



Recollections
of
Melvin E. Kaufman

Mel died on April 28, 2006, at the age of 78. I first met Mel in 1971 about a year after being separated from the U.S. Navy. I was looking for a graduate program that was related to my undergraduate background in psychology and one that also had financial support available. Mel encouraged me to apply to the program in behavior disorders that he directed. He also assured me that I could get financial aid through a federal grant. I applied, was accepted and did get financial aid. I entered the program as a full-time student in the fall of 1971. Mel was my advisor during the two years that I spent in the program. During this time we spent a good deal of time together. I think Mel took a particular interest in me because I shared the name David with one of his sons. I also had gone to the same high school (Druid Hills). His son and I both had a rocky career at Druid Hills. We both had dropped out of Druid Hills and both of us had subsequently succeeded academically at the university level.

As I neared graduation from the program with a masters degree, Mel and a colleague of his (Ron Alexander) encouraged me to consider applying for the doctoral program once I had the three years of field experience required. I applied after one year and was accepted on the condition that I remain in the field for two more years and attend school part-time. I agreed to do this, and Mel became my major advisor, chair of my doctoral committee and subsequently chair of my dissertation committee. After my two years of part-time work, I returned to GSU as a full-time student. I spent a good deal of time working with Mel in various ways during my time as a doctoral student. I graduated with my PhD and took a university position.

I usually saw Mel at least once a year during the next eight years, usually at professional meetings.

In 1986, for reasons I won't go into, I was looking for another university position. Mel, who didn't know this at the time, called me and told me there was a position in our field at Georgia State, that he was chair of the search committee and he thought I should apply for it. I did and was subsequently hired. Thus, I returned to Georgia State as an associate professor, and Mel and I now became colleagues. Over the years, before he retired, we worked on projects together, attended professional meetings together, usually had lunch together, frequently took coffee breaks together and became good friends. I got to know his other son, Rob, during this time because Rob was going to graduate school at Georgia State and spent some of his off-time around the office.

As colleagues, I was his go to person for computer questions. This opened up an opportunity for me to have a bit of fun at his expense. I would install things on his computer so that when he booted it up, he would get a surprise. I recall two programs in particular that really got him going. One was a program that affected his word processor such that as he typed, the words would start sliding down the screen. He was beside himself when he called me to come down to his office and see if I knew why his computer was behaving so strangely. I acted mystified and later removed the program while he was out of his office. The other was a program that interrupted his boot up with a request for his password of which he had none. He called me to come to his office and see if I could tell him what was going on with his computer. When I got there, I watched what happened when he re-booted and told him that it was a mystery to me. I suggested that maybe he should try a password. When he would put in a "password," the computer would come back with some comment such as "No, stupid, that isn't it." He got more and more irritated at the computer, and I nearly choked trying to hold back laughter and treat the whole thing like a serious problem. Even after he retired, I would often stop by his house on the way home to help him with some computer issue. I used to tell him that his biggest problem was that he wasn't exploratory enough, but he was always afraid he would screw something up.

After Mel retired, he would come by the department a couple of times a week to visit. We would usually go out to lunch, often with another colleague (Joe Walker). If there was a conversation going on with one of us, whoever it was had to walk on his good side, which was the side on which he could hear the best. Mel loved to travel and frequently his most recent trip was part of the conversation when he came to visit. During these conversations, I learned that he often took his own food

with him rather than dine off of the local cuisine. This was no great surprise, as I had observed some of his food quirks during trips to conferences. I used to kid him about being fat-phobic. One thing he really liked was pizza, but he wouldn't eat any until he had taken napkins and blotted it to soak up the excess oil that he could press out of the cheese.

I forget the exact year, but I think it was probably 2003, when he had a rather serious stroke. He never really recovered from the stroke and spent around three years, as I recall, in a long-term care facility. During this time, I was the department chair and had less flexibility in my schedule than in past years. However, I would try to visit him at least a couple of times each month. His speech was difficult and it was often hard to follow his attempts at conversation. After the first year or so, it was pretty clear from what he said that he was ready for the ordeal, of being disabled and bed ridden, to come to an end. It was a sad day when I learned that he had passed, but I also knew that he probably had welcomed it.