Remembrances (from people who couldn’t join us in-person)

Aaron Beagle

I met Dan Williamson in the fall of 2005 when I began my masters at state. I enrolled in his Foucault seminar and we formed a bond fairly quickly on. I went on to be his grader for several business ethics classes and I did a directed reading with him as part of my graduate requirements. Those regular Kierkegaard meetings were some of the most enlightening of my philosophical education and in true fashion of a couple of UCSC grads we just hung out on the grass or a picnic table and chatted; nothing formal about these “classes”.

Our paths continued to cross as I ended moving in to a Victorian across the street from him where I lived for ten years or so. During this time Dan and I became deeper friends often enjoying Friday movie nights together (Bogart, Kubrick, Hitchcock and Japanese noirs especially) and talking politics, philosophy, music and Star Trek well into the late hours of the night. When I married last year, he attended our wedding and when we became pregnant Natasha and I had already begun to affectionately call him “Grandpa Dan” (though he preferred Uncle Dan, said it made him feel younger.)

Dan could be a crosspatch at times there is no doubt but he loathed being reduced to a grouch and any who took the time to get to speak deeply with him knows he was an optimist who saw the world as one worth learning and thinking about without the constant drumbeat of technology and hustle culture. He was a mentor and a friend and I miss him.

Dan and I joked from time to time that Dante’s ring of hell with the happy pagans sounded a lot more interesting than a lot of his heaven, I like to imagine Dan arguing about being with Aristotle and Plato… when he’s not showing them the latest guitar lick he’s working on.

Tom Leddy

I am very sorry I cannot make it to Dan's memorial. Unfortunately it conflicts with attending my brother-in-law's memorial. I have known Dan since sometime in the 1980s. He took classes from me and we studied Heidegger together. I was his thesis advisor, which seemed strange as we were roughly the same age and had both gone to UCSC as undergraduates. I lost touch with him after he left SJSU but then we reconnected when he returned to become a lecturer, after having received his PhD at Riverside. Dan and I shared a love of philosophy and also of photography. We talked frequently, visiting each others office, and in the hallways. Dan was often a bit grumpy, but some of that was a front. He was really a very kind person. He also had a somewhat weird sense of humor which I learned to enjoy. Before the pandemic, he, Kyle and I had a reading group on Object-Oriented Ontology - the latest thing in Continental Philosophy. It was always stimulating. Dan would often set us straight as to how Foucault would have handled the issue in question. Dan also got to know my wife, Karen, and we had several dinners at our house over the years. I was very sad to hear that Dan had passed away and will miss seeing him in around campus.

Mark Zarem

Thank you, George, and Truc, for inviting me to share this moment. I'm sorry I won't be with you all in person. Dan and I met our freshman year in the courtyard of College V at UC Santa Cruz. It was 1969. Our immediate camaraderie spurred a lifetime of magnificent, and often hilarious adventures - which I daren't recount here! I hear your wonderful laughter still, Dan'l, and your inimitable growl! From you I have learned what love and true friendship can be. And bravery. Now, months after your final moments, I feel your presence at my side as I write these few words. O! my abiding and most beloved friend! Mark

An Anonymous Student

Dr. Williamson was so inspiring. I always admired the way he would dress and come to class with his hot coffee and his bag ready to teach us. He would carry a small camera with him and he said it was for in case he saw something beautiful on his walk to campus everyday. I hope i forever see the beauty in the small things in life like him. I am thankful to have been his student.

Kris Scott

I had the pleasure of being a student of Professor Williamson, for undergrad, in 2010 and 2011. I took Williamson's "Computers, Ethics, and Society" and "Business Ethics" courses. When I first met Williamson I noticed his pipe, witty sense of humor, and of course his expansive knowledge of Philosophy. In class, Williamson challenged his students but always did it from a place of curiosity. I especially enjoyed when Williamson quoted "The Silence of the Lambs". He even tried to imitate Hannibal Lecter. His direct and sarcastic energy was not for everyone but it definitely resonated with my sensibilities. One of my favorite learnings from Professor Williamson was on the inconsistencies with inheritance in a capitalistic society. This was the first time I saw opposing viewpoints of capitalism which was fascinating to me. I also enjoyed his expertise when it came to Foucault. I do not consider myself a true Foucauldian, however, Williamson is definitely one of the professors who elevated my interest in Foucault. Williamson's understanding of power and deconstruction was inspiring. I know Professor Williamson meant a lot to many students, fellow faculty, the Philosophy Department, and SJSU. I consider myself grateful to have known him when I did and will continue to carry his teachings and learnings with me. You will be missed, Professor Williamson. Kris

Jason Aleksander

I am sure many other people in the department, including students, alumni, staff, and faculty knew Dan much better than I did. However, I did want to acknowledge that in all the time that I spent in the dean's office as an infrequent interloper in the department (before becoming an active, full time faculty member), Dan was unfailingly welcoming to me. He gave me the impression that the philosophy community at SJSU meant a lot to him and that he was committed to helping make sure that our community was open to everyone who wanted to participate in it. I greatly admired Dan for this, and I wish I could be present in person at the memorial to honor and express my appreciation of Dan's devotion to our philosophy community. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to get to know him a little.

Jan Giddings

The first time I met Dan it was passing him in the department and I introduced myself as a new grad student. He looked at me like I was stupid and mumbled something and kept walking. There were a few more moments like this but I kept trying. I would stop in his office and blabber away about something. Little by little he responded in kind and engaged with me in chat. Then, over the years we had real conversations. When I came back from cancer treatments, bald, he stopped by my office one day and tried his best to talk about religion and ideas that interested me but that he couldn't have cared less about. It was so funny. I never forgot his kindness. After he had a bout with cancer he came by my office and we had another meaningful chat. A long one. I only regret I have not been on campus these last few years to chat a few more times. Yet Dan was not about regrets, so I will just remember him kindly and often.

Fern Alberts

He was the best grumpy, disgruntled, sweet lonely man.