm, creative, inspiring and much more. I am sorry we did not keep up after I had moved away in 1989. I will always remember him fondly.
Dick Stafford
SFASU '74
UT '85
TTU '91*

Richard D. Stafford, Ph.D. - July 28, 2009 at 05:49 PM



“ *I was one of the eight students that made up the graduating class of Marquette High School in 1956. Jim excelled in school whether it was athletics, drama, music or academics. There was never any question by classmates or faculty that Jim would be successful. Jim was certainly one of Marquette High School's most distinguished and accomplished alumnus. It was a special treat to us classmates for Jim to be able to return to Nebraska to attend the Class of '56 Alumni Reunion in 2006. My sincerest condolences to the family of a truly special person.*

Bud Wall - October 02, 2008 at 11:25 AM

KJ

“ I met Dr. Miller when I was 20, starting a Theatre Degree, and just flat crazy. He taught acting the way he listened as a friend, true, real, and nothing suprised him. I still find myself thinking about him and missing him. He was an inspirational father figure for so many of us. When Dr. Miller spoke, you could hear a pin drop. His spirit will continue through many lives and then some. Miss ya and love ya Doc.

Kelli Jeray - September 27, 2008 at 03:26 PM

DH

“ I first met Jim in about 1948 when their family moved to Marquette, Nebraska. His father, Ralph Miller was the preacher at the Evangelical United Brethern Church. Jim and I studied catechism together in 1951-52 and we were both baptized in the Platt river in '52. For many years we took piano lessons in Central City and after lessons, we would walk down town to the Dairy Queen and then meet my mother who had driven us to town. We also were in drama together at MHS and listened to each other recite "drama readings" till we each learned the others "readings". Jim graduated in '56 and I graduated in '57. We did not see each other again until MHS high school reunion in 2006. I will always remember Jim as one of my best friends during our teen-age years.

Darold Hutsell - September 13, 2008 at 08:49 AM

MY

“ Last year I realized it had been 20 years since I strolled through the back door of the University Theatre Center, paused to stand on the stage and continued to Dr. Miller's office. He asked me to explain why, at 23 years of age, I had decided to start college to become a theatre major.

That brief meeting put in action a series of events that have influenced everything in my life. And Dr. Miller was clearly at the center of that influence. I learned so much from Dr. Miller as an educator and as a good person. I often wondered through the years if he had any idea of the positive influence he'd had on so many people.

Dr. Miller's talent, passion for excellence and human compassion were truly inspiring.

I just wanted to express how much he 'mattered' to me and, I am certain, to countless others.

Michael Youngblood - August 29, 2008 at 05:10 PM

DE

“ I first met Jim in 1984 when he recognized a potential artist in me and rewarded the potential with praise and a scholarship. I now follow in his footsteps as a theatre professor myself. He was my mentor, my best and favorite teacher, and an ardent supporter of me and my aspirations for well over half my life. I loved his quiet but commanding presence, his gentlemanly demeanor, the smell of cloves on his breath, and his passion for teaching and for his art. I'll be forever grateful for his positive influence on my life, and I hope to emulate his good efforts with my own students.

Darise Error - August 22, 2008 at 10:02 PM

AP

“ Dr. Miller was nothing less than amazing and I am blessed to have had him as a mentor and friend. His constant inspiration and direction inspired those around him to see the humor in life all the while paying strict attention to correctness. I will never smell cloves again without thinking of him. My thoughts are with your family.

Ashlee Parker - August 20, 2008 at 12:54 PM

JF

“ Lee, Emma, Eric & Sarah: Here in New York it is not who is cast, but who auditions. (talking about litigation). SHSU theatre alums always get to audition. I can think of no finer tribute to Jim. Ruth & I admired Jim & Julee extravagantly. They are missed. Joy Finnegan

Joy Finnegan - August 19, 2008 at 05:43 PM

MM

“ It is hard to imagine that such a force is no longer with us. He knew how to challenge us to see ourselves not as we were but, as we could be. What a marvelous gift! I quote Jim daily in my classes and refer to his teachings as I direct. He was a wonderful director on and off stage, leading us all to reach our objectives and play to win. His legacy of theatre education is an example of a life dedicated to inspiring young performers and perpetuating the craft. My condolences to family, friends and to all the students who were forever challenged to be there best by Jim Miller.

Mandy Whitlock Muniz - August 19, 2008 at 02:01 PM

GP

“ Having worked in theatre all our adult lives, my wife and I naturally gravitated to the faculty and staff of SHSU's Department of Theatre when we moved back to Texas in 2008. We were priviledged to have Jim Miller as a friend. He was a remarkable man, a true gentleman, and he will be greatly missed. My condolences to Lee and all the family.

Glenn Payne - August 14, 2008 at 05:00 PM

DA

“ I was blessed to spend a short stint at SHSU. Doc was the most influential presence in my perspective. he will be missed and never forgotten.

Damascus - August 12, 2008 at 03:48 PM

J(

“ I am so grateful I had the opportunity to thank Dr. Miller in person a few years ago for his support and strength; I lost my father at the end of my last semester in 1996 and I would not have made it without him. I am who I am today because of him...and will always remember him with love, he was really like a second father during that time.

On top of that, I still don't say "git"...

Jill Hair (Wilson) - August 11, 2008 at 12:25 PM

DE

“ Jim was the epitome of a theatre educator -- honest, earnest, constructive and dedicated to the improvement of his students. He taught lessons that transcended theatre, and his dedication to his art was surpassed only by his dedication to his students. To this day, he remains my standard for gentle brilliance. My most sincere condolences to family and friends. The world of theatre education has lost one of its brightest lights.

