

When I first came to UNM-Gallup almost six years ago, Ralph was one of the few people to truly welcome me to the campus. There was something about him-- maybe it was a fatherly or elder statesman sort of thing--that had me periodically seeking out his advice. It didn't hurt that his old office in Gurley hall had tons of photos from Vietnam and elsewhere that helped open discussions unrelated to UNM, which is a better way to get to know someone.

Over the years, Ralph proved to be a relatively sane voice when life around Gallup seemed a bit insane. Most of the time, Ralph was such an even-tempered person that it had a calming effect on me. He did occasionally get frustrated and angry, but, I saw that side of him very seldom. And when he was chair of the committee helping the Faculty Senate update and rationalize the constitution and bylaws, Ralph was so open-minded and accepting of ideas from others that his leadership was like a gentle pushing.

The conversations I had with him over the years where he revealed a few things about his life remind of what Henry James wrote:

"Three things in human life are important: The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."

I'd like to think that maybe Ralph and I got along because we both had substantial experiences outside of academia. He had both suffered and seen the world for what it is--a place of joy and pain, wealth and suffering. His time in Southeast Asia is an experience few others have, his time in Zuni revealing of both the situation there and of him. Even his own physical suffering from the tire factory accident, perhaps gave him a perspective that said what matters is the person, not their credentials; the heart, not just the head.

Even though I knew Ralph for much less time than many here today, he had a significant impact on my time here in Gallup as a mentor, a colleague and a friend. There's a Sufi saying that

“When the heart weeps for what it has lost,
the soul laughs for what it has found.”

I would like to think that even though we are mourning his loss, Ralph has now found something new.

--Robert B. Galin, Associate Professor