

Speeches for Tony Davenport

1.17.04

Robert Serum

Shun Endo

Bruce Altshuler

Marc Rosenthal

Bernie Nolan

David Graetz

Susan Pierce reading for Anne Davenport

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Dear Family and Friends of Tony Davenport:

Just a short while ago, none of could have imagined that we would soon need to gather together to remember Tony and to celebrate his wonderful life. We still can't really accommodate ourselves to losing him. Time just seems out of joint.

Many of you from Lancaster may not know that Tony has served Northwood University in Midland, Michigan for more than a decade as Director of our Term in Europe. I am a member of that department and have worked with Tony for all of the years since he began leading our students to Europe each fall. Tony's predecessor was his father, William Davenport, who was a wonderful raconteur. When Bill suggested that Tony should succeed him, we wondered whether Tony would thrive in the position—he seemed quite reserved when compared to Bill. But so did most people I suppose.

But Tony surprised us. Our students loved him and gave him almost perfect ratings as a teacher. He fussed over details, such that I never refused one of his requests, and he always insisted on the highest standards of behavior. I remember a few of his biggest challenges in that regard and can tell you that some of them were the first to call me when news of Tony's passing reached them. I remember one of them in particular...when he called, I learned that he is now a corporate vice president who believes Tony changed his life. More than 500 graduates of Term in Europe think the same. Tony emerged as a great story teller himself, and a keen observer, whose performance in recent years has been so impeccable that he became our idea for what an overseas program director should be.

Tony was also wonderfully adaptive. In the third year of his leadership, I asked him to accept a return visit invitation from a school in Germany that had invited us to their

campus. Having grown up in France, he wasn't sure that it made any cultural sense to waste time in Germany. I told him I wouldn't ask him to do it twice, but a year later I discovered that he had learned to speak German and intended thereafter always to include Germany on his itinerary. I think he discovered they have pretty good wine in Germany, too.

Probably even more important than Tony's professional impact was his personal impact on people. He was so kind and thoughtful. I think my wife and I are not the only parents whose children received wonderful hand-crafted and personalized bowls at their nativity which become more precious every year. When my assistant, Linda, was losing her husband to cancer last year, she said that Tony's call to her was the best one. He told her how meaningful it has been to him to be the final caregiver when William passed. Every year he wrote a letter to parents from Europe featuring each participant in some special way, and always imbued with his special sense of humor. We often laughed aloud when we read them. When one of my colleagues, with whom he always stayed when he visited Midland, told him that her mother was in the hospital, he immediately announced that he would go there to read to her. He read her poetry for more than an hour and delighted her so. Whenever we heard these stories, we always said, "That is so like Tony."

I have a high regard for people who LIVE in the present—the only place where there is life. Most of us drift too much into the past and the future. But Tony had a gift for living in the present---not in the sense of *carpe diem*—but in the sense of being completely present in the NOW. If you were with him, you had his attention.

Tony had his priorities straight. Whenever I was with him, he always talked about the importance to him of Kay and their family. In recalling this, I was reminded of the poem by John Donne in which he used a compass as a metaphor for his travel. Not the kind of compass by which you find your way, but as the older of us will remember, a two-legged instrument with which you draw circles, fixing the sharp point in the middle. Just as Donne suggested, Kay, you were Tony's center, no matter where he was. And so was the

rest of your family. Donne called his poem A Valediction Forbidding Mourning. Tony would probably suggest the same to us now, but we can't accommodate that standard.

And this time, he has gone away beyond returning to a place where, I suspect, only God can be his Center--yet always connected to us by love. We miss him very much.

Shun Endo

Tony and I worked together, side by side, for the past twentyfour years. It is rather ironic and as well as it was very fortunate on my part that I ended up working closely with somebody who had a very strong interest in oriental art. Tony, who spent a part of his youth in Europe and his formative years in a truly international cultural setting, including New York City, Hawaii and Japan eventually developed a profound and correct understanding of oriental aesthetics. I use the word correct specifically here because Tony did not commit the mistake that so many people make. He did not end up with a misunderstanding of a culture that was not his own. His mind and eyes must have been so clear and sharp that he could see all the similarities and differences, not only as a written concept, but also as visual elements in both western and oriental culture.

