

My Good Friend, Leonard Moss

By David C Parker

I first met Len Moss in 1960-61. I was a part time student at Harper College, which is now known as SUNY Binghamton. I took an American literature course with Len as instructor & as I remember we read: *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller & Robert Pen Warren's *All the Kings' Men*, among others. Len would always start each class by outlining one theme in the assigned novel. He would then open the class up to discussion. In class he kept the conversation focused on the novel and the outlined topics, never letting it degrade into a general conversation about anything and everything.

What I remember most about Len is that he was always tolerant of other people's opinion. The Cold War, Israel, the size of government, you name it—you could have a civilized discussion. He may not have agreed with you, but everything was on the table. Compare that to the current atmosphere of repression and “coerced conformity” in most Universities. It is the difference between day and night. *

Since I was older than most of the students in the class, Len invited me to join him on a trip to New York City. I had only been to NYC once before; I gladly agreed.

At that time I remember he had a 1953 Plymouth, which at every 50 miles we had to stop to add oil, due to compromised rings and seals. That year Plymouth was a very solid car and a good value. It got us to NYC and back to Binghamton. I remember among other destinations we went to Katz's delicatessen and we had my favorite: wurst, sauerkraut and mustard—delicious but I always felt terrible the next day. We visited his mother's & stepfather's apartment but neither one was there. I remember that his mother had a pink and grey dinette set—very popular in the 50s. We went to the beach; where Len said he needed to “bake” for the day. Len said that the best medicine was salt water and sun!!

We returned to Binghamton and I continued visiting him at his lake cottage—even after I had resumed my studies at other universities.

My wife and I visited Len when he and Shaoping vacationed at the Cape each summer.

I remember at Eli's Bar Mitzvah—I gave Eli a Leatherman. Len remarked that Eli made much use of it and it was a real man's gift!!

We kept in touch over the years and Len and Shaoping joined us on a sail on my first catamaran in Boston. We attended and celebrated Eli's graduation at Brown.

After the Mosses moved to California, we managed to keep up the contact. We were planning to visit them last fall in California—but it did not work out, because I did not plan enough time to drive up from LA.

Len was my good friend for over 50 years. He had many exceptional characteristics but again, the one I remember the most was his interest in other people's opinions and his tolerance of those opinions, even when he did not agree with them. We need more Len Moss in this world and in the Universities!

*It is ironic that SUNY Binghamton where Len taught and encouraged open expression and tolerance of opinion, Arthur Laffer was recently shouted down at a speaking event sponsored by Young Americans for Freedom. The disruptive chant was "Free Speech".

Obviously the students meant Free Speech for me but not for thee.

—David C Parker, Boston MA, July 5, 2020