

The Teachers Who Transformed Our Lives

I am grateful to have the rare opportunity on behalf of the Class of '63 to honor the teachers who transformed our lives but are not able to be with us to accept their awards. Though their physical presence is missed we are living lives today and every day inspired with the passion, insights and love for learning that they shared with us when we were so young so many years ago at Yale.

The absentee honorary award winners are:

CHRISTOPHER ARGYRIS
HARRY BERGER, JR.
HAROLD BLOOM
FELIX E. BROWDER
ROBERT A. DAHL
MARTIN B. DUBERMAN
FRED I. GREENSTEIN
ROBERT L. HERBERT
MICHAEL KAHN
WILLIAM S. MASSEY
SIDNEY W. MINTZ
VINCENT J. SCULLY
NORMAN E. SMITH
HARRY H. WASSERMAN
KEITH L. WILSON
THEODORE J. ZIOLKOWSKI

In an ideal world we could give each teacher the honor and recognition they so clearly deserve.

Each has given us memorable and inspiring memories.

Our classmates have written eloquent and moving testimonials to the influence these great teachers have had on their lives. Each honoree deserves more time and attention than we can give at this moment.

Warren Hoge, for example, in recommending Harry Berger for an honor said that Berger's insight that it is only by "**recreative impulse**" about an event, sharing and communicating the story with others, that it is in fact how such an event is allowed to live, and how that original insight helped launch Warren's great journalistic career. That whole story told at length with wit and gratitude by Warren in nominating Berger for an award clearly deserves more time.

I would have liked to say more about how Chris Argyris had tape recordings going so that he could demonstrate how in a meeting we were talking at each other or through each other rather than listening and exchanging ideas.

It would be fun to remember how Harold Bloom would upend Shakespeare, like turning a man upside down, and watching all the bright coins leap out like so many new revelations--showing us that the words we thought we knew so well we didn't really understand at all!

And from what I read and re-read Theodore Ziolkowski deserves a special award for being able to make German poetry an open door to an intellectual awakening.

If time permitted I might surprise you, Mike, knowing your fondness for Mory's. I noticed that Charles Garside, richly deserving to be honored for his gift of making the Protestant Revolution seem like the most dramatic act in all history, also helped introduce a new drink called the **Garsidini**. He would instruct Mory waiters such a Carl to put four ounces of gin in a glass and then just quickly pass a vermouth bottle over it--just allowing a few drops into his drink. The Garsidini fueled many a happy celebration in that wonderful tavern.

There are so many more memorable stories to tell about all our absent award winners.

But because there are so many professors to be honored, and time is limited I have been asked to use **one teacher as an example for all.**

Many members of our class have told us that Vincent Scully changed their lives in ways they could never have imagined. I will use Professor Scully as the personification for all those who have given us so much.

Let me first say that the **passion for his profession, the love of his subject, and Scully's talent in sharing that love with us is evident the experience we all had with each one of these absentee honorees.**

Let us get back for a brief moment to recapture some of that first experience with this new kind of learning.

We first met Scully in a darkened, crowded lecture hall. We found our seats, leaned back and were tempted to enjoy some much-needed shuteye.

Suddenly the lights went up, a lithe, handsome figure literally bounded onto the stage. He slammed the large screen with a long pointer that sounded like thunder and we were instantly wide-awake.

Then our ears and minds received the shock of his powerful baritone intoning--as dramatic pictures filled the screen--words and ideas that we have never heard before rolling out with eloquence and a mesmerizing combination of insight and inspiration. Pointing at pictures of Greek temples he would tell that they were not simply great architectural works of art but in a deeper sense an heroic example of the innate desire of all human beings to attempt to mediate through art the tragic tension between heaven and hell, between the Gods above and the earth below.

As Scully raced on through his passionate paeon to art and architecture his rich baritone would take on almost an Irish sounding lilt—unusual in this son of New Haven and Yale—as he read from Irish literature to help explain the decorative ironwork of a Louis Sullivan skyscraper in Chicago or the moving passages from an autobiography of Sullivan’s protégé Frank Lloyd Wright. And then he would bring us back to the present with a discussion of Louis Kahn’s “primal” art gallery right next door and how this original, “elemental” structure reflects some immortal sense of place that is just as powerful as Stonehenge or any other mythic creation.

In closing Scully would then encourage us with his passionate enthusiasm to watch for columns and pediments and Gothic spires that surround us on the Yale campus to be aware that all these various forms of architecture had thousands of years of heart and mind and intellect behind their creation. He would tell that these buildings could speak to us—if we would truly work hard to see them and understand—about our own lives and dreams.

Having brought us back to such a dramatic understanding of the potential for truly seeing the art and architecture of our time, Scully would hurry off the stage, and the lights would go up

We would remain dazed in our seats for several minutes. None of us had encountered a teacher so full of emotion and knowledge and willing to take such risks in treating us as though we were eagerly eager to see and hear and know as he was.

There was no condescension. Here was a man in love with his subject, and happy to share without limit his passion and his knowledge.

As we gradually made our way outside the Harkness tower bells would be ringing, the bright sun would be blinding us, and we knew we had been given the gift of a new sight.

None of us who listened even once to Scully ever forgot his vision that the passionate study of art and architecture was a powerful way of finding a source of creative life and energy in this world.

Scully's words ignited fires of imagination in our hearts and minds that burn brightly to this day.

Some of went on to become well known architects; others became deans of schools of architecture including Yale. Some of us became curators of Museums or influential architectural critics in such publications as the *New York Times* or others became clients of architects he recommended or simply lifelong admirers and amateur if enthusiastic students of architecture.

And Scully is but one example of the transformative experience we had with all those we honor even in their absence today.

None of us had planned to have our lives transformed before we met these amazing teachers.

But through each of the teachers we honor in absentia today we had been given the miracle of encountering in our early days at Yale a teacher who gave his all—all his knowledge, passion and love for understanding of his subject, and sharing his love so generously with us all—no matter how young we were.

Now, in our later years, it is even clearer: these honored teachers like Scully—those we honor in their absence because unfortunately cannot be here to hear our gratitude-- enhanced not only our life at Yale, but also our lives ever after.

Their gifts were many, and continue to influence us in every aspect of our lives.

When we pick up a book, see a play, read poetry or listen to music, participate in politics or the struggle to organize an organization, whether we became more intrigued with mathematics, history, chemistry, biology or simply the study of life itself—our honored teachers set us on this journey. We caught their excitement for what we could see and be.

Every one of these honored teachers filled our hearts and minds with LUX and VERITAS when we were so young at Yale.

The light of knowledge they shared and their passionate search for truth in every subject has inspired us throughout our lives.

These lifelong gifts of light and truth that they gave are why we are so pleased to **honor these teachers who though absent today transformed our lives forever.**

Michael Gates Gill
June 1, 2013