

John Briggs

John Briggs worked as a guidance counselor and English teacher at GCA from 1972 to 1976. John passed away on November 7, 2010, at the age of 81. During his 40-year career as an Adventist educator, he touched countless lives. The following tribute was written by Kathy (Wear) Meintzer, class of 1976, on behalf of the students who knew and loved John Briggs.



We didn't know a man named John Briggs, we knew a man named JB. The fact that we could call him that speaks a lot for the kind of teacher he was—personal. He was not a stiff and formal man—he was almost one of us. He not only taught us, but he counseled us, guided us, laughed with us, and loved us. For some of us, he was the best teacher we ever had.

We may not remember all that we learned inside the classroom, but the things he taught us outside of those rooms are much more valuable.

We saw a man who loved God and strove to teach us foolish youngsters to do the same. He lived the principle, “Study to show thyself approved unto God.” Books and tapes and learning, oh my! He loved to learn and grow! He taught us the importance of communication with each other—to open our hearts and expose ourselves to each other. Without communication, he said, we cannot really know and love each other. He was such an example of learning for ourselves, not just assuming that everything we'd been taught was true. It was okay to think outside the box.

His whole life was dedicated to helping others. For many of us, he was a father figure, one that represented God to us as no earthly father ever had. He had a special knack for spotting the “strays,” if you will—those of us who had been wounded and needed special attention. I was one of those. He made room for me in his family the last year of academy and supported me through one year of college. He made up his mind that I was in his heart and he would always be there for me, and he was. No matter what choices I made, or what I did, he was there. He didn't have to be, but he was. He was my touchstone. No matter where I was, how bad things seemed, I always knew I was loved. He was not just ‘JB’ to me, he was ‘PA.’ That's the “be the Jesus that others may never see” kind of man he was.

I could almost bet that there are very few teachers who touched as many lives as he did. He was not perfect, but there was no question where his heart was. Mr. Briggs, JB, or PA— there will never be another one like him.