

Jim was my advisor for 2 years. The advisor-advisee relationship is quite unique, it's hard to find the words to describe it. And ours was cut off suddenly, in the middle, just when we were starting to click. Jim taught me so much. How to do research, how to write a paper. How to think about AI. How to think about everything. He talked about his visions for the field, large and small. We discussed where the field was going. Where our research was going. In his last meeting with me he said our paper could wait, there were more important things. Well, I understand what he meant, but in one sense I disagree, what we were doing was the most important.

There is nothing quite like doing science. Nothing like watching Jim come up with an idea in his office, start writing on the board, writing faster as he gained steam. Or sometimes he'd work himself into a corner, erase everything. Drop the chalk. Think of something else, start again. Jim was always so enthusiastic, I loved that. Loved listening to him think. Whatever we were doing, he always believed it would work. Whatever our current stumbling block, he thought the answer was just around the corner. He was usually right.

When I met with him, he would listen more than he'd talk. The subject was whatever I'd want to discuss. He helped me as a student. We were opposites in some ways. Jim was a quick thinker, leaping from idea to idea. He'd always be the first to ask a question after a talk. I learn more from reading than talking. And I'm hesitant to discuss subjects I don't fully understand. I'm afraid of being wrong. This worried me, I told Jim about my concern that my way would never allow me to have worthwhile academic conversations, but he dismissed it out of hand. "No no," he said, "that's a learned behavior. Even if it's a problem you'll overcome it." Learned behavior. Those words were a weight lifted for me. Ever since he said them, or maybe it's just his example, I've been less hesitant to jump into academic conversation. The type where nobody knows the right answer. Thank you Jim.

Here's a secret: Ever since then, when I find myself hesitant to dive into one of those conversations, I try to pretend I'm him.

Jim was a role model. Some of us from the department volunteered at the Food Bank one Sunday. The man at the Food Bank said, "I need one volunteer to lift the boxes so that everyone else can sort the food. This is the hardest job." Jim raised his hand. He lifted 12,000 pounds that day. Talk about a metaphor. He had so many advisees through the years, and I think he liked teaching us more than anything.

I miss Jim. I try to carry his way of thinking with me, as so many others do I'm sure. I try to take his approach to problems. I try to find the joy in learning, in doing research, that he always found. I miss Jim. I'm glad to have known him.

Alan Carlin.