Dalin Error - August 10, 2008 at 07:13 PM

JD

“ Dr. Miller was one of the most interesting people I ever knew. He was an excellent teacher and director and as for a personality, well, it was unique and wonderful. Doc had the ability to make a whole classroom or auditorium laugh with one unexpected comment and you definitely wouldn't want to miss one of those unforgettable comments. Such a great man will be missed by many, including me. I'm thankful for the chance to have known him at all. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and all those who miss him now.

Jennifer Dyer - August 10, 2008 at 05:08 PM

JM

“ Leigh and Eric, Our thoughts are with you and your families at this time. Jim was not only a truly professional educator but one of our finest neighbors. Avenue R will not be the same without your mom and dad. They were both jewels.

Joyce & Jimmy Merchant - August 09, 2008 at 08:49 PM

SS

“ Doc was the greatest mentor in my college years. He led by example and all of us followed because of his natural charisma. He was like a second father to me at SHSU. His office was always open to any student who needed help whether academic or personal. He was the most brilliant, most gentle, most quick-witted man and he will be missed greatly. Love you, Doc! Godspeed.

Scott Sidler - August 09, 2008 at 01:01 PM

MC

“ Jim Miller was a wonderful inspiration on all who met him. He was poised and concerned in all of his duties, but yet fun to be with as told by many.

Jim was an inspiration to myself and Nancy as parents when our daughter pushed so hard to go to SHSU and the Theatre program. He seemed to always be on the "stage of life" and made everyone feel like you were on it with him.

His strength and devotion to SHSU helped put together a wonderful and successful program that allowed students to grow and aspire while generating self confidence and learning to survive in the real world today.

We love Jim for what he and his staff did for our family and we know his legacy will live forever.

The scholarship is a wonderful idea as he loved to help his students.

Michael & Nancy Czerwinski - August 09, 2008 at 10:27 AM

MT

“ I, too, am one of the many students whose life Dr. Miller helped steer. He was a wonderful professor and a great advisor. He will be greatly missed. My deepest sympathy goes out to his family.

Melissa Thornton - August 09, 2008 at 09:40 AM

SD

“ Dr. Jim was a huge influence on the fact that I have maintained a professional acting and directing career. He knew and appreciated, that I embraced both the creative side and the business side of live theatre. To this day I utilize lessons learned in his Directing class when coaching improv teams, or directing traditional theatre. One of my favorite things about Dr. Jim was his ability to get down and relate to his students on their level while maintaining our admiration and respect. He was often a calming presence in what can be a "drama" filled community. He will be missed, but remembered fondly.

Steph DeWaegeneer - August 08, 2008 at 06:56 PM

SS

“ I've never met a more perfect blend of teacher, friend, father, peer and hero. He quite literally changed the course of my life twice. I will miss his advice and his inspiration. We've lost one of the best.

Sean Sellars - August 08, 2008 at 06:39 PM

CF

“ I would like to extend my condolences to Dr. Miller's family first of all. He was a great man to whom I owe much respect. I can never smell clover without a smile on my face in remembrance of him. His eyes glissened, his smile endless, his wit unmatched. Heaven is a much blessed place to have him and their pronunciation is better now, too!
With love and many prayers,
Cheryl Jensen Fair

Cheryl Jensen Fair - August 08, 2008 at 06:13 PM

GK

“ It's impossible to put into words how Jim helped shaped my life often without my even realizing it was happening. Some of my best collegiate memories were the numerous times he and I would square off over an issue - and I would leave his office shaking my head while he had that signature smile on his knowing all too well that, eventually, I would see the conflict from his point of view. He was one of the most inspirational instructors of Theatre that I have ever encountered. Many of his teachings, I still use when working on a piece of theatre - and THAT - is a legacy that I have no doubt is shared by countless numbers of his students that were lucky enough to know him. He was tough. He was fair. . .and he just might be one of my favorite people. To his family - you have my deepest sympathy in your time of sadness and know that we all share your grief. To my fellow classmates - I would remind you of the 4 words he would always say upon departure - "Go do good work."

We will, Jim. We most certainly will.

Gene

Gene Kato - August 08, 2008 at 04:16 PM

LH

“ Dr. Miller is one of those once-in-a-lifetime people. My memories of SHSU are surrounded by him, and his ability to make me WANT to do great things. He was a great teacher, and a great friend, and will be missed by us all. I'm the person I am now partially because of Doc. Cheers, Doc! We love you. (SHSU musical theatre alumni 2002)

Leanne Hill - August 08, 2008 at 04:14 PM

LU

“ Dear Lee and your Brother,

I'm very displeased and sad for your father leaves us. I'm very closer to you and I hope to see you soon , to embrace you strong. I remember your father as a very enjoy person whit a wonderfull smile that became sweet when He looked at you.

Lucio

Lucio - August 08, 2008 at 03:18 PM

KF

“ Dr. Miller touched my life in so many ways. He was a teacher, mentor, and a friend. The playwright Steven Dietz wrote these words in "Lonely Planet"- the reason why I became a Theatre major at SAM.

-History may focus on the famous names but history is made by those people who quietly live life day by day inspiring the good in the people around them.

Thank you Dr. Miller for taking the time to teach, encourage, and inspire me. Godspeed Dr. Miller you meant the world to me. Kassity Fojt (THEATRE MAJOR 2001)

Kassity Fojt - August 08, 2008 at 03:12 PM

NJ

“ Lee, Dr. Miller gave so much to SHSU and all of the drama students. He had a gift that many do not have. So sorry for your and our loss. Norma Dell Jones (SHSU Alumni Executive Director 1977-1992) of Lovelady.

Norma Dell Jones - August 08, 2008 at 09:13 AM