

SED Prof: “the Heart and Soul of Our Extended Family”

Daniel Davis, a retired high school principal

By Susan Seligson

Daniel Davis, a School of Education clinical assistant professor of education, was a native New Yorker and an unabashed Yankees fan. An insatiable reader and a world traveler, he loved jazz, movies, and his students, who threw him a surprise party for his 70th birthday and served his favorite drink—orange juice with lots of pulp.

“To say that everyone loved him is not hyperbole,” says Jane Ko (SED’12). “Dan was my advisor—he’s the reason I’m here. People gravitated toward him.”

Davis died on October 19, 2011, of a heart attack while visiting Udaipur, India, with his daughter, Jill. He had just completed a week of teaching in Mumbai.

Davis’ colleague Thomas Cottle, an SED professor of education, who had known Davis since he came to BU in 1999, describes their friendship as “love at first sight. He called me darling and I called him sweetie. His students adored him, and for good reason. They knew he was really smart, they knew he really knew about education, they knew that he had done and done well what he was teaching them to do, and they knew he really cared for them and their well-being, and it was genuine.”

Before joining the BU faculty, Davis worked in secondary education for 30 years at Stoughton High School, as a social studies teacher, department chair, and finally, principal. As coordinator for curriculum and teaching development at SED, he advised more than 70 students, from undergraduates to doctoral students, and taught courses in social studies methods. A specialist in critical thinking and the art of questioning as related to the teaching of history and social science, Davis coauthored the books *The United States Since 1945* and *A History of the World*. He also was codirector of the Harvard Project on East Asian Studies in Education.



Daniel Davis’ “limitless energy and enthusiasm, coupled with his deep passion for history and politics, transformed generations of SED students into exceptional teachers,” says former student Brooke Feldman (SED’08).

SED Dean Hardin Coleman recalls that at last May’s Commencement ceremony, students wore “I love Dan Davis” signs on their caps. “He was that professor who not only challenged you to do your best,” says Coleman, but “he swept you up in his enthusiasm for teaching and let you know that you counted as a person.”

Former student Brooke Feldman says Davis was far more than a professor and an advisor. “He was the heart and soul of our extended family,” says Feldman (SED’08). “It was Dan’s limitless energy and enthusiasm, coupled with his deep passion for history and politics, that transformed generations of SED students into exceptional teachers.”

Davis had traveled to China, Israel, and India to teach in various BU programs. In India, he was working with the BU cohort at the American School of Bombay, where he was teaching the last course in the master’s program before the students concluded their thesis.

Davis graduated from the State University of New York, Oswego, and earned a master’s in teaching at the City University of New York and a PhD at Ohio State University.

digest difficult science concepts and then be able to translate these for others.”

At UMass Amherst, Margulis was a Distinguished University Professor in Geosciences. She wrote hundreds of papers and many books on topics ranging from cell biology to microbial evolution.

Her most recent books include *Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution* (1998) and *Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origins of Species* (2002). The latter, and several others, was coauthored by Dorion Sagan, her son

from her first marriage, to the late astronomer Carl Sagan.

Margulis was honored throughout her career. She was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1983 and received the National Medal of Science from President Bill Clinton in 1999. Among her other awards was the 2008 Darwin-Wallace Medal, awarded by the London-based Linnean Society for major advances in evolutionary biology. At UMass, she received the Chancellor’s Medal and the Award for Outstanding Accomplishments in Research and Creative Activity in 2009.

The Library of Congress announced in 1998 that it would permanently archive her papers.

She also lectured widely throughout the United States and abroad. She returned to BU many times to give special lectures.

Zook, who describes Margulis as a mentor, colleague, and friend, has been teaching her original graduate Symbiosis course at BU for more than 20 years.

“I feel so special to have known and been guided by her for more than three decades,” he says.