

Jeffrey Scott Arpan (1947-2005)

A Memorial by José de la Torre

On Saturday, May 28, 2005, our dear colleague and friend, Jeff Arpan, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Business Administration at the University of South Carolina, died after a brief illness. Jeff suffered from semantic dementia, a progressive illness that affected his memory and reasoning capacities, the essence of what makes one an academic. Shortly before his death, he joked to me that all he had left was his capacity to “make love, dance and enjoy life, so it wasn’t all that bad.”

Jeff held the James F. Kane Professorship in International Business and served as Chairman of the International Business Department from 1985-2003 at (“the first”) USC. He was also the Director of the Master in International Business Studies (MIBS) program for many years and under his leadership the program achieved the top ranking from *U.S. News & World Report*. He was instrumental in developing a strong working relationship between the Moore School of Business and major corporations throughout the U.S and was active in executive development programs for companies such as IBM, Verizon, Westinghouse, Eastman Chemical, Sonoco, and Xerox.

At the bright young age of 24, Jeff was the youngest person to receive a doctoral degree in international business from Indiana University. He was one of the original Farmer's crop, a group of prolific individuals that went on to populate IB faculties throughout the country.

I first met Jeff in December of 1971, at the AIB meetings in Detroit, Michigan, where he interviewed for a job at Georgia State University. My first impressions were that he was:

- Oh, so Young
- Very Hip
- Totally Committed and Driven

We joked that he would have to win the AIB dissertation award that both John Daniels and I had won in the previous two years to qualify for a job. And, sure enough, his dissertation was selected by the AIB as the best international business dissertation completed in 1971.

Jeff joined our faculty at GSU in September of 1972 and one of the first things we did together was to campaign for George McGovern in the Georgia countryside. Talk about naïve.

As the “fabulous” four (the self congratulatory moniker that Daniels, Kujawa, Arpan and me gave ourselves in a peak of hubris) began to break up and leave GSU for different places, the mystique of those years began to

fade away. The first major blow was the failure to recruit Bob Hawkins as our senior leader, a story that will forever remain in our collective memories as one of typical Dean myopic behavior. After that failure, we realized that—as my father-in-law was fond of saying—“you can’t make chicken salad out of chicken shit, and the exodus began. John went off to Penn State, I departed to INSEAD, Duane went off to Florida International, and Jeff to South Carolina.

For more than a quarter of a century following that move, Jeff researched and studied international business topics in over fifty countries on five continents. His primary research interests started in the field of international accounting, but soon migrated to global competitiveness of industries (on which we worked together in the textile sector), the impact of culture on business practices, the relationship between international business and the environment, and on international business education. He authored more than a half dozen books and fifty articles on these areas.

During these years, Jeff provided exemplary service to the Academy. For the longest time, he served as Chair of the dissertation awards committee, and it wasn’t until 1986 that he gave that up by establishing the rotation system that now controls the process. I was the first Chair to follow Jeff in this role (and then only for one year) and it was remarkable what he

had accomplished in such a seemingly effortless way. Years later he served as VP Programs for the meeting at during the 1977-78 period and was elected President of the AIB in 1997-98, and served as Past President during the 1999-2000 period. He was subsequently elected as a Fellow of the Academy and honored by us at the Monterrey, California, meeting for all his contributions to the AIB.

Among the many awards and recognitions he received in his lifetime, he was selected as one of the "Outstanding Young Men in America" in 1976; named one of the "Ten Southerners to Watch in Globalization" by the Southern Growth Policies Board in 2001; and selected as the Community Ambassador of the Year by the Board of Directors of International Friendship Ministries in 2002. In 1999, Jeff received the Outstanding Teacher Award for Executive Education and the Alfred G. Smith Teaching Award at USC.

In 2001, Jeff was diagnosed with Semantic Dementia, a progressive and debilitating disease affecting speech and the ability to communicate. By 2003 the progress of the disease required him to retire from his job as Chair of the IB department at USC. He devoted much of his time in retirement to education of others about the disease and to research being conducted on the

illness, including participation in a long-term study being conducted by the Memory and Aging Center of the University of California at San Francisco.

Jeff was the middle child born to parents Eleanor Ruth (Holly) Arpan and Floyd Gorden Arpan. He is survived by his wife Luz Rodriguez Arpan (a lovely woman he called, “la Luz de mi vida”), his three daughters, Laura, Amy and Piper, his step-son Alejandro, his granddaughter Reed Ralstin, his siblings Cheryl Sorokin and Randy Arpan, and his nephews Nathan, Justin, Jordan, and David Knowles.

Probably his most enduring legacy consists of the hundreds of alumni from the USC MIBS program that owe to Jeff a significant measure of their education. It was remarkable how no matter where you went he would find time to meet with his old students, all of whom thought wonders of him. Also, he will certainly be in all our collective memories for years to come as a dedicated and thoughtful colleague to whom we could always turn in a time of need.

For those who wish to contribute to his memory, a Jeffrey S. Arpan Fellowship has been established at USC. The purpose of the fellowship is to provide support for graduate students in international business. Moore School of Business will provide matching funds for donations.

Jeff, rest in peace and continue to guide us as we move forward in the search for global peace and understanding.