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Press release: 2013 : 10 : 18 : USF St. Petersburg mourns the passing of Journalism Professor Robert Dardenne

Tom Scherberger

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USF St. Petersburg mourns the passing of Journalism Professor Robert Dardenne

Posted October 18, 2013 at 2:56 pm by Tom Scherberger

USF St. Petersburg Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska today issued the following statement regarding the passing of Associate Professor of Journalism Robert W. Dardenne:

To the USF St. Petersburg Community:

I am saddened to announce the sudden passing of Associate Professor of Journalism Robert W. Dardenne, Ph.D. who died unexpectedly at home today.
An experienced journalist and dedicated teacher, Dr. Dardenne was beloved by his students and colleagues and admired by all who knew him during his 22 years at USF St. Petersburg.

I regret not having the opportunity to work with Bob. He was such a leader and the heart and soul of the Journalism and Media Studies Department.

He led the department twice during his tenure here, most recently for four years before returning to the classroom full time last fall. He planned to retire next year.

Deni Elliott, the chair of the department, recalled Bob’s wisdom and commitment to his students. “His door was always open and he would never let a student’s call go unanswered,” she said. “He provided a great model of leadership for me to be chair, but he made it look way too easy.”

A native of Baton Rouge, La., Dr. Dardenne joined USF St. Petersburg in 1991 after seven years at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He earned a B.A. in journalism from Louisiana State University, an M.A. in journalism from the University of Florida and a Ph.D. in mass communications from the University of Iowa. Before his academic career, Dr. Dardenne worked for newspapers in Louisiana and New York.

Dr. Dardenne started the USFSP chapter of Kappa Tau Alpha, the journalism honor society, and presided over the first induction ceremony last year.

G. Michael Killenberg, the founding director of the USFSP Journalism and Media Studies Department, hired Dr. Dardenne. He believed strongly in the importance of community-based journalism, he said, and they were co-authors of a book on the subject, The Conversation of Journalism. “I really liked his approach of people-first journalism,” Killenberg said. “He believed you find the news in the streets, not from the government.”

Friends and family will gather to celebrate the life of Dr. Dardenne on Wednesday at 3 p.m. in the courtyard of the Peter Rudy Wallace Center for Teachers, where the journalism department is located. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Robert Dardenne Memorial Fund, University of South Florida St. Petersburg, 140 7th Ave. S, WMS 200, St Petersburg, FL 33701.

Our thoughts are with his wife, Barbara O’Reilley, and son, Rob, a spring 2013 history graduate of USF St. Petersburg.

Bob will be missed by all who knew him.

Sophia Wisniewska, Ph.D.
Regional Chancellor
USF St. Petersburg
My condolences to the Family and friends. Bob and I spent many hours of just talking and thinking about what life is about....He lived for his students and Friends...and loved his family.

Bobbymac

October 18, 2013 at 4:04pm

What a terrible loss for USFSP and St. Petersburg. His wit will be missed by all who knew him.

Monica Rowland Kile · Executive Director at Saint Petersburg Preservation

October 18, 2013 at 4:09pm

This is a tragic loss for the field of journalism, future USFSP journalism students and me personally. He will be missed greatly by many.

Buddy Baker · Top Commenter · Works at Freelance writer and editor

October 18, 2013 at 4:13pm
Buddy Baker · Top Commenter · Works at Freelance writer and editor

Condolences to Barb and Bob Jr.

Reply · Like · 1 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 4:14pm

Lin Young

Sad, very sad.

Reply · Like · October 19, 2013 at 5:28pm

Arielle Stevenson · Journalist at Freelance Journalist

He gave me Hersey, Thompson, Gellhorn, and countless others. He got me through school when I wanted to quit. Sending love to Barbara and Rob. He's a giant of a man and will be greatly, greatly missed. But never, ever, forgotten.

