

Anecdotes and Testimonials
for a Teacher, Colleague and Friend

Fred Mench

Professor of Classics



Presented on
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at
The Richard Stockton College
of New Jersey

formerly
Stockton State College



Fred, I remember you as one of the first faculty members I met when I walked into my office on H-wing in 1979. Your office was a few doors away and you immediately made me feel welcome. In fact, you decorated my walls. You had a poster of a French (?) landscape in your office and you gave it to me to hang on the bare wall beside my desk. Which it did for over 20 years! The calming scene, full of optimistic greens, always reminded me of what made Stockton faculty, like you, so special: smart, helpful, generous people committed to teaching and always ready for a new idea and a great conversation. We had many – in your office, in mine – and also at the Faculty Writing Institute that Penny Dugan and I held for two weeks every summer. You were in our first “class” of faculty from across the curriculum, and a big force in setting the positive, energetic tone that made these institutes work so well for four years.

I wish you all the best in your retirement. I am sure you will make the most of it.

Best,

Mimi Schwartz



It is hard to believe it has been 10 years since I graduated from Stockton. One person that I will always remember as being an instrumental part of my professional and personal growth is Professor Fred Mench. He served as my preceptor for the program as well as professor for several of my Literature courses as a Litt/Lang major at Stockton. I'll never forget writing journal entries for his courses and also the intense course on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. I always remember him being tough, but fair, and when you got an "A" in his course, you felt that it was truly earned and it was one in which you could be proud. He made me see how powerful it was to be a Literature/Language major, and the skills I learned at Stockton have enabled me to be successful in my career at Rutgers University where up until recently I served as primary editor for our Alumni Newsletter for the School of Pharmacy. I currently edit several publications for professors within our School and serve as business manager in the largest department at the School of Pharmacy. I am happily married with a beautiful little girl and often reflect on what a fabulous program I graduated from at Stockton and how it has enabled me to become a strong person.

When I think of Stockton, the first professor that comes to mind is Professor Mench. I will never forget that as a student I never missed any classes in 4 years' time, except for one class that I missed due to 104

fever with pneumonia. Professor Mench went out of his way to call me to see how I was feeling. He is one of the most brilliant and sincere professors I have ever encountered and I wish him the very best as I am sure this is not the end for him, but the beginning of another remarkable chapter in his life.

Lisa Mulé (Miskura), Class of 1997



Back in the early years when I still attended Program meetings, I was regularly amused and impressed by the array of distinct and strong personalities. In particular, Klukoff, Tompkins, Hollis, Moira Ferguson, Royce Burton, Enscoe, and of course Fred Mench. Each would play out what often seemed like a scripted role; they were predictably cantankerous or pontifical or incisively right, some of them actually exhibiting all of those traits on the same day. Fred, as I remember, tended to be the fair-minded legalist, listening for a while, then trying for the benefit of us all to sort out and clarify what had been said. In this way he was part of the comedy.

Over the years, I came to increasingly respect his careful intelligence, and how it was buttressed by a wit that never was cruel or used to undermine. It was (and no doubt still is) a humane wit, in service of elucidation, or the lightening of a moment. In short,

I remember Fred for his unflagging decency, and for how he used these strengths to forge an admirable career as an educator at Stockton.

Stephen Dunn



Simply a Decent Fellow

For those who worked with Fred Mench over the years, perhaps the most succinct summing up of Fred's contributions to the College comes down to this: he cared.

He showed that care throughout his various and important contributions to the College commons, for example as leader of the Faculty Assembly – the job was called “moderator” at the time – and as elected chair of the division (now school) of Arts and Humanities.

In terms of substance, Fred's strength has always been his recognition of the need for balance among the various constituencies in the academy. Without that recognition, an institution's advancement depends exclusively on the individual success of certain campus leaders, and one gets the sense that Fred's disposition was close to Bertolt Brecht's notion “... unhappy the land that needs heroes.” That term moderator was quite apt in Fred's case. It is fair to

say that Fred helped the College mature because he typically tried to make sure its elements worked collaboratively.

In terms of style, Fred's contribution has set a fine example for those who arrived in subsequent decades. He can be passionate, but he is no ideologue. He can hold his ground without being strident. His readiness to seek common ground among the particular interests of programs, division, and the College at large made him a fine colleague as divisional chair. Fred's legacy is then not only his considerable influence on how the College developed and the care and industry he devoted to that development but also the fact that he went about that business with honesty and decency, and that is a legacy we will gratefully cherish in the years to come.

G. Jan Colijn



Fred and I were both present at the creation – when a predominately young faculty, fired by the enthusiasm of the 60s, arrived in Pomona with the opportunity to write on a blank slate and build the new educational utopia. That opportunity created a great deal at Stockton that was different and better, much of which survives to this day. But it also resulted in a good deal of reasonably nutty and comical

behavior. In the midst of that maelstrom, Fred always struck me as something of a small island of sanity – a consistent spokesman for the good stuff in the curriculum, for a sense of humor and perspective in faculty deliberations, and for honesty and courage in faculty relations with the administration.

Fred arrived here with platinum credentials for teaching the very classics that were under assault in much of higher education during the 60s. And yet, he managed to nourish them quite successfully in that hostile intellectual atmosphere, and to teach them, to rave reviews, to state college students (and to my students and preceptees in particular) – most of whom entered his classes without any initial idea of what in the world he was talking about.

