

Jeeps, Leipzig and Aesthetics: Remembering My Mentor Dr. Carrow

By Margaret Montet

I sat at a table with seven other mid-career college librarians. Our exercise was to write a short essay about our favorite teacher ever and then share with the group. Ultimately we were to discover what made these teachers successful and incorporate those techniques into our own teaching.

I wrote about Dr. Stimson Carrow, a Music Theory professor with whom I studied as an undergraduate and graduate student at Temple University. He was everyone's favorite, really, after they got over the shock of having to come to class prepared. He was tough on us undergraduates, drilling us on scales, chords and key signatures (the language of Music Theory) until as he said, we'd be able to recite all of the key signatures "in the middle of the night at the point of a gun." He addressed us by Mr., Miss or Mrs. And our last name. No other professors did that. He took the time to learn all of our names and the correct pronunciation.

In graduate school he relaxed a bit and frequently took us on wild tangents that put his passion for music in context and helped us understand Dr. Carrow as a real person. He told us about the time he "borrowed" an army Jeep in Germany so he could go visit J.S. Bach's grave in Leipzig. When I visited Leipzig on a recent tour of Germany, Dr. Carrow was as much on my mind as J.S. Bach. He also told us about the time he was locked up (I don't remember why) and taught the other prisoners in his cell Music Theory. No one doubted that story. Dr. Carrow also taught the eye-opening Aesthetics course which somehow helped us appreciate music, art, literature and history and tied them all together. That course changed the way I think about arts and culture, so important in my life.

As I read my essay years later at the librarians' conference, I began to weep. My neighbor had to finish reading for me. The other people at the table were touched and shed tears, too. How odd. No one was more surprised by this than me. It was at this moment that I realized all the things I

do when teaching that are unconsciously modeled on Dr. Carrow. My stories aren't as interesting as Dr. Carrow's, but I try to put the students at ease: everyone is new to the library at some time or another. I've learned to respect each and every student because I'll never know their whole story or what makes them tick. And whenever I'm speaking, whether it's to students, faculty, conference participants or whoever, I strive to make my content interesting and relevant. I imagine them asking, "What's in it for me?" and then I tell them. It works: I'm even invited to speak about library topics now.

Dr. Carrow has been gone for some time now, so I'll never be able to tell him how much his Music Theory and Aesthetics classes made me a better librarian. If I had thought to ask, "What's in it for me?" back in Dr. Carrow's classes, the answer would have gone something like this: a thorough knowledge of Music Theory, a new appreciation for all of the arts, and an ability to put listeners at ease and even make them laugh. Dr. Carrow was a man of faith and dreamed of sitting beside J.S. Bach on the organ bench in heaven to turn his music pages. Maybe I'll catch up with him there, although I'm not sure J.S. Bach needs printed music!

Margaret Montet, a writer and librarian from Hamilton, NJ, has published articles on topics including medieval art, murder mystery dinner parties, apples, sand castles, quilting, kites, and many travel destinations.