



## WABASH COLLEGE

### *Class Agents Letter*

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## Class of 1986

### Class Agents

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Dear Class of 1986

Six weeks ago, I started a Class Agent letter to you while I was back at Wabash for the Class Agent Forum, but life intervened and I never finished it. I am writing now to share sad news. One of our classmates has died from complications of Burkitt lymphoma, a rare B-cell cancer.

Dr. Dave O'Drobinak died this morning of a brain hemorrhage that came as a side effect of the chemotherapy that the Doctors were using to treat the lymphoma that they discovered in him two weeks ago. They discovered the stage four cancer two weeks ago and responded with a radical treatment.

When I spoke with Dave almost a week ago, his spirits were high and he and his wife Mandi were working well together to respond to the challenge. He did not give up, because he knew that Neil Goodnight would kill him, his body gave out.

Drobes was an epitome of the meaning of Wabash to me.

His performance at the 800 meter final at the 1986 state championship inter collegiate track meet is the single most impressive athletic performance that I have ever witnessed by a team mate in my entire athletic life. In it, he qualified to go to the National Track meet and set the Wabash record for the 800 meter run.

Dave trailed the pack of 7 other runners through the 500 meter point. He was about 25 meters behind the lead pack entering the backstretch. He started his kick 100 meters before most folks start and when he passed me at the 600 meter mark, he was 5 meters ahead of everyone. He made up 30 meters in 100 meters. As I sprinted diagonally across the field from the 600 meter mark to the finish line looking over my shoulder watching his progress, my worry was that he would fade because he started his kick so early. Dave not only matched everyone else's kick, he extended his lead by an additional 5 meters to win the race. I was astounded as he crossed the finish line.

Some Little Giant.

While the rest of us prepared for graduation by partying, Dave trained. He ran brutal intervals in the May heat and humidity in preparation for the National championship meet. At that meet, he

reset the record for the 800 meter run that still stands at the College, one of the longest standing athletic records on the books today. He also holds the College record in the 1,500.

Dave had a huge heart. He has stayed in touch with his friends and coaches through the years, keeping those relationships fresh and full of the joy of living. He would call me yearly just as the weather in my area changed to see how the weather was treating me. He always laughed since I was wearing parkas and wool socks when he was wearing shorts and sandals. I wanted to kill him, but I always appreciated the call.

Neil Goodnight, Dave's four year room mate in Martindale offered the following reflection on his friendship with Dave.

"Dave was much more than a friend to me, after living together for 4 years & not killing each other he became a brother, a part of my family. I had a blast with Dave. We determined our freshman year that Martindale needed an upgrade in confidence. So we took it upon ourselves to drag the dorm out of the cellar in academics & intramurals.

Dave had a confidence & swagger, sometimes enough to make you want to kill him, but that was Dave, and that's what made him special.

Regardless of the duration between calls or visits it was easy to "pick-up where you left off". It's hard to believe Dave as a positive influence, but simply being around him I felt as though I had improved myself.

His sarcasm, wit, & intelligence were likewise impressive. But the thing that impressed me most was his timing. Without fail, when I would need to talk to someone about a problem, dilemma, or good news...he would call."

Dave was a Biology Professor at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia. Here is a quote from the tribute that his colleagues posted about him at his passing.

"For David, or "Dr. O" as he was more widely known, being a professor was more than a vocation. He worked countless hours to make Anatomy & Physiology, one of the toughest subjects in Biology, accessible to students. In the classroom, he was intense, but hysterically funny at the same time. The rapid-fire delivery was always peppered with creative comments that exposed his great passion for biological science. He had a great sense of style, whether it was his way of speaking or the sharp color-coordinated clothes that made him unofficially the best dressed scientist on campus. His door was always open for unlimited office hours and there was a steady stream of students who came in for personal tutorials. He had a huge white-board on the wall of his office and was always willing to give a one-on-one explanation to students who wanted to learn."

Sounds like Dave hasn't changed much.

Dave began to participate in the Dad thing late, like many others of us. Over the past six years, he has become a Dad to Colin, and at birth to Adam. Their antics both thrilled him, and challenged his (short) temper.

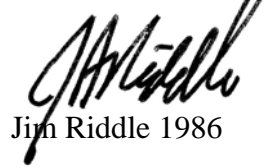
His passing humbles me that I am left when others more talented have been taken.

It reminds me that our College is a place that extends across time in our collective minds and hearts. I think that Dave would have enjoyed the thought of each of us raising a toast in his memory to the College and to the relationships that we formed there.

It is funny to me that today is a cold day here in St. Louis. It occurred to me on the way to work that it is a day that he might have called with his weather report.

Blessings to each of you.

Yours in the College.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Riddle". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "R".

Jim Riddle 1986