In the midst of endless and tumultuous faculty meetings where we struggled over the soul of this new college, Fred always managed to maintain his balance, and helped us to maintain ours, with a delightful sense of perspective and humor. I can recall one ferocious battle being waged over a relatively minor curricular issue in which one of the combatants accused the other of making a “mountain out of a molehill.” Fred’s instant quip, “That, it would seem, is our job,” brought down the house and drained all the poison (at least momentarily) out of the atmosphere.

And, during a time when all of us were untenured, and speaking unpleasantly either to higher administration or to the mobilized and frequently angry faculty carried considerable personal risk, Fred al-

ways seemed to me to say, in public, exactly what was on his mind.

In this last area, and indeed in all areas, he always did this quite matter-of-factly without any visible signs of either anxiety or compensating bravado – as if it never occurred to him to do anything else. I can recall wondering whether his study of the travails of classical Greece and Rome had led him to believe that those might have been somewhat more important for the course of Western civilization than our travails at Stockton. For many of us, at that time, that would have seemed a very curious and questionable conclusion. Yet, amazingly, it has stood the test of time. So has Fred.

Bill Daly



I first entered Professor Mench's class my Freshman year at Stockton (2000). My schedule had to be fixed because it was a mess. When I found out that I was going to have *Worlds of Homer* I immediately became stressed. In high school, we touched upon small snippets of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and I thought they were very difficult to understand. The way the story was expressed just seemed hard to comprehend. When I found out my new schedule was going to

include *Worlds of Homer*, that high school feeling came back.

First day of Professor Mench's class, my stomach was in butterflies listening to him explain the syllabus for the class. After class, I decided to try to make the best out of it and do what I had to to get a passing grade. Professor Mench was always available to me when I had questions or when I wanted something explained more thoroughly. Even though I ended the class with a "C" average, I felt that I gained some better knowledge of Homer and his literary legacy.

The second class I took with Professor Mench was two years later in Spring 2002. *Greek Tragedians* was another stomach turner for me. Again, Professor Mench was familiar enough with me to know that I needed some extra help with this era. He would work with me in providing additional information from the college library to look at to shed some light on the tragedies of the Greek times.

A lot of professors have an "untouchable persona" about themselves. In another words, a lot of college students feel intimidated by their professors. Professor Mench was the opposite. He truly seemed approachable and very willing to help me. He showed his incredible enjoyment for his classes and the lessons that he brought forth to share with his students.

Seven years later from my first experience with Professor Mench, I am teaching the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to seniors in high school. How ironic is that! I believe that you go through different levels of learning in life. In high school, I wasn't mature

enough to understand Greek history. College came and I started to get the gist of the Greeks, but not quite grasping the history. However, my career came and my learning level changed dramatically. I enjoy teaching Greek history to my seniors. Every time I start this unit with my students, I think of Professor Mench and how much he has influenced me. If it wasn't for his excitement on the topic, I believe I would not now feel confident to teach the topic to my own students.

I wish Professor Mench the best of luck in his future endeavors. I hope he continues to teach our future and share his knowledge.

Fondly,

Jaimi McWilliams (Werner), Class of 2004



The first time I met Fred I was making the circuit of colleagues while being interviewed for a position at Stockton. Fred was most cordial and informative. I noted that he had every possible contingency covered in his small office, including food and toys for visiting children, batteries for power shutdowns, et al. Here was a man who thought of everything, and with considerable detail and planning. (As I learned more about Jungian typology and the MBTI, it became clear that Fred was an ISTJ, an introverted, sensate,

thinking, judgment type, which, in other persons, led to successful engineering and administration). Through the years I found Fred always thoughtful, conciliatory, even-tempered, and careful in his judgments. As some of his colleagues lacked these qualities, he always had a balancing, sobering, compensatory influence on the tiller of our sometimes tempest-tossed Litt/Lang barque.

Fred has always been a person with a quiet sense of himself, with staying power and constancy, qualities which served his students well, for sure, and I believe all of the rest of us also. I am pleased to have been his colleague, and consider myself so still. (Just last year, the anniversary of the Charles Whitman tower massacre at UT was covered by *Texas Monthly*. In this article, those who were there at the time were interviewed, including our Fred Mench, who was in the tower during the shooting, only yards from the sniper. He stepped out into the stairwell, saw bodies piling up, and prudently dove to cover. This is why we had the privilege of knowing him).

I wish him well in semi-retirement, and know his active mind will continue to survey the goings on back in Ithaca, Athens, and other trouble spots scattered about the wine-dark sea, and, even better, will continue to discern how those ancient perturbations inform us still.

Jim Hollis



Lake Fred

Here's the real story behind the naming of Lake Fred.

The college moved from the Mayflower Hotel to the Pomona campus in early 1972. In those days President Bjork and his immediate staff worked out of a cabin located where the Lakeside Center currently resides.

One warm Spring day in 1972 President Bjork and two assistants, Chuck Tantillo and Dick Chait, were walking from the cabin to the main campus building. They were on their way to attend a meeting with the leaders of the newly formed Stockton Federation of Teachers.

On the way around the lake, Bjork, Tantillo, and Chait happened to pass Fred Mench. Fred was by the path, his gaze focused on the lake, unaware of the three administrators passing by. Arms extended out, palms turned towards the sky, Fred was chanting "cogito, ergo sum," "cogito, ergo sum," over and over.

Bjork and his companions kept going. The meeting with the SFT leaders took place as planned, with the usual rancor, invective, and mutual mistrust permeating the proceedings.

Someone suggested they pick a topic they could agree upon. Tantillo suggested that they try to come up with a name for the main campus lake, which at

that time was nameless on campus maps. Ralph Bean said, “Let’s call it Lake Samuel Gompers” to honor the famous labor leader. Chait countered with the name “Lake Millard Filmore” to honor his favorite dead president. Many other names were put on the table. Agreement could not be reached.

