

Memorial for Len Moss

By Jack Reuter

Len and I first met in 1963 when we were beginning our teaching careers as literature professors at SUNY Binghamton. We became friends right away, knowing our time at Binghamton would not lead to tenure. Len's ready sense of humor, which matched my own, made our shared fate easy to accept. Our friendship, easy and natural from the beginning, endured till Len's recent passing: we exchanged emails regularly throughout his final years.



Though we moved on to different institutions—Len to SUNY Geneseo, and I to Oswego briefly on my way to University of Southern Maine, from which I retired in 1997. My goal at the time was to move close to NH where I built a lakeside summer home that Len visited annually for several years. Len's visits were among the highlights of the summers. They were always

relaxing because he felt at home. Soon after arriving he would check the leftovers in the fridge. I can see him now walking around happily with a big drumstick. He fit easily into the usual routine: long walks, Ping-Pong, and lots of swimming. He liked good food, too. So we always made a trip to the meat market, so he could buy a thick steak for grilling. After a generous repast, we

relaxed on the screened front porch overlooking the Waukegan Lake. We talked and laughed into the wee hours. Then there were special evenings when Len and I would take the pontoon boat out to the middle of the lake with a few beers to drift and soak up the blissful quiet, interrupted occasionally by the loons' mating calls.



Len was someone who, in his quiet way, needed to expand his experience. I remember when he decided to take advantage of an opportunity of the Fulbright scholarship to teach at Beijing Foreign Studies University. There he met a member of the faculty in a neighboring university, Shaoping, whom he would marry. I remember his telling me when he came back to the US, he wanted to marry her but he wasn't sure he could get her out of China. But he was determined and eventually China let her go, for which I know both were immensely grateful. Subsequently, their son, Ely, was born. For a few years, Eli and my grandson, Eben, were friends. They both ended up in California, but in different places.

When we weren't at the lake, we stayed in touch, mostly by phone.

He kept me abreast of his scholarship and the books he was publishing. I was enlightened by the signed copies he sent me. At the same time, there was much going on in the world that needed our attention—the follies and vicissitudes of our administrations, as well as the national government. George W. Bush and Iraq preoccupied us, as Trump preoccupied us more recently.

Inevitably, we both grew older. But we never lost touch and got together when we could. At last, Len and Shaoping retired to California. But we kept up our friendship by phone. I was saddened but not surprised when I learned of Len's passing. We talked regularly during the time his health was declining and he was unfailingly resigned to what he knew was coming. He never lost his wise humor and warmth, for which I will always be grateful.

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