But through the differences in western and oriental aesthetics, rather than the similarities, Tony and I were brought together. He opened my eyes for Japanese pottery as well as for Korean and Chinese ceramics. His gift with words and articulation of visual qualities that basically defy the process of articulation itself were a constant inspiration for me. And we exchanged views on those differences. We were perhaps a bit shy about the similarities that existed between us. The similarities that made us feel a sense of vulnerability because Tony and I understood beauty with strength as well as beauty with frailty. I was an apprentice to the secret of oriental pottery through Tony. Formally, once I enrolled in his ceramics class through which once again I was introduced to the beauty of the ceramic works of Asia Minor including the works of ancient civilizations along the Mediterranean coast. And informally, I was a frequent visitor to his ceramics classes looking for the perfect and the most beautiful dish from which I could eat Japanese pickles. Tony brought all these things together and articulated them for me. Through Tony, I became a born-again Japanese.

Although he had a deep appreciation and respect for Japanese pottery, he must have sensed a weakness of form in Japanese pottery when he compared it with works from China, and Korea as well as works from western culture. His artwork expresses first and

foremost, the strength in forms while retaining sensual response to the surface texture. In this sense, his artwork is sculptural and architectural with its strong presence of three-dimensionality. His architectural background was clearly reflected in his treatment of space in his work. Yet his lines for drawings were evocative and sensual like those of painters, just like those we can see in his mother's paintings. He was a sculptor who shared interest and sensibility with painters. He was a sculptor as well as a potter. He was an intellectual who at the same time could not resist the temptation of getting his hands stuck in the mud.

During December, I visited Tony a couple of times in his space, a former church building. On a rare sunny, winter day, Tony was waiting for me in a small sunroom and the living room was filled with the rays of light that were coming through the stained glass windows. I could not help thinking about the days and times that he must have spent with his parents in their villa in Provence. I was wishing if only the sun were a bit stronger for him. We discussed the differences between the space in western church buildings and the space in Japanese shrines. In this converted church space, Tony's work seems to respond directly to the architectural tradition of European culture. The space and artwork that Tony provided for me in those two days were truly memorable and the purity and the tenderness of the air that surrounded our conversation will stay with me forever.

Eventually, I noticed a beautiful pot on the shelf. Tony said it was an old Korean pot that was from the collection of his late father and Tony's dream was to make a pot that would be just as good as this pot. At this instant, I felt a sense of jealousy for the accumulation of cultural tradition or succession of aesthetic heritage of which Tony was a direct recipient as well as he was a conveyor of this heritage to his family, his students, and to the people around him.

Tony, today I am supposed to represent the branch campus but I do not think I can do it. Because I do not think the institution was the important part of our relationship. What existed between us was: consciously drawn line vs. unconsciously drawn line,

intentionally created shape vs. accidentally created shape, and expected texture vs. unexpected texture. Tony, you taught me the meaning of ambiguity in Japanese culture through Japanese pottery. You exposed me to the richness and depth of European civilization. You showed me the depth of human intellect.

If one's life is not judged by its length, then Tony led a truly rich life. Still he left us too early. We miss you.

Bruce Altshuler

My name is Bruce Altshuler, and Tony has been one of my closest friends since we met in college. There are many words that come to mind when I think of him: brilliant, loyal, creative, generous, eloquent, loving, modest despite his great gifts. But these words all are so inadequate in the face of his uniqueness, the vividness of his being, the fullness of his life. For Tony Davenport was one of the most extraordinary people whom any of us will ever meet. And knowing him, and being with him, has enriched our lives immeasurably.