Reply · Like · 21 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 4:14pm

Paul Mueller · Front Page Manager at Bleacher Report

A testament to the man and professor he was: He and I recently corresponded (5 years after I graduated) about my re-reading a Pete Hamill memoir from one of our classes. We talked Hamill, the drinking culture of the newsroom and what the future had in store for each of us. Heartbreaking to learn of this news, but privileged to know that he will live on in each of us that he touched most—particularly his young students. I'll always remember him, and any and all professional success I may achieve will be done so with him and his lessons as a foundation. Sad today, but forever grateful.

Reply · Like · 10 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 11:24pm
Nicely said, Paul. That's sad.

Reply · Like · 3 · October 18, 2013 at 11:37pm

Therese Hounsell · Top Commenter

he changed, in some profound and positive way, every life he touched.

he was both a teacher and a journalist in the consummate sense. Just a great human.

my heart is with barb and rob. As are so very many.

rob, kid, your dad loved you and was so very very proud of you; and barb, I always admire his sweet affection for you, and his awe of your talents. Makes me smile to know I saw, sometimes daily, how much he loved you both.

I am who I am today, as a writer and photographer and person, largely due to Bob Dardenne's influence. I know I am far from alone in this regard.

I laugh and I cry and I drink wine and remember my friend. My irreplaceable remarkable amazing friend. And I am so thankful for every moment I had in his presence and energy; and terribly sad for knowing he is gone.

Reply · Like · 8 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 9:20pm

Meghan McAtasney · Saint Petersburg, Florida

Dr. Dardenne was more than just a mentor to his students. His legacy lives in every student he ever taught. We will miss him terribly.
We are a group of university teachers from Tunisia. We met Dr Dardenne during a trip we made to Tampa in the summer of 2008. We stayed in touch until last summer as we exchanged views about the events taking place in the Arab World following the revolutions. Dr Dardenne will be missed by all of us.

I'm deeply saddened by this. He guided me through an extremely difficult time, one that had me seriously considering changing my major. Keeping him and his family in my thoughts & prayers today and always. Rest in Peace dear professor.

I'm in shock and also heartbroken, a mentor and helped me become a better teacher in so many ways! I loved working for him!

And his work will live on through yourself and the many others that he mentored, such a beautiful thing that we can live our lives in such a way that when we must leave we still live on if we have helped others. My condolences.
Chris Ingram · Follow · Top Commenter · Owner/President at 411 Communications, president

Well said Heather!

Reply · Like · October 19, 2013 at 11:34am

Therese Hounsel · Top Commenter

omg. i am heartbroken. this man was like a father to me.

Reply · Like · 4 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 3:48pm

Kaeli Conforti · New York, New York

Oh no! Just saw this now. He was my absolute favorite professor at USF St. Pete (the others were great, too!) I loved his stories about working in the field and am forever thankful for his guidance. Keeping him and his family in my thoughts and prayers today and always. Rest in Peace, my friend.

Reply · Like · 3 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 4:59pm

Chris Ingram · Follow · Top Commenter · Owner/President at 411 Communications, president

I am so sad to learn of the news about my friend Bob, and former adviser and professor. Out hearts bleed for Barbara and his son, Rob. I spoke to Bob on Wednesday when he called me for no reason other than to chat. He told me of his retirement and new work plans for a start-up online news organization (which in typical Bob fashion he couldn't explain what he was going to be doing)! He also told me how proud he was of his son Rob and the man he had matured into in the last year or so. My thoughts and prayers to Barbara and Rob for their loss, and the loss to the USF St. Pete community.

Reply · Like · 2 · Follow Post · October 19, 2013 at 11:38am
Mary Emch Macfarlane · Belleville Senior High School

I love the picture of your girls. They are so cute. I hear all about them from your Mom.

Reply · Like · 2 · October 25, 2013 at 6:23pm

Shawn Gearhart · St. Petersburg College

Dr. Dardenne was larger than life. He was a mentor to me and an advocate, not only for journalism, but for USF St. Petersburg as well. He helped me become a better communicator, and encouraged me to keep reaching for my goals. Bob Dardenne was a great man, teacher, and friend. You will be missed sir.

