

A TRIBUTE TO SHAE ZUCKER

To most of you, the name Shae Zucker doesn't ring a bell. But to many veteran teachers Shae will always be remembered for being very special.

Shae was an exceptional teacher, master teacher, counselor, ETAI board member and more. I met Shae at an ETAI conference some twenty-five years ago. As a teacher-trainer at Levinsky College of Education, I was always on a quest for great English teachers and educators to be master teachers for my college students, and with Shae I really lucked out. Shae had been teaching at Balfour Elementary School in Tel Aviv at the time. She knew the system, worked well with her colleagues and principal, handled parents well and taught in an interactive, interesting manner. She gave her heart and soul to the kids, and did not have discipline problems in her classes.

For a decade or so, Shae was a Levinsky master teacher. She had previously studied in the Levinsky Hasava retraining program. She knew most of the staff intimately and then worked with many of them. But, no matter how busy Shae was, she always had the time and place for my students, and I was so grateful. She willingly accepted and guided at least 3 student teachers each academic year and took students from other teacher trainers too. She believed it was her mission to help train, mold and mentor future teachers. She could teach only so many pupils each year. But her student teachers could then go out and teach so many more. She was a model teacher. She did not always follow the ministry trends, like group work without a reason. She used every method at the right time and place.

With so many of my student-teachers at Balfour, I came there quite often. Shae was always able to rearrange her schedule for my students' benefit and moreover she could always find a substitute so that she could be part of our feedback session. We were the ultimate trilogy: student-teacher, master teacher and teacher trainer. She knew what I required of my student-teachers and opened her lessons to their teaching and experimenting. I knew the method to her teaching madness and was happy my students were really loving teaching.

And so we started working together as colleagues...and slowly became friends.

Shae was a counselor and went around to many schools and teachers giving of her experiences, knowledge and downright common sense. She did all this travelling by bus. Shae gave many workshops to teachers in the field.

Shae was very active in ETAI. She was on the board and on the conference committee. You would find her at the registration desk from early in the morning. ETAI and teaching English were very, very important to her. She gave selflessly of herself. She was a friendly, gregarious individual. She loved people and they responded. Because of Shae, I even became a weathered presenter at ETAI conferences.

But 11 years ago, it all changed. First of all, Shae suffered from a series of strokes, which led to much suffering on her part. It left her right hand paralyzed, so she had to learn to write with her left hand. Second, her diabetes resulted in the amputation of her left leg above the knee. She had been a chain smoker and had to have a tracheotomy. Shae, who had been so articulate and caustic, funny and positive, was now difficult to understand when she tried to speak. She was susceptible to bedsores and often sitting was painful. But she braved each and every impediment with, "It will be OK."

Confined to a wheelchair for the past seven years in Hadasim, Shae could most usually be found sitting in front of her computer. She tried to organize all her files and materials, and donated them to students and teachers. She kept busy with things that interested her: English, teaching and giving.

Shae was also susceptible to pneumonia and other infections and was often hospitalized. It was in Bellinson where she spent her last days.

Shae passed away this past November at the young age of 59. She suffered acutely, yet she bore it all with dignity. At times, I do not know how she managed. Life is certainly not always fair. Shae was dealt more than her share of disadvantages and it made me mad. I am thankful that she no longer has to suffer.

A prolific reader, Shae received books and magazines from many friends, relatives and acquaintances. When she finished, she passed them on to me for my students. I had a mini-library in my classroom, encouraging them to pick up a book or journal just for fun. They all knew about Shae. How many of you out there did your student teaching with Shae as your master teacher, or how many went to see model lessons that she gave?

Good-bye Shae. May you rest in peace. You will be missed!

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