Tony came to Princeton with a background of superb academic achievement – his father Bill told me that he had placed second in all of France in his high school exams – but Tony was anything but academic in his approach to education. For despite his passion for knowledge, Tony wore his learning lightly, with fascinating details of history, or art, or literature emerging in the course of his conversation, casual observations and anecdotes casting things in a new and more meaningful light. He was always mentioning things I should read or music I should listen to, and when I was here in early December we were discussing the late Roman Empire – this is the sort of thing that just came up when you talked with Tony – and he went and found a book he felt I should read, and of course he gave it to me. Many of you, I am sure, experienced this wonderful way Tony had of just giving you things that he thought you might like, or need – from books to ceramic vessels to a new cleaning product that he had discovered.

Tony's wide-ranging curiosity and love of learning, his enthusiasm, and his kindness, made him the perfect educator, and I envy both his art students here at Ohio University and the Northwood students who had the unbelievable good fortune to have Tony as their guide through Europe. My wife Holly – who currently is in Puerto Rico with her own student group and thus regretfully could not be here – wanted me to be sure to mention the importance of what Tony gave these young people, and how he certainly changed many of their lives forever.

Tony introduced me to so many things, and to so many people. And by far the most important was his family – his parents Bill and Roselle, his sister Anne, and of course Kay and their wonderful children. So much of what Tony was came from Bill and Roselle -- from Bill's social ease, fascinating talk, and amused recollection of obscure facts, to Roselle's ecstatic engagement with the beauty that she found all around her. And from the moment that I met Anne – an eccentric teenager visited by two of her brother's college friends, who showed us Paris and whom we in turn took to see the movie Woodstock – I realized how rich Tony's family environment must have been. Many years later, when I got to know Kay and saw something of the life that they had created together here in Lancaster, I was again struck by the strength and feeling that Tony brought to his family. And on that visit 5 weeks ago, I happily encountered more of this, with Tony at the head of the table carving a roast chicken, with Kay and Marc and Marc's friend Laura coming in, and Michelle stopping by, and then Laura's brother wandering in the door -- a casual and welcoming home for their children, and for their friends, and for friends of their friends.

I personally owe Tony so much, in addition to the sheer pleasure of his friendship. It was through Tony that I learned that one could experience life in a different way, in a European way, when I joined him and our friend Marc at the Davenport family home, St. Martin, in the south of France. There, at that beautiful house, we would have our relaxed breakfast under the almond tree – the bread and butter and honey that so often started Tony's morning – and we would end our day with local cheese and glasses of red wine. (When I was last here, it was so typical of Tony to describe to me his failing appetite by saying that he even had lost the desire to eat butter.) And if it were not for Tony I never would have met my wife, for the chain of connections that led me to her began at SUNY New Paltz, where she was a painting student and Tony had gone to study ceramics.

When Holly and I were leaving on our last visit, Tony walked us to the door, and stood at the window looking out as we drove away. I will always remember how he looked – not so much sad as thoughtful, knowing that it might well be the last time we saw one

another. He looked so wise, and he so looked beautiful. And I will miss him so very much.

Marc Rosenthal

For Tony

It is very hard to be here today talking about Tony, though I really need to say even these very few words, because he remains so much a part of me. During my college years, Tony's work, his cosmic wisdom, his arcane knowledge and his friendship had a huge role in defining who I was, and who I turned out to be. There are large parts of me that come right from him. Especially the parts involving food, and cursing in French. While Tony was totally unconventional in many respects, I have never met someone more committed to living a civilized life. He really appreciated civilization; being surrounded by beauty, fine food and interesting conversation. The proper enjoyment of life was consistently a priority. He always managed to take the time and care to set up a wonderful living ambiance, no matter where he was, no matter how temporary his situation. I think he, more than anyone I know, really grasped the idea of living in the moment. No matter where Tony set up camp, he made it special, and every meal he made into a minor celebration.

When I was first getting to know him, I would go to his dorm room, which he had painted entirely white, walls, ceiling, floor and all the furniture (something the college really appreciated). He had built an elaborate wall storage unit (and this was before he had power tools) which opened up into a small table. There I would share with him sumptuous lunches that he prepared, of crackers, cheese, sardines, Warsaw Falcon Polish pickles, Oreo cookies, and, of course, wine. His room was like an oasis.