Reply · Like · 2 · Follow Post · October 19, 2013 at 6:55am

Jean Chance · Top Commenter

Bob was a standout grad student at the University of Florida. He was recruited here by his professor/mentor, the late Robert Pierce. I was fortunate to work closely with Bob at UF when he was my grad assistant. Early on he demonstrated dedication to our students. My sympathies to his family and his students and colleagues.

Reply · Like · 2 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 11:26pm

Gabrielle Mercedes Cinelli · Teacher at Pinellas County Schools

R.i.p to a man who touched the lives and hearts of many. May he continue to guide as he watches over the ones he once guided here on earth. Dr. Dardenne was a man that inspired all who had the pleasure of knowing or working with him. He was a true intellect who lead many journalists to reach their full potential.

Reply · Like · 2 · Follow Post · October 18, 2013 at 9:33pm
It's a great loss. Professor Dardenne was amazing. I just recently had the pleasure of getting to know him and he was offering me guidance. My thoughts are with his family. He was truly a great man.

Caitlin Constantine · Top Commenter · University of South Florida St. Petersburg

I am so deeply saddened by this. Like so many of his students I have nothing but the best memories of him and the classes he taught. He will be missed so very, very much.

Christian Crider · Palm Harbor, Florida

An amazing professor, thoughtful friend, and staunch ally through some of the toughest years of my life. R.I.P. Bob...

Abdulsamad Sahly · Teaching Assistant - Department of Journalism at Jazan University

It is a big loss. He is great teacher. I have been here in USFSP only a few months. But, when i met him in class, i feel like i have known him for years.
A fine man, a wonderful colleague, a sad loss to our USFSP family.

Norine Elizabeth Noonan · Professor, Biological Sciences at University of South Florida St. Petersburg

My deep and sincere condolences to Barbara and Rob. This man was truly a Mensch. This term describes one who is honorable, kind, with a firmness of purpose and fundamental decency. Bob was all of this and more. I will always be grateful for his enthusiastic initiative to get USFSP to host foreign journalists through the US Department of State Murrow program. USFSP was the only university in the state of Florida to be named as a host site, joining institutions such as the Annenberg School and Columbia University. Truly his loss will be felt around the world.

On a personal note, as we worked through the program proposal for the MA in Digital Journalism, he once told me I could be his editor anytime. It was the nicest compliment I have ever received.

A dear and valued colleague, a role model, teacher, adviser and friend to many students and graduates, a devoted family man, a southern gentleman who loved his Louisiana roots. A devastating loss to all of us and to USFSP. We are all the better for having known him and he's taken a bit our our hearts with him. His loss reminds us that we should never, ever miss an opportunity to tell those we love how we feel...we may not get the chance later....au revoir.

Teresa Slattery Amin · Tampa, Florida

I graduated from the J-school master’s program in 2000. Dr. Dardenne was my first teacher and a great man. I always enjoyed our chats whether they were in class, at Tavern at Bayboro or via email. I just emailed him Sept. 25th to catch up and he said he was planning to retire soon and maybe work for some news websites. A great man and a great teacher!

Liz Bird · Professor of Anthropology at University of South Florida
I can't believe he's gone. We were friends for 30 years, and even when we wouldn't get together for months, he was always there. His warmth and his smile, and his wonderful ideas. He was so looking forward to the next phase of his life. My heart goes out to Barbara and Rob.

Eve Browning · Duluth, Minnesota

I'm so sorry Liz.

Mi Jolley · Tampa, Florida

I was shocked to hear about Bob's passing yesterday morning (still am,...). I talked to him two days before, and he was so full of optimism and plans, very happy about his Bob Jr's great job. It will take a while to realize, that he just won't walk in to the Tavern and say one his quirky and warm remarks...My condolences to his wise, Barbara (he spoke about her any chance he got:) and Bob Jr whom I saw graduate in May (and saw his Dad cheering from the faculty seats...:).

