

Remembering Dr. A. Nayland Page

by Bruce Cort '71

In 1967 the then Salisbury State College was a very different place from what it is today.

I arrived on campus as a 17-year-old kid from Silver Spring who had never really been away from home. The wilds of the Eastern Shore were not really known to me, save for a few family visits to Ocean City. I was used to the big city where we locked our cars and houses. Northwood High School where I had graduated had almost three times as many students as the 750 at SSC in 1967.

After about two weeks of being fairly severely homesick, I decided that this was a pretty nice place and that I was going to make a real go of things. The campus community was so small in 1967 that you instantly knew everyone or knew of them. As students and faculty traversed the campus, they always greeted each other. The "Friendly Factor" made SSC an extremely comfortable place.

I became a history major [and the] small group of history majors at the College was very cohesive. We stuck together and the faculty was wonderful. They were not only top-notch scholars, but also top-notch people as well. We learned as much or more from them outside the classroom as we did in class. It was that group who really helped to shape us. Dr. [Nayland] Page, Mrs. [Sylvia] Bradley, Dr. [Millard] Les Callette, Dr. [William] Wroten and Dr. [Justin] Shen in political science really cared about their students. Each and every one of these professors was always available to discuss an academic or personal issue. They went above and beyond.

Dr. Page's area of interest was Latin American history. He had a deep knowledge

and love for the area, its history, people, culture and language. Having been a Fulbright Scholar, he was truly an expert and lived in Chile for several years. We were fortunate to have him. He could have garnered a faculty position anywhere, but he chose to be at SSC because he really loved his work.

Although I didn't take any of Dr. Page's classes until my junior year, I ended up taking every course that he offered. Going into his class was a joy. He always spent a few minutes at the beginning of class doing what I referred to as "the monologue." I swear that he was every bit as humorous as Johnny Carson. This relaxed the class and put us in a position to learn. He would start his lecture by flipping a few pages from his loose-leaf notebook at the podium and then never had to look at his notes. He brought history to life. As I listened, I found myself creating mental pictures of the stories that he told. This was truly a rare talent and Dr. Page relished every moment that he spent in the classroom. I developed a deep interest in Latin American history and ultimately decided to attend graduate school and specialize in this area. At the University of Maryland, I found that the department (only three professors) might have been knowledgeable, but they were not inspirational.

I didn't really see Dr. Page for a long time after I graduated, though I followed his career as provost and then interim president at the College. However, in 2001 I accepted an invitation to a luncheon at the Alumni House to meet Dr. Janet Dudley-Eshbach who was then interviewing for the president position. Dr. Page and I sat next to each other and it brought back so many great memories.

From that point on, we stayed in touch. When I visited Salisbury

for SU Foundation board meetings, I would often meet Dr. Page for breakfast at the Commons. He was such an interesting and intelligent man, and I always enjoyed hearing his views and comments on politics, current events and world affairs. We both also had deep affection for the school and such fond remembrances of the "old days."

Last February, I had an e-mail from Dr. Page offering condolences on the passing of my business partner, General Don Johnson. When I inquired about his health, he told me that he hadn't been feeling very well and was suffering from constant nausea. When I called the following week, I found out he was in the hospital. I visited him there and we had an enjoyable visit, talking about a wide range of issues. Despite his illness, Dr. Page managed to inject a great deal of humor into the conversation and he let me know that he had led a good life and that if it was his time, he was prepared.

We spoke about the Cort Chemistry Scholarship, which I established in memory of my parents, as my father was a chemist who greatly valued education. I explained my philosophy that setting up the scholarship wasn't giving, but investing in the future. Hopefully, one of our scholars will one day make a meaningful contribution that will have a positive impact on many people. Dr. Page seemed very interested in this idea. Upon his death, I learned that he had made an extremely generous contribution to the scholarship fund. I was bowled over by his generosity.

Several months of hospitalization and stays at rehabilitation facilities followed, and Dr. Page ultimately passed away on May 7, 2007.

He was a great mentor, scholar, friend, role model and solid citizen who made great contributions to the school that he loved. I will miss him but will never forget him and his most generous gesture to perpetuate the Cort Chemistry Scholarship. I am extremely fortunate and so grateful for everything that I learned from him both inside and outside of the classroom. I will never forget him!



Three Presidents (from left): Dr. A. Nayland Page, Dr. Norman C. Crawford and Dr. K. Nelson Butler