Something else I've always appreciated about Tony. He was tremendously eloquent and pretty much fearless when exasperated. I remember, clearly, a heated exchange he had, over 30 years ago, with an architecture student who shall remain nameless, called Roy Perlemutter. He said, " Roy, most people change and change and change until they die; you will never change until you die." It was a really good line, and I've remembered it all these years, but now I think he was wrong; most people aren't that open to change all their lives. I think Tony actually was. He was insatiably curious, and engaged. Always

reading new books, eager to exchange ideas. Tony was a good influence on me. When I spent time with him, I read more, I thought more, and I made more Art.

Tony taught me how to make an omelet, to appreciate opera, and to love France. I will really miss him.

--Marc

Bernie Nolan

We are all united here today, not only in our desire to pay our respects to Tony, but our need to do so. We mourn his passing, but most of all we celebrate his life. Even though he was only granted part of a life, he lived it to the fullest. We feel cheated that he was taken from us but yet we must be grateful that he came along.

Mary and I first visited Tony and Kay's home on Main Street more than twenty years ago. We discovered it to be a home cum artists atelier. The large room was filled with the most wonderful art: many framed paintings in oils and acrylics hung on the walls. There were beautiful ceramics and sculptures, on tables, on stands, and on the floor. Many of these were works in progress. And in the midst of all this, standing at the stove, cooking, was Tony who came and welcomed us with open arms and a great smile. Tony was very charming.

This was the home where Tony and Kay generously hosted many dinners for those of us who were lucky enough to be their friends. With them we alternated get-togethers in our home, or in Nancy and Jim Barrett's. We spent many, many pleasant evenings over the year with Kay and Tony, Nancy and Jim, Carol Heisey, Marlana, the Benedicts, and many other friends. Tony usually prepared the salad in one of the large beautiful ceramic bowls of his own creation. One had to be careful about admiring his work because on more than one occasion we found it wrapped on our doorstep the following morning with a short note from Tony. This was typical of his kindness.

At those dinners, we were captivated by Tony's erudite observations and his diverse interests. The conversation, quite often set in motion by Tony, would cover a wide range of subjects, including Art, History, Politics, Movies, World Religions, and others. And, I must admit, or should I say "confess", that on occasion at those dinners, the combination of the congenial atmosphere, the wit, the repartee.....and the wine, caused us to become a little more loquacious.

Tony was a great teacher, especially of art. Those of you who heard his lectures are aware of the fact that he had a way of explaining works of art that allowed you to understand and appreciate it more. He had a great love of music and poetry. On one occasion he and I were chatting in their kitchen, when something reminded him of a poem. He leaned back on his chair and quoted, spontaneously, from beginning to end, a wonderful poem by W B Yeats, called "Sailing to Byzantium". He relished every word as if they were intoxicating delicacies. I have never forgotten his voice as he recited. I will read the final verse of this poem because Tony loved it so much:

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing.
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enameling
That keeps a drowsy emperor awake:
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

I am sure that those of you who knew him well can picture him, sitting there with his eyes half-closed, reciting, as if transfixed by the artistic imagery and the sensual music of the words.

At this time of year we always think of the delight Tony took in ringing in the New Year, using the large bell from the old Luthern Church. We wish we could have had many more New Years together.

Thank you Tony for enriching us spiritually and intellectually. Thank you Kay for sharing Tony with us and for allowing us to participate in the celebration of a wonderful life.

David Graetz

We have heard some inspiring stories of the roles that Tony has played in many of our lives. We have heard of Tony as an artist, friend, coworker, confidant, and professional. But that is only the tip of the iceberg if you'll allow me that analogy. Tony was a family man. Tony was the anchor for the family consisting of his parents and sister, and Tony was the anchor for the family he created right here in Lancaster.

