

## THE BROMMEL-MANGANIELLO-WOHL SCHOLARSHIP

“Ralph died in 2011 at 64, but by that time he made an impression not only on me, but all who got to know him. He was from a large Italian family who lived in Chicago in the housing projects. He attended Lane Tech High and Marshall High. After high school he enlisted in the Air Force where he served in the police force. From 1965 until 1971 he served mostly in Viet Nam. Following service, he returned to Chicago and sold insurance for Prudential; then became a training consultant for a clinical laboratory; followed by a salesman for Power Transmissions and later a purchasing agent for a beverage distributor. After college he has a wide variety of jobs from management to health services.

When Ralph was 28 he came to Northeastern and I became his academic advisor. He also over the years took a number of courses that I taught. He had accumulated 18 credit hours from some junior college work. He chose a communications major. Ralph suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder due to his active combat in Vietnam. Since he was older and wiser than his younger classmates, he said little in class. He listened and followed carefully all that was said. His assignments reflected deep thought and care. Ralph insisted on sitting in the back corner of any classroom. He did not, after experiences in the war, want anyone behind his back. Usually he dressed in military fatigues. I found that group activities enabled him to participate and make friends.

Ralph never talked about the war, but in blogs some 40 years after the war he shared stories with other veterans. These helped me to know Ralph even better. In July 1967, Ralph arrived at the air base in Da Nang protecting troops on Monkey Mountain. Ralph wrote of the barracks being blown up and the nearby ammo supplies igniting. He wrote that it all went up in a colossal explosion ... ‘Red hot shrapnel rained for several minutes.... We were all burned or wounded by the fragments.’ He was sprayed with Agent Orange and ended up with Multiple Myeloma. For years he had a web site on the Internet for others with health problems related to Agent Orange. Ralph helped these other vets and kept them up to date on treatments. He went into several experimental studies. Once he had a stem cell transplant “in order to stay alive.” Myeloma caused him to have bone marrow cancer.

Ralph liked school and appreciated any chances to learn beyond what he knew from the military. He graduated from NEIU in 1978 with a degree in communications and minor in business. In 1981 he took graduate work at Wichita State University. Yes, Ralph returned to the service in the 80's and advanced to the rank of captain in the US Air Force. With multiple health problems, he began to lose his sight and found his calling in doing work for the blind. His work at the Kansas Blind Foundation became his passion. He became Director of Rehabilitation for Envision, Inc.

To write this I went back to letters that Ralph had sent me over the years. I treasure them for his wanting to continue dialogues we had had in classes. Interestingly, Ralph never dwelled on his war experiences. He was always more interested in sharing with me the challenges that he faced in his various positions. I think I recommended him for almost every position he achieved. Ralph's life taught me as much as I taught Ralph. This scholarship is in the Honors College because Ralph ended his military career in the Intelligence Division.

Ray Wohl, born in Toledo, Ohio, came to Chicago after receiving his BA from the University of Toledo and some graduate work at New York University. I knew him first as an actor in Chicago productions. He achieved membership in both Actors Equity and Screen Actors Guild. Ray could light up any dull classroom with his wit and umpteen questions. As an older student, he just wanted to be challenged by either his classmates or professors. I looked forward to his being in my classes.

Ray wrote about our relationship as follows: "...From my first days at NEIU, Dr. Brommel was an encouraging presence in my life. I made an important decision to seek a MA in speech. I knew Dr. Brommel would be one of my professors; little did I know the impact he would have on my life."

The next excerpts come from correspondence we have had. Let's allow Ray to write for himself:

"My studies at Northeastern were both in the College of Education and College of Arts and Sciences because I wanted teacher certification. When I started with Dr. Brommel, his classes were the most challenging and rigorous of my formal schooling. He expected excellence with extensive reading lists, analysis and written reflections. His lectures were well prepared. I recorded some of his lectures and for many years returned to them for insights. A few years ago in reorganizing my office, I let them go. I wish I had them today to offer back to the University."

Another time Ray wrote, “Congratulations for a truly wonderful 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration at Northeastern. We laughed and cried; we applauded and lauded; we smiled happily at each other! Your party was a reunion stretching across generations, states, mentors, protégés, family and colleagues. All were friends of Bernie Brommel. You tied us all together with your love and friendship, kindness, compassion, loyalty and learning!

I so enjoyed sitting with Ralph Manganiello and his son, and Tim Day, the recipient of the first scholarship, in our names. We all got a chance to learn about one another. Later we sat front and center for the program of speeches and music that celebrated your life.”

After graduating from Northeastern I often visited Dr. Brommel in his office in the Beehive Building. Often I would leave with a book or two under my arm for recommended reading. When he retired, I was the recipient of many of his books. My home library has greatly benefited from his generosity. I am so honored to be part of your scholarship legacy and commitment to excellence and to the next generation of student scholars. Bernie, I pledge to you that I will continue to be a loyal contributor to NEIU and assist the University in its fund raising efforts. I too look forward with you to a continued association with Northeastern in so many wonderful ways.”

Today Mr. Wohl teaches, as he has for the past twenty years, in the Chicago Public Schools as Fine Arts, Music & Media teacher. Active in the union in 2013, he won in an election one of only two positions on the city school’s Pension Board.