

A remembrance

Although Jerry had been ill for quite some time, I still found myself unprepared for his death. Over the years he had become the big brother I never had; and no one was more fun. We spent oodles and oodles of time together writing a couple books and dozens of articles on a range of topics – holism, compositionality, context sensitivity, the lexicon, analyticity, Davidson, Quine, even supervaluations! But we did much more – hundreds and hundreds of lunches and dinners and even operas. Jerry made a great effort to ease me into both of his favorite pastimes – opera and sailing. There was always some opera or other blaring from his colossal speakers in his living room, which comfortably overlooked Lincoln Center and the Met; he assumed Mozart would be accessible enough for a slug like me who had grown up on the Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. But much to his chagrin I did not take to Mozart's comedic operas. Jerry was discouraged until one day we stumbled into a rehearsal of Pagliacci at the Met and it came as a revelation to Jerry to find me weeping a river of tears. "I forgot you were a southern Italian!". We even once drove for hours up to Tanglewood to listen to one of his favorite singers, Federica von Stade. She sang for what seemed like an eternity about cats. The things we do for love. However, I did draw the line at sailing – Jerry's second greatest passion – for years I told Jerry I got seasick looking at his boat and though he tried to cure me I resisted. Still, I'd meet up with him at the marina in Jersey to feast on his regaling me on his misadventures at sea. Don't get me started!

There were our ventures abroad, including to Australia, Great Britain, San Marino, Sweden, Norway – where he told their National Academy of Science that they should find something else to spend their time on other than natural selection. When pressed on whether he thought the biologists could all be wrong, he responded that all the economists were --- this was 2008.

Then there was the time we were invited to Reading by Emma Borg – Jerry didn't love to travel to conferences, but I asked him whether he would go if I could secure a private tour of the Victoria and Albert Museum. He said yes figuring he had nothing to lose, but little did he know that Emma's father was the director and we got that tour. Jerry kept repeating how much he wanted to bring home one of the tiny invaluable exhibited items.

There were winter holidays in St Lucia and Italy and many conferences in the US and then two NEH sessions – one a six weeks seminar on holism in 1992 and one a much larger institute on the metaphysics of meaning in 1993. There were various SPP and APA symposia, including two highly aggressive sessions with Donald Davidson, from which it took me a lot of time to recover. Through it all I was never bored, always fascinated; sometimes fearful, but always felt safe in Jerry's hands.

In 1992, we did a session with Paul Churchland on state-space semantics at Washington University. Jerry, as was his normal reaction at conferences, was not pleased to be there, but still came along most likely as a favor to me, which was in turn a favor I was trying to do for my friend, the late Roger Gibson. Jerry complained the whole time that he didn't want to be there and was not going to participate, which left me in the unenviable position of replying to Paul's

rather ambitious comments on the fly to an auditorium full of Barnes Hospital researchers --- much friendlier to Paul's ideas than to our own. Paul ran through a multimedia presentation, concluding with three criticisms of us – I was anxious I wouldn't have a reply, but after the first critique I thought I had a reply and felt some temporary relief; after the second I had the same feeling but then came the third and final comment. It was heavily technical and I simply couldn't follow it and felt embarrassed that I'd have to say as much. As I got up, resigned to humiliation, Jerry gently pulled me back into my seat and said – "I got this". I felt total relief. He reviewed Paul's first two objections and gave the same replies I had come up with, but then he got to the third and I thought "thank God he's answering this one." I was therefore stunned when he began with, "Paul, as for your third objection I didn't understand a word of it". I thought – "Sheesh I could have said that!" but then the inimitable Jerry added "and neither did you Paul!" – That I could not have done. The two of them locked horns for the rest of the session, continuing even as Jerry and I were running up the aisle out of the room, into Joe Ullian's 1965 Bonneville convertible, racing to catch a plane.

When I started the "What is cognitive science?" lecture series at Rutgers in the mid-90's, Jerry was, of course, the inaugural speaker. To a packed house he began, "Cognitive Science was a pretty good idea; too bad it just didn't work out" —obviously not what the audience was hoping to hear. Around the same time, he also gave the first comment in what has become an annual SEMANTICS workshop – which he began by exclaiming, "There is no such thing as semantics." Perhaps, it was due to Jerry's powers of persuasion that a number of the distinguished assembled semanticists mysteriously agreed!

Obviously, there are far too many stories to record here. Suffice to say each is precious to me and recalling each makes me miss him more.

About his overall impact on the Academy, what is there to say other than that his career has been nothing short of amazing. He changed the discipline of the study of mind in philosophy and completely won over or at least mobilized several generations of researchers. I myself was not trained by Jerry, and never became as fully informed or as committed to his program as others were. And my main area was and is philosophy of language. Even so, it was obvious to me that it would have been wholly impossible to work in philosophy of mind or cognitive science these past several decades without confronting Fodor. His list of citations is astronomical --- look for yourself. Most philosophers would be thrilled to have been cited only as many times as but one of Jerry's books, e.g., his *Modularity of Mind* is approaching 15K citations by itself! And then there is the span of his career and influence; when a junior member of the profession seems to me to be becoming too smug about their own accomplishments I like to remind them that Jerry was in his 30s when he wrote his game changer, *The Language of Thought*.

As far as our work habits in collaborations, when we started a project (and we always seemed to have one) we'd meet daily in his apartment and spend the day complaining about other positions, with Jerry ready to pounce on the keyboard unless his cats Greycat or, later, Mr. James, got there first – in which case we had to wait out the pause. The stories are endless and

hilarious, even if Jerry was sometimes a bit over the top. But he was like this with everyone and everything and it meant nothing personally. He treated us all, from student to senior colleague, with respect and skepticism.

And now he's gone; but how fortunate am I to have collaborated with him—and even more to have been his friend.