Suddenly Bjork, who had remained silent during the discussion, said, “We should name the lake after somebody local.” Since I am the top guy around here, we are going to call it Lake Fred Mench.”

Everyone around the table, administrators and faculty, agreed that was a great idea. Fred was probably the only person on campus without enemies. But someone asked Bjork why he thought Fred should have a lake named for him. Bjork responded, “Fred deserves it. I admire his ability to speak Spanish.”

Unfortunately, when the campus map was printed the Mench part was omitted for space purposes. But a few old timers still call it by its full name – Lake Fred Mench.

Tony Marino



The truth is, the rumor about Fred was that he was an extremely difficult professor – one who you could never please. It was time for me to take my Senior Seminar course. I was extremely nervous to

see the unveiling – who would be the professor of this course. Behold – it was Fred Mench. I was very nervous!!! I vowed to myself that I was going to make an impression on him early. I remember getting all the information ahead of time. He gave us a list of suggested movies to view analyzing the hero in each to prepare for this course. If my memory serves me right, there were at least 50 movies on this list!!! Was he crazy??? Anyway, me being the person that I am, I REALLY WATCHED every movie on this list AND took notes. I later used all of this info. in my reflective journal which was also a requirement. In talking to the other students in the class, I think I was the only one who did this – but again . . . my goal was to impress this man!

I remember the book well, Joseph Campbell's *A Hero With a Thousand Faces*. That theory still plagues me today when I watch a movie. I could never watch a movie again without trying to put him into Campbell's Monomyth. Anyway, the course was fabulous!!! I learned so much in that semester. Fred taught us about literature, but also about life. He was going through some personal issues at the time – I can't remember exactly, but I believe his wife was very ill. He became a man that I truly admired and looked up to. When it came time for the senior paper – yes I did impress him. I spoke for an hour in my presentation about Huck Finn as a hero representing the Jacksonian Era – I used all theories that were taught. But, this effort was not all me – it

was because Fred instilled in me a work ethic that I will never forget.

I often think of Fred when I am teaching my Honors World Literature course. I, too, teach Campbell's Monomyth of a hero. This year, I was given the honor of the Governor's Award of "teacher of the year." I was asked who I could think of that had molded me into the educator that I am today . . . Fred Mench was the first name that came out of my mouth. Without even thinking, I said his name. That says a lot about this man. This is my 11th year teaching and I owe my work ethic to him.

Fred will always be a special man to me, and I wish him much happiness on his new journey in retirement.

Sincerely,

Stacy Peretti (Passalaqua), Class of 1996



Fred was on the Steering Committee and active in the Assembly for much of the same period as I was. I remember him as unfailingly good spirited and measured during those sometimes hectic times.

Fred's leadership with the Classical Humanities Society is also one of the memorable aspects of his years at Stockton. His efforts in arranging programs

(from the speakers to the refreshments) contributed significantly to bringing community members and academics together and making the College a part of the community.

I remember Fred visiting me in the hospital during the winter break of my first year at Stockton. I was very ill and in great pain. I looked up one day to find Fred standing at the foot of my bed with a stack of books that provided hours of entertainment for me as I recovered. Fred brought more than books that day. He brought me a sense of the community I had joined.

But of all the ways I think of Fred, the one I treasure most is the sight of Fred in a small classroom with a group of students around a conference table working on Latin – the students looking earnest and Fred looking content.

We will miss you, Fred.

Cindy Jassel



Fred and Mamie

Everybody knows about Fred Mench's smarts, his dry wit, and his teaching abilities, but my favorite memory of Fred didn't take place on campus, and it

shows a different side of Fred that I didn't know about until that night.

Years ago, Fred dropped by my house to show me some pictures or chat about something – I don't remember the purpose of the visit. I was busy in the kitchen, so I asked Fred to wait a few minutes in the living room.

I had recently gotten a kitten named Mamie; she was a shelter girl who was somewhat skittish and standoff-ish. She was still getting used to me and to the house, and she was rarely happy. I knew it was temporary, so I didn't worry.

But when I came out of the kitchen and into the living room, Mamie was sitting on the couch with Fred – on his lap! – looking adoringly up at him while he read aloud to her from an article in *Cat Fancy* magazine. She was listening intently, and I truly believe she was batting her eyelashes at him flirtatiously. Even if I had had a camera and taken a picture, that picture could not be more vivid than the image I still carry today of that “Fred moment.”

Fred turned on the charm with Mamie, and made her transition to her new home easier and faster. It's my favorite Fred memory, and I will have it forever.

GT Lenard



Stockton was a very different place when I joined the sixteen member LITT/LANG faculty in 1976. Most of the college-wide faculty (and the faculty was mostly male) had beards, wore blue jeans, and shuffled down the gallery in sandals. Gerry Enscoe favored dashikis; Ken Tompkins, of the flowing Viking hair and beard, wore his Mexican wedding shirt on days too hot for breast plate and helmet. Jim Hollis dressed in black, looking a bit like TV's Palladin without a six shooter.

In the early eighties, an outside consultant said Stockton was "stuck in the amber of the sixties," and many of us considered it a compliment.

Fred Mench stood out among us. His collar buttoned down, his necktie knotted, his sweater vests hand knitted, Fred looked like a professor. He sounded like a professor. He was the one parents of prospective students were steered to.