Tony's devotion to his mother and father are legendary. Although I saw Bill and Roselle only yearly as I grew up I always felt thoroughly connected with them because of Tony's constant regaling of Bill and Roselle stories. He loved them, he admired them, he respected them, and he was truly devoted to them. I will never forget the loving tribute he gave to Roselle at an introspective of her art career here at the Hammond Gallery in 1992. He spoke for nearly an hour on her artwork and technique. It was suppose to be a fairly typical and technical review of an artists' work – but this was his mother and there was nothing typical about it. Roselle was there and I remember watching her and seeing the pure joy and love in her eyes as her son showered her with affection in a way that only Tony could, that is, Tony could review her artwork both in an academic way and as a son who just simply loved his mother and her work. Every mother out there deserves to have that look. Tony was a family man.

I hope you will all forgive me for talking about another death, but I have an insightful story of Tony and his father. I wasn't around Lancaster or France at the time of Bill Davenport's death, but I was corresponding with Tony via email. A few weeks after Bill died, Tony wrote me an email describing the death process he had just gone through with his own father. He described his own pain that he went through as he watched Bill slowly deteriorate to the point of making incoherent statements and confusing Tony with the reality that was going on within Bill's dying mind – and more to the point, Tony tried to described the helplessness and sadness that he was experiencing. You see, it was irrelevant to Tony that his very own father was unable to separate reality and the visions associated with death – it just didn't matter. Tony loved his father unconditionally. This

was not some moral conviction about right and wrong that Tony had, rather it was an act of pure love. An act so pure that it may appear simple, or even insignificant. But it was neither. Having helped watch after Tony during his death, I can assure you that such an act is certainly not simple; and the significance of such an act is one in which the rewards are not physically tangible. In any case, during the email exchange I had with Tony I came to realize that he wasn't necessarily emailing me to tell me the specifics of his father's death and his feelings, but more so to tell me that he simply loved Bill. I think Tony was troubled by the fact that he wasn't sure if Bill understood him during his final days. I'm unable to put my finger on it, but something about that statement epitomizes my view of how much Tony loved his father. Put it this way, I think everyone here knows about Bill Davenport and not necessarily from first-hand account. In all my years of knowing Bill [or Roselle] there was never any question of the two-way street of adoration between them [him] and Tony. And yet, here is Tony telling me he isn't sure if Bill really knew how much he loved him. Tony was a family man.

Tony's arrival in Lancaster was soon "accentuated" with his marriage to Kay. Recall that in 1979 Tony was single with no kids and by the end summer 1980 Tony is the parent and stepparent of 4 kids! Here I am standing in front of you – I'm 35 with no kids (please don't harass my mother about this) – and here was Tony, at age 29, going from 0- to-4 in just about 2 years! What makes a man do this? In Tony's case the answer is 3 letters – K...A...Y. Tony didn't just love Kay – he loved being Kay's husband. He loved being Kay's friend. And he loved being the father of Kay's children. Tony and Kay's relationship is one which I think many of us will try to duplicate. Why that is so could be answered with many findings – because they were always kind to each other; because they were kind to their children; because they were kind to their friends...who knows! And actually, it doesn't matter why, it just matters that when I think about the relationship that Tony and Kay had, I want that as a goal for my own relationship and that's probably one of the best compliments that a child can give his parents. Tony was a family man.

As with most deaths we are all left here reflecting back on the life of someone and wishing we had said this or that in an attempt to fill the void left behind. Tony is certainly no exception. We will all be walking up to the edge of this void...this chasm... that Tony's early death has left. As we stand at that edge and start to build a bridge across that chasm I would like to propose that the foundation of that bridge is the stone that reads "Tony was a family man".

Susan Peirce

Tony received this poem from Anne
and was touched by its beauty.

I read it today in her behalf –
only a part of an incredibly complex
 poignant
 and
 on-going
 Good-bye

From The Funeral by John Donne

WHOEVER comes to shroud me, do not harm,
 Nor question much,
That subtle wreath of hair, which crowns my arm ;
The mystery, the sign, you must not touch ;
 For 'tis my outward soul,
Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
 Will leave this to control
And keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution.