

In Memory of Professor Alan Dundes

1934–2005

Folklore Professor Alan Dundes was famous for his engaging lectures and the breadth and creativity of his scholarship. But, he was also a teacher who would drop everything, take you by the hand to the Anthropology Library and sit down at the computer with you to show you all the resources available for your paper, as his eyes twinkled with intense joy. Professor Dundes was deeply devoted to his work. However, he was dedicated to more than just folklore. He took it upon himself to mentor students and to get to know them as individuals. Once you visited him in office hours, or even raised your hand in class to comment on one of his signature outrageous and wonderful folklore interpretations, he would remember you.

For me, Professor Dundes made the university less intimidating. Though a giant in his field, he still had time and patience for undergraduates. Because of him, academia became accessible; I was enthusiastically encouraged to research and publish. I still recall when he singled me out in front of a class of three hundred and asked me to explain the thesis of a paper I wrote two semesters ago for a different class, while he beamed with pride.

He was incredibly charismatic; when he spoke, you listened. Students continue to collect and circulate folklore about him. My friends and I often speculated whether there were multiple variations of Professor Dundes in existence because of his prolific publications and his extraordinary love of teaching and mentoring. He made a huge difference in my life, and the lives of generations of folklorists and non-folklorists around the world. There will never be anybody who can fill his shoes (or his powder blue blazer), with quite the same flair and gusto.

The Berkeley McNair Undergraduate Journal, which is founded on the ideals of mentorship that Professor Dundes epitomized, dedicates this issue to his prodigious legacy.

—Michelle Hwang