When Fred invited you to his office for tea, you knew you would be drinking tea. The Mench tea ceremony, performed in a paper-stacked, windowless office was a marvel of balance and economy of movement. Never leaving his desk chair, Fred rolled gingerly between overturned milk crates to turn off the electric kettle, to warm the pot, to fill it with loose tea, to search for another cup while the tea steeped. I wanted to applaud when he brought it all off without spilling a drop or scalding a guest.

Fred's office was a place of calm in the midst of a college lurching from crisis to crisis. Surrounded by posters extolling the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome, it was almost possible to take the long view while there. I remember Fred's tenure as moderator of the Faculty Assembly as a time of purpose and peace. In those days, moderators served one year only. But I remember the Mench year as the era of good feelings.

I miss Fred's red wool car coat. When I complimented him on it, he told me his peers at Kenyon College had also liked it. The coat must have been twenty-five years old then. I suspect Fred has the fifty year old coat still but wants to spare it from the cold. I miss the parties at the Burtons where Fred beat out all comers in solving the rebuses in the Ballantine India Pale Ale bottle caps.

I will miss Fred's daily presence. I will miss his kindness, his decency, his insight. I will miss his stories about Edward and Sara and pictures of his grandchildren. I miss Martha, and I rejoice that Fred found Mary. May they share many cups of tea.

In friendship,

Penny Dugan



My favorite memory of Fred is during my freshman year. Fred was my mentor during the mentor/scholar program which meant I had an independent study with him. We were analyzing Campbell's Monomyth depicted in various stories. In my naiveté and intimidated freshmanness, I never questioned or protested a reading suggestion. Thus, Fred ended up having me read Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad*, *The Aeneid*, *The Once and Future King*, *Le Morte de Arthur*, *The Hobbit*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Grendel*. I also wrote a 29-page research paper. After that semester, college seemed a breeze.

That freshman year also included Latin where Fred discovered that if I lived in ancient Rome, I would have had a speech impediment. No matter how hard he tried, I could not roll my Rs if my life depended on it.

Lydia Fecteau



Writing about Fred Mench

Energetic, always engaged, dedicated, full of humor.

These are the words that immediately come to mind when I think of Fred Mench. If you want more proof of this description, then I challenge anyone here to keep pace walking alongside him from B-Wing to K-Wing after a Faculty Assembly meeting.

When he passed by my office to inform me of his intention to retire, he looked at me with his peculiar grin and said: “Congratulations. You are now the old man in the LANG program.” It was as if he were handing off a baton at a track meet.

Working with Fred has been an honor. For almost nine years he has served as my unofficial mentor. Always quick, serene, and full of wisdom, his mere presence at a program meeting would seldom lack deep respect and silent admiration. Where else would we learn the history of an evolving, ambitious Language Program?

You see, Fred Mench is not really leaving the Languages and Culture Studies Program. He will continue to visit our classes; keep in touch, accompany the Hellenic Studies Program on multiple future study tours to Greece.

Professor Fred Mench will not halt his extended adventurous wonderings or his intellectual quest to promote the “Examined Life.”

I will follow his lead, and our LANG faculty will run with his Classical Studies baton, keeping stride with our master professor ... nuestro muy querido maestro (our very beloved teacher).

We are truly grateful for your legacy, and we will give continuity to your ideals.

Thank you, Fred.

Arnaldo Cordero Román



When I think of Fred Mench, I think of three things I love: books, music, and pie.

Though we certainly share a professional interest in literature, I think of books because I shared my first office at Stockton with Fred's books – not Fred, mind you – but shelves and shelves and stacks and stacks of books that he got for review as editor of *Classical World*. I rather liked being surrounded by Fred's books. They made the office cozy; their titles were often intriguing. I pulled a few off the shelves and read parts of them over lunch. During Fred's visits to his books, I first got to know him as a dedicated teacher, scholar, and colleague.

As time has gone on, I have learned other things about Fred – most notably that he is a righteous disc jockey. Anyone who has attended one of the Literature and Language programs’ annual spring bashes can testify to the central place Fred’s musical choices play in the festivities. His taste in music is eclectic, and his choices for the bash reveal a wit and irreverence that always merit comment – and sometimes applause. Each year, when Fred rolls in with the sound set-up or boom box or heads for the computer with his pile of cds, the guessing games begin. Will he go with chanting monks or Mozart concertos? Bagpipers or Rosemary Clooney? When the volume goes up, faculty scan the room for student reactions. Some students nod appreciatively; some look confused; some roll their eyes; some even dance (though not to the monks). While the event is known for its food and for its presentation of student critical and creative writing awards, the music is really what makes it a party.

Plus, Fred always brings pie.

Lisa Honaker



Like many events in the chapters of our lives, it does not seem possible that I have known Fred for 30+ years. During this time I have interacted with

Fred on many levels, and have known him to always be unwavering and dedicated. It would be remiss if I did not say that no job was ever perceived by Fred as too great or too small – whether it be picking up copies at the Print Shop or serving as Divisional Chairperson. I would like to thank Fred for sharing his example of patience and support, evidenced both at work and with family over the years. I wish him health and happiness in the new life chapter that he and Mary are writing.

Nancy Messina



ANCIENT HISTORY:
On the Occasion of Prof. Fred Mench's
Retirement, 2008

I have to confess: I loved Prof. Mench. Although I was a nontraditional, older student when I matriculated at Stockton in the 1970s, and so should have known a thing or two about the world, my grasp was as narrow as my personal history and sorrows. But, slowly, nearly without my awareness, that came to change. With each session in Prof. Mench's courses, my world enlarged, chapter by chapter, lecture by lecture, until it extended all the way back to the ancient river valleys of Egypt and Mesopotamia (present-day

Iraq), where writing first emerged, and on through the city states of Greece and up through the founding of Rome, its imperial expansion, its decay, and its ultimate fall.