Allison Savage Bates · Content Marketing Specialist at Intermap Technologies

Dr. D was one of the greatest teachers I've ever had, and just an all-around cool dude. I owe my writing career to him. When I showed up clueless in one of his undergrad classes because I mistakenly believed I couldn't pursue my M.A., he took me under his wing and made sure I got my track switched and got all my classes sorted out. His Media Theory class was enlightening and the lessons I learned from him will stay with me for life. My heart goes out to his family and the entire USF community.

JoEllen Schilke
This is so sad, and sincere condolences to his family. One of the many things I admired about Bob was the way he would light up with curiosity and pleasure when a good tale was being told; a mystery presented; a potential story making its way in. He made you want to find out stuff, and then write about it, over and over. What a loss.

Chris Ingram · Follow · Top Commenter · Owner/ President at 411 Communications, president

Well said JoeEllen!

Paula Witthaus · President at Demand L.I.F.E., Inc.

Shocked...Speechless...Grateful...

Joe Wisinski · Adjunct Professor at The University of Tampa

I'm terribly sorry about this news. Bob was one of the best professors I've had, either in college or grad school. He taught me so much, not just about journalism, but also about teaching. My condolences to his family and friends.

Doug Kingsley · University of South Florida

My condolences to the family. He was a wonderful and understanding teacher. He will be greatly missed.
David Alpha Brothers · USF Graduate School

Yesterday's memorial to Bob Dardenne was fittingly filled with great speakers sharing wonderful memories of the man. It also revealed what I should have known all along -- that I had lots of company in the "still in touch" column. I graduated from the MA program -- in every way the two best school years of my life -- in 1999. I last exchanged e-mails with Bob around six weeks ago about the possibility of doing some teaching at USFSP next year, a desire fueled in no small part by knowing that that would facilitate frequent visits to his office. Every time we communicated over the years, whether by phone, via e-mail or in person, he was invariably welcoming, intellectual and congenial, a combination too rare in teaching and in journalism. I remember telling him once, after my own experiences in both fields, that I had no idea... See More

Melanie Riedinger-Whitmore · Works at University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Dear Barbara and Rob, please accept my family's condolences for your loss. You and your family are in the thoughts of so many of Bob's colleagues, friends, and students during this very sad time. Bob was a very special person, and we will miss him very much. He touched so many lives here at USFSP, and I feel privileged to have known him and worked with him. He was a mentor to all of us, and his influence spread across this campus. I will remember very fondly his gentle and sound advice, his sense of humor, his doodles, and how much his presence during meetings or even casual conversations made it all meaningful and worthwhile. Bob truly led by example, and we all are better off for having been touched by his presence here.

Comas Susan · Saint Petersburg, Florida

I knew Bob through my 10 years of owning Bayboro Books...he was an amazing inspiration to his students and a very cool guy (professor) to deal with on book orders. He watched me bring up my
daughter through the years there and always told me to keep the special moments close. He spoke of his son often...heartfelt thoughts to his family and students who loved him so....

Meg Gilbert Durshimer

I was one of the first graduates of the USF grad program and considered Bob a dear friend, even when we didn’t have contact for long periods of time. In fact, he and I had just an email exchange about the possibility of my son entering the program. He was a great journalist, mentor, and friend and he will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him. My thoughts are with you, Barb and Bobby.

Genessa Kolosey · Follow

He was, without a doubt, one of my favorite professors. He was that "cool, wise uncle-type" that always told you exactly what you needed to hear.

Randy Carlson · Top Commenter · Works at USF St. Petersburg

I am just at the point where I can process this. I am incredibly sad at the loss and feel very lucky to have had him as a professor.

Lin Young

It was a to hear the news that Bob was gone. Bob was a good man and a great teacher. He will be missed. My condolences to Barb and their son.
Lin Young
I meant it was a shock to hear the news.

Mi Jolley · Tampa, Florida
P.S. This is Barbara Jolley; the Facebook account has my husband's name...:)

Mi Jolley · Tampa, Florida
P.S., Sorry for the typos...my eye got sweaty...:(

Martine Wagner
Bob was a wonderful man and colleague. He was brushing up on his French and would always love to discuss anything about France. I will miss you very much my dear Bob.