An Inspiration to Generations

Jack Aber taught finance at BU for 40 years

By Tom Vellner

During his 40-year teaching career at Boston University, Jack Aber became known as a devoted leader and an esteemed mentor among his colleagues. To his students, he was an enthusiastic, caring professor whose lessons had a major influence.

Aber, a Questrom School of Business professor emeritus and longtime chair of the finance department, died on January 12, 2015. He was 77.

As a testament to his impact, one of his former students, Douglas Chamberlain (MET’74, Questrom ’76), established the Jack W. Aber Scholarship Fund in 2013. “Jack’s ability to interest and engage the classroom is legendary,” says Chamberlain, president of Appleton Partners, Inc., in Boston. “His enthusiasm is electric and he undoubtedly influenced thousands of undergraduate and graduate Boston University students over the years. Our friendship began in the classroom in 1975, and we remained closely linked for nearly four decades.”

Chamberlain says Aber was invited to join the advisory board at Appleton Partners in 2001, “where he was a brilliant and dynamic contributor to our firm’s growth and success. Jack truly inspired his fellow board and business colleagues, in addition to generations of BU grads. So very approachable, likable, and committed, his radiance as a teacher, colleague, and friend will carry on for all of us so privileged to have crossed his path.”

was an accountability that I hadn’t seen in other institutions,” says Master. “You had to be able to teach, because this was real tuition money being spent by real people, and Norm planted the stakes firmly in the ground that this will be a place of teaching excellence. The school was this laboratory of innovation and new ideas. It was a phenomenally creative place. We could do things and try things that we wouldn’t be able to do in most places.”

In honor of Scotch’s dedication to teaching, SPH presents the annual Norman A. Scotch Award for Excellence in Teaching to an individual who has made outstanding and sustained contributions to the school’s education program.

Scotch’s role in the creation of today’s SPH, and in the successful model of part-time education for working professionals, was little known to those outside the school.

“It’s very characteristic of the way he lived his life,” Glantz says. “If someone came to him with a good idea, he would do what he could to see it happen. He didn’t really care about credit, he cared about doing good.”
An Activist and a Trailblazer

Political science prof Betty Zisk challenged convention

By Mara Sassoon

In 1965, at a time when men dominated her field, Betty Zisk joined Boston University’s political science department, a pioneering move characteristic of the strong-willed professor who would go on to help found the Massachusetts Green Party.

A champion of social justice, she was also deeply committed to her students, seizing opportunities to serve on the reading committees for their theses. Zisk “combined scholarship and activism with a willingness to meet with and help students,” says Christine Rossell, a College of Arts & Sciences professor of political science.

Zisk, a CAS professor emerita of political science who taught at BU for 46 years until her retirement in 2011, died on October 19, 2014. She was 83.

Zisk attended Swarthmore College, whose Quaker (Religious Society of Friends) roots inspired her to join that faith.

“First and foremost she was a Quaker and an activist,” her friend Charmarie Blaisdell told the Boston Globe. “She was devoted to issues of social justice.”

Zisk earned a master’s degree in political science at Haverford College, another school in the Quaker Consortium, and a PhD at Stanford University. Following in her professor father’s footsteps, she joined BU’s political science faculty a year later.

In his memorial resolution to the CAS faculty, Graham Wilson, professor and chair of political science, recalled that Zisk would talk for hours with her students outside of class and was known to visit students in the hospital. She stood by her beliefs and her students with the same determination; even colleagues who disagreed with her political opinions considered her “a worthy adversary,” according to Rossell.

She was a pacifist who had a passion for the environment, and she supported Ralph Nader’s presidential bid as a Green Party candidate in