Prof. Mench's instruction was as temperate as Virgil's in Dante's *Inferno*; he kept his cool even as the world around us was heating up. Our country was still in Vietnam, after all. Wearing suit jackets and bowties in that era of tie-dye and Day-Glo, the man was the opposite of flamboyant. Clearly, a square. It was the intensity of his focus on the subject matter and his evident erudition that compelled our attention. Facts were crucial, and we learned them or else, but what was necessary, above all, was historical understanding, and for that one would require the scholarly disinterest Prof. Mench modeled for us in every class. This unquantifiable quantum, even more than the research skills and data we took from his instruction, would permit many of us to prevail in graduate school and beyond. Combined with the enlargement of my worldview, acquiring this reasoned stance helped me put my life with its little sorrows in perspective.

Over the years, I've referred to the texts used in Prof. Mench's classes on countless occasions. These were the first books I consulted when the drumbeats began sounding for war with Iraq. I knew better than to sneer when Saddam claimed his people were civilized way back when ours were still hunting in packs. Any student of Prof. Mench's would have known the importance of securing Iraq's National

Museum, but then, again, any student of Prof. Mench, whether in a classics or a history course, might have foreseen the course of the war, and come to a different decision. One more instance of a lesson learned in academia that was not merely academic is what I learned about love when I followed a reference to Plato in the bibliography of a class text.

This led to books titled *Love in the Western World* and *Love Declared*, both by the French essayist Denis de Rougement (Along with my temporal world, my circle of acquaintance, too, had widened). Turned out, the Ancient Greeks had no generic equivalent for our term love. *Philia* designated any “feeling of attachment between two people.” Their terms described discrete bonds. Socrates claimed “that he possessed only one knowledge, that of *erotikè*,” an amorous bond between those of the same sex or opposite sex. But that wasn’t right. Maybe Platonic love? But how vague. *Charis* and *agapè*, gratitude and reverence, those two, together, seemed just about right. And so it was I came to learn that, no – for what I felt for Prof. Fred Mench – love was not too strong a term.

Joe-Anne Mc Laughlin, Class of 1978



When Stockton launched a new Master of Arts in Education degree, I had the honor of serving as the founding director of the program. I had been involved with the program from the very first moment, serving on the committee that developed its mission, its curriculum, simply everything related to this new Master's degree. It was clear from the start that strong disciplinary content knowledge was going to be one of the corner stones of MAED. During the first semester of courses, Fred approached me with the idea to integrate our Master's students in his Examined Life program. I did not have to think twice. What a wonderful opportunity! Our students were to be treated to a series of presentations by eminent scholars on life, literature, and the arts of ancient Greece. In addition, Fred would offer a seminar geared especially toward the needs of teachers. As an overload, of course. Fred knows a thing or two about teaching overloads. I knew immediately that this was a worthy prospect for our program. As I began to work closely with Fred on all the details of the joint venture, my initial appreciation deepened. I really don't need to state here that Fred cares about this college, our regional educational community, and our students. That is common knowledge. I am going to say it again anyway, because it was such a pleasure to see him in his element.

The seminar was a great success. One of the MAED students even decided to apply for the Examined Life fellowship, which included a study tour of Greece. It was a profound experience for her, and her students are benefiting now from her many insights gained from the trip and the seminar.

Fred will enter well-deserved retirement after so many years of tireless service. Examined Life will continue, and I sincerely hope that it will remain a long-term feature of the MAED program.

Thanks, Fred, for starting it all for our Master's Program.

Marion Hussong



Fred Mench was the second person that I met at Stockton. I spoke with a secretary when I first walked into the ARHU office – probably Ginny Burkley – but Fred was in the office too and quickly introduced himself.

He was first on my itinerary and took me to the G-wing cafeteria for an “informal” breakfast meeting before my whirlwind day of interviews. At that breakfast – yogurts for both of us – Fred pulled out a pen, drew up a napkin, and asked, “Would you like me explain General Studies to you?” As I nodded, he

proceeded to explain the G-categories, diagram the 25% rule, and suggest courses that might be taught.

Our breakfast was quite brief, I had arrived on campus a few minutes late, yet Fred still managed to explain in a straightforward and powerful way Stockton's greatest claim to academic innovation. That was the first thing he taught me about Stockton.

The best thing he taught me was the personal value of hard work at the College. Fred's work ethic dismissed any stereotype I might have had about senior faculty letting junior faculty do all the grunt work. I know of no professor, from my first day until now, more willing to roll up his sleeves and get to it than Fred Mench.

Another lesson derives from Fred's even temper and seeming endless enjoyment for his work. It is that temperament and enjoyment, I am sure, that has made him the exemplary teacher that he is. It is a lesson I have yet to master. I'll keep working at it Fred.

Tom Kinsella



“φίλου πιστοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀντάλλαγμα – there
is no substitute for a faithful friend”

Ancient Greek proverb

Soon after I was appointed to Stockton, I received a letter from Texas, from someone named Fred Mench. He introduced himself as a colleague and congratulated me for my appointment. In return, I thanked him for his kindness and expressed the desire to meet with him. For the first time we met at Stockton in September of 1971 and, after 36 years, we are still here! We both established our families in Linwood, he in the gold coast and I in the silver! No regrets.

During the Mayflower months, and for several years after, we used car pools, an experience that gave us opportunities to talk about academics, subjects of common interest and to know each other well. We both made our commitment to Stockton serious and permanent. Once upon a time we tried to teach a class of some 70 students without much success. Those were the days when we had one faculty strike after another. Students were disappointed and their evaluations were very harsh. A student who failed our course on ancient Greek-Roman and Byzantine civilization had threatened us with death. I remember receiving a call from the Northfield police department

to get the news. They asked me whether I knew the person who had threatened us.

Fred is an instructor par excellence, and a totally devoted teacher. I know of no other member of the faculty that spends so much time with his students. If he is not in class, he is in his office with an open door five days a week. Saturdays include extracurricular activities, either at Stockton introducing a visiting speaker for the Classical Humanities Society of South Jersey, or in some community in South Jersey, lecturing or leading a discussion. On Sundays if he is not teaching, he is singing at the First Methodist Church of Linwood, N.J.

Once upon a time, the Athenian philosopher Diogenes went around Athens with a lectern searching for the person with the ideal life. We imagine him saying “ἄθροπον ζητῶ!” I am searching for a genuine human being! Not much later, Menander, another Greek poet, proclaimed that “Blessed is the human being if he is truly human” [μακάριός ἐστ’ ἄνθρωπος, εἰ ἄνθρωπος εἶ]. Fred Mench fits in both categories. He has pursued the ideal life (not exactly as Diogenes visualized it), and he has proven himself as the “καλὸς κ’ ἀγαθὸς ἄνθρωπος.” I will remember him as such.

Demetrios Constantelos



A Tribute for Fred Mench, in Latin sayings

Those who have had the pleasure of knowing Fred will see a little of him here in these proverbs from wise Romans, I think:

<i>Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo</i>	“Resolutely in deed, sweetly in manner”
<i>Draco dormiens numquam titillandus.</i>	“Never tickle a sleeping dragon.”
<i>In lumine tuo, videbimus lumen.</i>	“In your light, we shall see light.”
<i>Philosophum non facit barba.</i>	“A beard doesn’t make a philosopher.” (Plutarch).... However, it helps (Connor): <i>Autem proficio</i> [?]
<i>Sapere aude.</i>	“Dare to be wise.” (Horace)
<i>Sapientia est potentia</i>	“Wisdom is power.”
<i>Quot linguas calles, tot homines vales.</i>	“You are worth as many people as the languages that you speak.”
<i>Amicus optima vitae possessio.</i>	“A friend is the greatest treasure in life.”

Best wishes to you, Fred. Thanks for all the help and advice you have given me over my years at Stockton and the sapientia you have shared.

Jack Connor



It is a pleasure to contribute a note to the tribute for Fred Mench. As a founding faculty member he made an enormous contribution to Stockton's success. As a member of the History Faculty, as a thoughtful contributor to the curriculum and as a leader, Mench's work has gone a long way to make us what we are. Through the years Mench's contributions to the History Program have been of the utmost importance. Perhaps, though, his greatest success has been to keep before the whole college the importance of classical scholarship as the central and dominant feature of our intellectual lives. I also wish to acknowledge his work as a leader of the faculty. As Moderator (as it was then called) of the Faculty Assembly and as Chair (as it was then called) of the Arts and Humanities Faculty Mench, with clarity of vision and sureness of foot, guided us through extremely difficult and perilous times. We have all benefitted from his liberal and generous leadership.

Bill Lubenow



Perhaps my clearest memory associated with Fred is of a conversation I had with one of his colleagues when we were trying to count up all his activities. Eventually, we decided to stop as it had reached so many that we were losing track and just thinking about them all was making us exhausted.

Rodger Jackson



My formal introduction to Fred Mench came as a new faculty member at Stockton in 1999, but I knew a few things about him before actually meeting him. My father had been Fred's classmate in the 1950s at Philadelphia's renowned Central High School, and when he found out that Fred and I would be colleagues, he was delighted to fill me in. My father said that even back in high school, everyone who knew Fred thought he was brilliant (a "genius" to be precise!). Having gotten to know Fred as a fellow teacher, and through his work on projects I truly admire, like *Fictional Rome* and *the Examined Life*, I'd have to agree. My dad also called him a "real gentleman" – a phrase I found to be sort of quaint at the time, but the more I've gotten to know Fred, the more I see what he

meant. Not only does Fred literally exemplify the term gentleman (he is both gentle and a real mensch), but he is also a person whose generosity and graciousness make other people feel good about themselves (my personal definition of the term). Though I haven't had as many opportunities to work with Fred as I would have liked, the encounters we have had over the last few years have always made me feel that my work and my voice at Stockton are valuable, and I know this feeling is shared by so many of the faculty and students whose lives he has touched. Gentlemen are a rare breed these days, and Fred exemplifies what makes them so prized.

Deborah Gussman



Not having studied with Fred Mench or taught with him, my best observations may be about the effects I have noticed upon people who have over the years studied, taught, and educated side by side with him. I have always enjoyed talking to the most active and diversified scholar in the world, David Roessel, after he has received another e-mail or note from Fred, who somehow has stayed a week, or a month, ahead of David in remembering to think about the next detail or problem of a forthcoming event, class, or trip. Even David can't always believe how much

ground Fred can cover as he stays involved in so many activities. The same “Fred effect” has been noticed as he has advised and partnered with my History colleague Tom Papademetriou. Fred, Tom, and David have always managed to somehow organize and pull off the most complicated social events, scholarly tours, and community-related educational projects. I have always suspected that Fred has often been disproportionately active behind the scenes of these activities to ensure everything from the clarity of guiding principles to the efficiency of program mailing lists. All in all, he has been a true role model, leader, and good example.

Rob Nichols



Fred was one of the people who really welcomed when I arrived at Stockton in the '70s. The college was so different from any place I had been before. Very little appeared to be settled or stable, and so it was reassuring to meet someone who, while he clearly loved being here and had carved out a good niche, seemed able to remain calm and collected amid the frenetic atmosphere.

I lived in the same general vicinity as Fred in those days, and he invited me into an informal, occasional carpool group that helped each other out with lifts

when needed. In addition to solving some practical problems for me, the gesture helped me as a non-Mayflower faculty member feel comfortable among my seniors.

Much later when I was no longer on the faculty I had occasion to call upon Fred's special expertise. President Farris was sometimes interested in injecting a little Latin into college ceremonies and documents, and I had the pleasure of requesting Fred's assistance on her behalf, which he always graciously provided. The process was fun because how to say something wasn't always cut and dried. For example, is a former President who happens to be female a President Emeritus or Emerita – because the adjective modifies the person even though it appears to modify the noun "President," which of course in English has no gender. Not many people would find that discussion interesting, but Fred did. I hate the idea of not having someone around to discuss things like that.

Marc Lowenstein



When I arrived at Stockton in 1980, Fred was the Moderator of the Assembly. I was pleased to discover that my sister-in-law knew him from regional Classical society meetings. In those days, faculty assembly meetings were always well attended and

offered the magnificent speechifying of the likes of Shelby Broughton and Gerry Enscoe. Fred managed all of this with great civility. Later I got to know his Martha in the Skills Center – she taught writing; later I met his daughter Sarah who taught Latin at Mainland Regional. Now I have completed a book for Vanderbilt University Press in Nashville, a city Fred has lived in on and off. Fred and I aren't great friends, but our lives seem to have crossed at a number of points. Mostly, I think of Fred as one of the reasons I initially felt blessed that I found myself at Stockton. It has been a pleasure to consider him a colleague.

Paul Lyons



I have heard students say that Fred Mench reminds them a little bit of Fred Rogers, of *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*. I think it's the sweaters. But they tell me it's only a wonderful day in the neighborhood until they see Fred's reading list. No one piles on the classics quite like Fred.

We all love Fred, but I have a special soft spot for him because he introduced me to two of my favorite people: Lydia Fecteau and Greg Cross. Fred recommended both of them to serve as Writing Center tutors in the late 1980s. Lydia has gone on to become part of our faculty community and an inspiration to

us all, and Greg was lucky enough to become my husband. Fred saw in Lydia and Greg traits of his own: a love of learning, a healthy work ethic, and a wry sense of humor. Greg learned a lot from Fred and still loves practicing his Latin whenever he can. Because of Fred, my son first heard Winnie the Pooh read to him as *Christophorus Robinus et Winnie Ille Pu*.

I have heard students describe Fred's sense of humor as dry. I have also heard students say that his humor is so subtle only he gets the joke. We get it, Fred. Thanks for the memories. *Bona fortuna sit semper!*

Pam Kennedy Cross



Saying something about Fred Mench is rather hard for me. For most of my time at Stockton, he has been a blur out in front of me that I have tried, vainly, to catch. I consider myself a pretty hard worker, and in past positions I had always set a goal for myself to keep up with colleagues. But nothing prepared me for working with Fred, and I more often felt like Wily E. Coyote trying to slow him down. Let me also say that I am crazy, and it was quite chastening to meet someone who was crazier than I am to the fifth degree.

In one of my early semesters here, I faced a problem in the scheduling of the three students for the Intermediate Greek course. The course was listed in the catalog as TBA, and so the students already had the rest of their schedules set before we were able to talk together about a meeting time. Two of them had MWF schedules, and one of them was on campus Tuesday/Thursday. All were enrolled in the course, but it was proving impossible to find a common meeting time. When I consulted with Fred, he offered the simple, typically Menchian solution. I should meet with two of the students on MWF, and then the other student the other two days. Even at this early stage, I had worked with Fred long enough not to consider this a joke, but his real suggestion. And, as most of you know, Fred would never suggest to someone else that they do something that he would not do. Indeed, Fred went on to say that this was a common problem with the TBA courses in Greek and Latin, and that very semester he had three students in Intermediate Latin all coming at different times. And, while I'm not completely sure, I think this was when he was coming to school dragging an oxygen tank before him. A saner person would have gone home and started polishing cvs. Fred and I began a competition to see how quickly someone could teach a class after surgery (Fred won – indeed, he was going to teach a class the same day as a colonoscopy until the students stopped him). Then there were the number of independent studies, the number of tutorials, and so on to who could see their spouse the least amount

of time (Fred won again, unless one counts time on-line).

But it has not been easy for Fred either. He is still puzzled that someone would not have e-mail access at home (and so can't receive all those messages Fred sends; it is a mystery). But, while I would not mind putting a boulder or two in Fred's way to slow him down (but it hasn't worked), everything that Fred does here at Stockton has had great value and has been really worth doing. Most of the people here at Stockton have no idea how much Fred has been doing. And it is a good thing, because if they had he would have been sent for mandatory counseling.

