

Jay: Partner, Friend, and Father

In 1977, when I was a graduate student, my dissertation director suggested that I attend the AIH conference in Toronto. I had never been to a language conference and he said that it would “be important for my future.” That it was! He introduced me at the City Hall reception given for the *congresistas* to the “eminent scholar,” Jay Allen. Our initial conversation was about getting stage fright when playing music in public. Jay played guitar (he had briefly studied flamenco guitar with Carlos Montoya when he was in New York) and I had studied violin. That was our first common ground. After many years of a long distance relationship, he finally followed me to Kentucky in 1983, when he accepted an offer at the University of Kentucky to fill Bill McCrary’s position after his death, and we were married in 1984 at the Newman Center at the University of Kentucky. Our dear friends and Jay’s classmates from Wisconsin, Margaret and Joe Jones, were in attendance for the joyous occasion. “Simple Gifts” was sung with accompaniment by guitar, dulcimer, and spoons. The reception was at Murphy’s on the River.

Because of Jay’s resignation from the University of Florida and beginning anew at the University of Kentucky, he had to take a new path in his research and teach the theater courses there,

adding another layer of fertile field to his scholarly endeavors. Out of a question in one of his classes from a student, "What was the stage like then?," he set out on a quest to discover the answer. This sent him to digging up documents in archives in Spain and spending a sabbatical winter in a cabin in the mountains of North Carolina, building the first model of Corral del Príncipe out of broom straws and matchboxes. From this model, Radio Televisión Española made a larger one for the 400th anniversary of the Corral; this is the one pictured on the back cover of this issue, and in Jay's 1983 book. An even larger model was built (incorrectly, much to Jay's dismay) for an exhibition for the anniversary celebration in Madrid. To this day, Jay is still tilting at that windmill, trying to get the director of the theater museum in Almagro to either correct the model, or remove his name.

Within this volume there are many testaments to Jay's academic career, but those of us who know him personally are most taken with his humanity, humility, and integrity. One recent example of this is that when he was just admitted last month as an honorary fellow of the Hispanic Society in New York—one of only one hundred in the world—he allowed me to put but a single sentence in the local paper to announce his honor.

Since I met Jay, he has always made the point that one's work needs to stand on its own. Making your "mark" in the field is not about making connections—it is about putting pencil to paper. Jay's purity of language and clarity in thought have been a beacon throughout the tempestuous storm of recent criticism. One paper, an extract from which is in this volume, was a critique of some of these new trends—a brave stance to have taken, since that was the focus of the symposium to which he was invited. He began this paper by saying, "I am an unreconstructed pre-deconstructionist." In addition to being tall, lean, and having a grey beard, Jay has always been willing to go against the flow, from marching in the 60's to helping Sanz and Coso buck the Ayuntamiento in Alcalá. He has also been a model of steadfastness and integrity for me and for our son. Even though he may disagree with you, Jay will always respect your point of view if you stand on solid ground.

Whenever I see El Greco's painting, *El hombre con la mano en el pecho*, I think of Jay, who is truly a gentleman and a scholar.

We have made marvelous trips to Europe and the United States, but there is no place that we would rather be than in front of our hearth reading a book (Jay likes mysteries), playing a family game, or listening to Bach.

Finding adjectives to describe Jay's qualities as a loving and devoted husband and father is difficult. After having raised his first family, he has participated one hundred percent, including in the delivery, in the raising of our son John Patrick, who will turn fourteen by the time these words appear. Jay has gone to all of his school events, church events, swim meets, piano recitals, and academic competitions, filled *piñatas*, etc. Likewise John Patrick over the years has been the youngest member to attend many a Spanish conference and banquet. He "attended" the NEH summer seminar at the University of Kentucky, and learned to walk at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. One summer when John Patrick was two years old, we were in La Mancha for a Cervantes conference and one of our excursions was to the Cave of Montesinos. Since there was no lighting and it was a pretty treacherous descent, John Patrick and I stayed above ground. When a *congresista* arrived and asked John Patrick where his daddy was, he answered, "in the cave looking for Dulcinea." Diana de Armas Wilson gave him his first edition of *Don Quijote* when she came in 1994 for the Cervantes meeting that we organized at the University of Kentucky. This January when we were in Spain he got in on discussions from *Don Quijote* to the *Teatro Cervantes*. When John Patrick "graduated" from the Montessori elementary school here in Danville, we, along with four other families, started a Montessori Middle School, where Jay has been a dedicated Spanish teacher for the three years of the school's existence. He has taken this challenge as seriously as any of his graduate classes and has found it as rewarding as working with the "big kids." It is the first time that we have gotten to team-teach together and it has given us an new appreciation for elementary and middle school teachers. Jay continues to read to us every night (he started years

ago with *Green Eggs and Ham*) and is now reading *The Merchant of Venice*. He looks forward to being able to read *Don Quijote* to John Patrick in Spanish.

Another memorable teaching experience was in 1989 when Jay taught the NEH seminar at the University of Kentucky on Spanish playhouses. Students from that seminar are still consulting with Jay on research interests that resulted from that fruitful seminar. Jay made sure that in addition to the academic component our colleagues had a wide gamut of social events that the Bluegrass had to offer. Other on-going endeavors include still trying to help "the boys [now in their 40s] from Alcalá" to save the Teatro Cervantes, which was almost razed to make room for a McDonald's, and have it become an acting theater and museum, as was envisioned twenty years ago when we met in the Plaza in Almagro.

Jay's edition of *Don Quijote* is in its twenty-third printing, and when we talked in January with Emilio Pascual, the head of Cátedra, he asked Jay to write a new introduction and revise it for the 2005 anniversary. Pascual is an *aficionado* of *Don Quijote* and read Jay's edition as a student at the University of Madrid, and had always admired it. This was an aside to the reason for which we went, which was an invitation to talk about the book that we are working on together, "*Don Quijote* in Western Art and Thought," which was very warmly received and will keep us out of trouble this summer. This project has brought the three of us many wonderful trips, experiences, friends, and delightful finds. This book will be dedicated to our son, John Patrick.

In addition to being a wonderful husband and father, Jay was a devoted son to his mother and to my mother. After two years of persuasion, my mother finally agreed to come and live with us. Jay treated Mom (Sara, *Abuelita*) like a queen. They had a wonderful relationship and when she had a stroke he went daily to the hospital, fed her, and often spent the night. He loved her many proverbs and said that she knew as many as Sancho Panza.

Jay is a wise man, a loyal friend, a loving father and husband, an inspiring and respectful teacher, has a great sense of humor and language, is a fine musician, dancer, cook, and a truly decent

human being. John Patrick and I would vote for him to be the person with whom we would like to be stranded on a desert island, because guess what book he would have along?!

Thank you, Dan Eisenberg, for putting this *homenaje* together and to our many friends for their contributions to this volume and to enriching our lives. Jay is who he is because of his relationships with his friends and colleagues over the years. As Ortega said, “yo soy yo y mis circunstancias.”

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