Unforgettable

Staff and faculty encountered at RIT have left indelible marks on former students.

In the past several issues of the magazine, we asked the question “Who do you love?” Following are some of the responses; we’ll share others in future issues.

If you would like to tell us about a favorite RIT faculty or staff member, send e-mail to umagwww@rit.edu, or write to Kathy Lindsley, Rochester Institute of Technology, University News Services, 132 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623.

Charles Koster
I have been very fortunate to have had several people who have been a positive influence in my life. Charles Koster is one who stands out at the top of that list.

Koster, an adjunct professor, taught classes in the MBA, the Executive MBA, and the advanced management program and several engineering master’s degree programs.

Chuck, as I know him, has a way of grabbing your attention in the classroom as well as outside of RIT. His unique style of presenting the body of knowledge makes the student long for more. Chuck has a wealth of life learning that he shares, which brings a sense of realism to what one reads in the textbook. These nuggets of wisdom, mixed with Chuck’s humor, have had a direct, positive influence on decisions I have made in the workplace as well as life in general.

Chuck, and his wife, Elizabeth, have opened their home on Canandaigua Lake to my fellow classmates and me on several occasions. Chuck took the time to get to know us as people. Chuck would meet with us outside of the classroom to help us be successful – even if it meant missing a Syracuse basketball game on TV. For that I am ever grateful.

Mr. Koster: Thanks for being a great professor, and an even greater friend.

Brian A. Simpson ’03
(manufacturing management and leadership)
Rochester

Michael Peres
As a transfer student, I had a lot of classes and interaction with Michael Peres, chair of the biomedical photographic communications department. I well recall Mr. Peres opening up his home for the students during the first weeks of class and making me feel welcome. Always sporting a smile and a kind word, Mr. Peres made my landing at RIT a very smooth one.

Mr. Peres was very accessible, both as a professor and mentor. He struck a good balance between sharing his expertise and encouraging us to make our own serendipitous “mistakes” – of which I made plenty. I’d like to thank Mr. Peres for being a part of my education at RIT and for being a visionary when it comes to crafting the curriculum to meet the technologies of the future head on.

Kevin Porter ’98 (biomedical photography)
Raleigh, N.C.

Ralph L. Van Peursem,
Mary Gillard, Walter Swanton
I enrolled in RAMI (Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute, which was renamed RIT in 1944) in September 1941 and got part way through my junior year before enlisting in the Army Air Corps in December 1942. I was already “going steady” with a girl from my high school class, and we were married in July 1944 on a B-24 base in Harlingen, Texas.

When I returned in June of 1946 from flying that bomber all over the Pacific and some other duties, it was just in time for our second anniversary. I re-enrolled in RIT and went full-time to get my diploma with the class of 1947.

Fran kids me with, “You kept dating me since I was such a cheap date.” Sunday afternoons, a movie was 25 cents each, a hot fudge sundae, 35 cents each, so you can see what she meant.

After graduation, I went back to the job I had as a co-op, in the industrial lab at Eastman Kodak Co. But I kept up a conversation with Ralph L. Van Peursem, the head of the chemistry department at RIT. He made it possible for me to enroll at Iowa State in chemical engineering beginning in September 1948.

Dr. Van Peursem was one of my favorite instructors. Dr. Van was loved by everyone in our department. I graduated from ISU
Charles Welch

I absolutely loved my four years at RIT. The class work was demanding and the professors (for the most part) equally demanding. My memory has possibly clouded a bit over these more than 35 years (Yikes! Is that possible? I thought I was just at the Varsity Inn the other night!), but in addition to the great general studies profs and my teachers in photo illustration, there were the very special people involved in our extracurricular life on campus.

I felt then and feel even more strongly now that I learned just as much at RIT outside of the classroom by being involved with Student Government, being an RA in Kate Gleason Hall and all the committees I participated in. The second floor of the College Union was so lively — full of student-staff interaction, be it with Father Jerry Appelby in Campus Ministry or VP of Student Affairs Jim Campbell or Director of Student Activities Steve Walls.

I worked most closely with Dean of Students Charles Welch. As I look back on those endless student committee meetings, that man was a saint, enduring hours of discussion over the procedures that could be implemented to avoid the scrambled eggs turning green at breakfast. But the most important reason I shall never forget Charlie Welch is that in the fall of 1970 he introduced me to his new assistant – a tall, handsome young man named Mike Piehler.

In those days, there were not the rules about students dating teachers or staff, so what I thought was just a great way to spend my senior year (attending not only student parties and activities with a great guy, but also attending a few staff functions as well) turned into a much longer relationship. We will happily celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary in September, have had two wonderful, successful children, and are now grandparents, all because of Charlie Welch.

We have kept in touch with Charlie (and his wife, Joan, who died of cancer in the mid ’70s). Mike and I babysat for their four children many years ago. We attended his wedding to Mary in 1979, and a special surprise birthday party for Charlie a few years ago. We see Charlie and Mary about once a year and the conversation always comes back to our very special days at RIT.

So, you see, I simply had to sit down and write and share my story. In a nutshell: Charlie Welch had no idea the impact he made on me. He was just being Charlie — good, kind, gentle, caring — a simply wonderful man and excellent administrator. And as it turns out, just as good as a matchmaker!

Kathleen McGarry Piehler ’71 (photo illustration)
Fairport, N.Y.