Dave Roessel



As a transfer student in the Fall of 1999, Prof. Mench was assigned to me as my preceptor. Not knowing who he was, I was delightfully surprised when I met him. His kind words, his genuine concern for others and his knowledge of almost everything made my undergrad years at Stockton very memorable. Never having taken a class with Prof. Mench, my only contact came through his advice on what classes to take and which ones not to take. Meeting with him once or twice a semester became more of a want than a have to. Preceptee meetings which should only last about 10-15 minutes usually

turned into at least 30 minutes and 20 minutes of that was just talking about where our lives had been and what we were planning on doing. Prof. Mench knew me and treated me as if I had him as a teacher every semester. When I graduated in 2001 Prof. Mench was at graduation in line with all of the other Litt/Lang faculty. His smile was just as big as the others and his words are something I will never forget. “Julie it has been a pleasure to help guide you through your time at Stockton. I thank you for sharing your experience with me.” It is now those words I think of as I watch the high school students I teach graduate, as it has truly been a pleasure to guide them, and I am forever thankful for allowing them to share their experience with me. I now know how thankful Prof. Mench was that I shared my Stockton experience with him. Prof. Mench is truly a Stockton icon. Someone who did not just teach but instead really taught his students. I thank him for his endless guidance and wish him all the best.

Julianne (Julie) Reinhardt, Class of 2001



Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote “*experientia docet*” (experience teaches). If that is true, and I’m sure it is, then Fred Mench is a most excellent teacher. His love of the Latin language and Roman culture

is undeniable. His dedication to Stockton and the greater community is irrefutable. While his retirement is unavoidable – O tempora! O mores! (What times are these we are living in! Cicero) – I do hope (and suspect) that he will continue teaching us all. And perhaps he will pass on the secret to his indefatigable energy “mirabile visu!” (amazing to see!). Enjoy your much-deserved retirement!

With best wishes,

Katherine Panagakos

Catullus, Carmina 31.7-11

O quid solutis est beatius curis,
Cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino
Labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum,
Desideratoque acquiescimus lecto?
Hoc est quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.

O, what is more blessed than when the mind, free from care, lays its burden down; and, when wearied with distant travel, we come back to our home, and rest our limbs on the wished-for bed? This and only this repays such toils as these!



I think I have this right though after 37 years it may be a memory tattered at the edges.

To appreciate this event you need to understand something about Fred Mench: he is the most organized person I have ever met! For example, Fred is famous for creating forms, lists, explanations, histories, backgrounds, foregrounds, genealogies and summaries as handouts in his classes. Any student who has taken a course from Fred has a personal collection of these handouts to take into the future – and, in many cases, into their own classrooms.

Not only has he created vast numbers of these handouts but he has carefully put them in folders all labeled and alphabetized. I was once reminded of Fred's propensity (I almost said "obsession") to organize things when I met an entomologist in England who cataloged beetles. Her collection consisted of a few thousand small, flat, glass-covered boxes of impaled beetles each labeled with the tiniest writing I think I have ever seen. Fred's collection is like that.

Don't get me wrong here. As one of the college's most DISorganized teachers, I admire tremendously Fred's achievement. How empowering and satisfying it must be to want a genealogy of Julius Caesar and to reach into a file cabinet and pull it out. I couldn't do that if my existence were at stake. I admire Fred

Mench in many ways; one of them is the way he organizes classroom materials.

All of this is as background to the incident I want to share.

Before the college opened its doors, five Deans and a Vice-President worked for a year and a half designing the academic college. About half-way through this long process we began interviewing candidates for the first cohort of faculty. Fred was one of that group. At the time he was teaching at the University of Texas.

When we found a candidate we wanted to hire we began negotiating costs for moving the candidate to New Jersey. I can't remember how much the State paid – probably a pitiful sum – but, anyway, we made arrangements to bring Fred, his wife and two children to Linwood, NJ.

His household furnishings and personal possessions were put on a moving truck and Fred, his wife, and two kids came on ahead in their car. So far this is a standard description of long-distance moving in America. There is nothing notable in the event.

Fred and his family arrived at their new house in Linwood in due time and waited impatiently – as anyone would – for their furnishing and belongings. Day after day went by but no truck appeared.

After many days, the cause was admitted to Fred by the moving company: the truck with all its content had burned to the axles!

Every single piece of furniture, every personal possession, clothing, heirlooms, toys, kitchen goods,

appliances – everything was gone. The shock from this must have been horrific for Fred and his family – all they had in the world was whatever was in the car. Parenthetically, I had a similar thing happen to me when I went from NY State to Texas in 1953 for a new job. The night I arrived my car was burgled and the contents stolen so that every thing I owned was gone. I was forced to appear for a job interview in a borrowed, ill-fitting suit with bedroom slippers on! This event gave me some small sense of what Fred was going through.

After a few terrible days, Fred met with an insurance agent who, I'm sure, expressed his sadness at Fred's situation and promised to do everything in his power to get Fred and his family on their feet. There was a problem, the agent stated, in that the insurance company could not replace any of Fred's possessions without clear evidence of model, color, size, condition of each item. If only Fred had those kinds of records, the full value could be determined; otherwise much of what Fred lost couldn't be fully covered.

The agent, of course, didn't know our Fred.

Fred went to a filebox that had traveled with them in the car from Texas and produced folder after folder, description after description and, can you believe, photograph after photograph of each of their chairs, beds, toys, appliances, couches, electronics – all in folders, all alphabetized and all legal proof of Fred's loss.

I wish I could say that this caused me to organize my life; it didn't. I wish I could say that my teaching was founded on vast quantities of handouts to support my students. I wish I could say these things. I can't.

I can, however, say that my colleague and friend Fred Mench is not only the most organized person I know. He is also one of the best teachers, one of the most considerate of colleagues, one of the most supportive of friends and one of the most honorable of men.

Ken Tompkins