



BROMMEL-CHAN-LAIRD SCHOLARSHIP FOR ENSEMBLE ESPAÑOL

Judy Moy Chan, who earned a B.A. in Communications from Northeastern Illinois University in 1982, is an adjunct professor at Cerritos College, teaching Yoga and Mat Pilates, and adjunct professor at Fullerton College as a Pilates Teacher Trainer in the Comprehensive Teacher Training Certificate Program, both in Southern California. Judy also works with clients in the Synergy Pilates Studio at The St. Jude Center for Rehabilitation and Wellness in Brea, California.

Judy Moy Chan combined at Northeastern her love for dance with a degree in communication. At Northeastern she took many dance courses with Marge Hobley and Dame Libby Komaiko. It was then that I saw Judy dance in programs. I taught her in a variety of courses and trained her as a speaker but she always had a keen interest in the psychology of communication. She was full of “Why this? Why that? What do you mean?” This made her a joy to teach. She also used the insights she gained in the psychology of communication to figure out her own life. I have even had her and her family as guests in my Family Communication course. For students at Northeastern, Judy models how a person can have a career and also a family. I have taught thousands of students and Judy is the only one that I know that taught her children to call me “Grandpa BJ.” This is humbling and an honor.

Judy writes: “My father immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 15, and at age 22, returned to Hong Kong in search of a wife. He was very particular, and eventually chose my mother. She hadn’t yet mastered the English language when she arrived, but decided to operate a laundry single-handedly while my father worked full time at Teletype Corporation. Our family of four resided in the upstairs apartment of the laundry. My father would come home, down a quick dinner, and iron side by side with my mother, into the early morning hours until every shirt was crisp and neatly pressed. To reduce overhead, they did not hire additional help. They toiled long hours, six days a week, saved and scrimped for an exhausting 10 years. Despite their limited resources and education, they saved enough money to relocate from the inner city to the northern suburbs.

By this time, my parents had sold the laundry, and both worked at Teletype Corporation. We were latch key children, coming home to watch Speed Racer, Garfield Goose and The Flintstones. There were explicit rules - ‘come straight home from school’ and ‘no one is allowed in the house.’

My middle/high school years were crushing for my self-esteem; being Asian with gold-rimmed stop sign glasses and waist length black hair, split down the middle just didn’t fit into any clique. I did manage to find a niche during those years, and it was dance.”

“Graduating from high school was an accomplishment. My father, an intelligent man, recommended that my brother study engineering, and that I major in computer science. My heart was heavy as I had rekindled a love for dance, and had no interest in computer science. He was ahead of his time; those careers were lucrative and provided stability.

Instinctively, I knew that I was not cut out to be a computer programmer, but out of respect for my dad and his advice, I declared my major in Computer Science and spent endless nights in the computer lab staring blankly at programming print outs. Changing my major was simple, but my worse fear was telling my father and going against his wishes. (He later discovered it for himself, as I neglected to mention that “minor” detail.)

My days were full, working part-time at a local insurance company from 6-10 am, academic classes at Northeastern and dance classes and rehearsals under the tutelage of Ms. Marge Hopley and Ms Libby Komaiko, practically living in the dance studio.

I was at a cross roads in my life and finally decided against Computer Programming and Dance, and instead, chose Communications as my major. I was one student of many that registered for Dr. BJ Brommel’s class that semester. He was an intimidating figure, austere and direct. Little did I know that underneath that seemingly stern exterior, was not only my professor, but my mentor, confidante, life-long friend, and “Grandpa BJ” to my children. Despite his busy schedule, Dr. Brommel counseled me through my academic endeavors, as well as a personal issues stemming from cultural and generational differences. He never told me what to do, but rather, asked thought-provoking questions to prompt my own decision-making. Those questions resulted in a life-changing decision, with no regrets, even to this day.

On a professional level, having explored the communication process, feedback, messages (verbal/non-verbal), and interaction within the Interpersonal Communication course has been invaluable. Effective oral communication and delivery has also been essential in working with clients in a Pilates Studio setting. A sound understanding of the client requires the instructor to communicate in a variety of ways in order to address the many learning styles of the client. Each individual utilizes different senses in which to receive and process the information (verbal, visual, manual or kinesthetic).

On a personal level, the Interpersonal Communication course was instrumental in my understanding of the dynamics in my own family. Dr. Brommel and I had lengthy discussions regarding the function of family roles, social structure and boundaries, which also tie in to cultural communication theories and concepts. This understanding prompted more respect towards my parents, rather than resentment.

Grandpa BJ, I am grateful for those carefully phrased questions that prompted me to choose the life that has brought me great happiness and joy. My life has been a path of twists, turns, and unknowns, but I am thrilled, amazed and in awe to say that my work in teaching Pilates at St. Jude and the colleges is truly my passion.

On a personal note, you often articulate what I feel when I have no words. You have such an incredible sense of who I am, and why, when I don’t even know. One of these days, I may ask you to draw up an assessment of me!!”

Grace Laird represents the finest qualities that I, as a student, had ever experienced. I had her as a teacher, first in the 7th grade, and then in high school, when she moved into high school teaching as all of the men teachers volunteered for WWI. I have had several brilliant college professors, but none with the range and depth of Grace. Her example taught me to hope that I could do for my students what she did for me. She is the first person to tell me that I could become a teacher or a doctor if I only studied harder and paid more attention! When I ran away to college, Grace gave me her used dictionary because she said I needed it. When I went for my MA at the University of Iowa, she gave me her dictionary of synonyms. In death, she left me her library, and asked that I speak at her funeral. She lived to be 101, and mentored me in phone calls, letters and visits. That woman never gave up on me. I have always tried to be like Grace. Interestingly, I took my first speech and psychology courses from her. Talk about influence! My career in teaching, Communication and clinical psychology I owe to her.

I see in the professors in the Dance Department and Communication Department reaching students in ways Grace would admire. Dame Libby, Irma Suarez and Jorge Perez (a former student) do the same for their students. In Communication, a new generation of professors led by Katrina Bell-Jordan, Anna Antaramian and Tony Adams, inspire students.

-Dr. Brommel