

A TRIBUTE TO MR. Z

40 YEARS OF MEMORIES AND REFLECTIONS
FROM THE CHAMINADE COMMUNITY

"Hi Hi!"

I was a frequent member of the Saturday detention 'Garden Club.' At the beginning of each Saturday morning detention, Bro. Eppy would round us up and take us towards the shed to begin 4 hours of manual labor. Just as we would get on the trailer that Eppy was towing with his tractor, Mr. Z would grab me and tell Eppy that he needed me to help him. Instead of cutting wood and digging holes in the heat, I got to move boxes in Frische Hall. Mr. Z would buy me a Dr. Pepper and give me donuts. One time he even paid me for serving a detention with him.

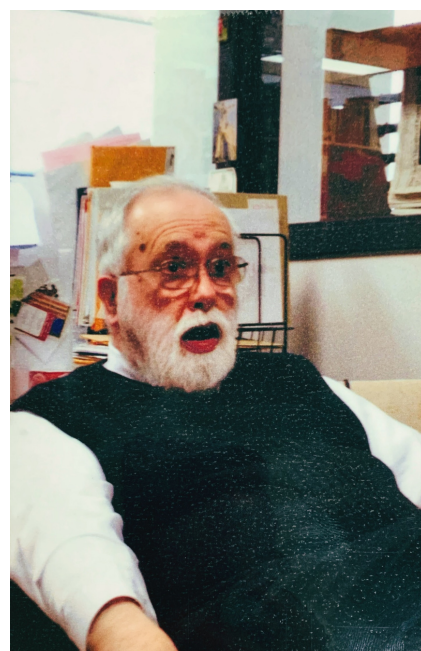
The spring before I started as a 7th grader, I was touring the grounds of Chaminade. When I entered the library, he saw me and immediately walked over with an outstretched hand and said, "Jim Zolnowski, nice to meet you." I was very nervous and gave a weak handshake and looked down. He pulled my hand near his face to that I was forced to look up. "When you shake my hand, you do it with a firm grip and you look me in the eye young man." I'll never forget that. I immediately realized that there was a higher expectation on how I conducted myself as soon as I walked through those doors. - Major John Vogel, U.S. Air Force

"Step into my office"

I remember the first time I asked for his help as a sixth grader and he asked me to "step into his office." I was deeply confused when he started walking away from his cluttered office. Only later did it become clear to me that the books and the students were his office.

Mr. Z taught me, through repeated practice, to always have two feet on the ground while sitting in a chair. When I told him I got straight A's on my report card he said, "I would adopt you but I think your parents already did."

When I was in 7th grade, Mr. Z told me that if I was 21, he would have bought me a beer and a pizza to congratulate me for getting good grades. Unfortunately, I was still a year away from being able to take him up on his offer the day he passed away. Mr. Z would always ask me: "What do great parents have?" The correct answer was always "Great kids." If I could talk to him now, I'd ask, "Mr. Z, what do great students have?" And of course, the answer would be: "Great teachers." Great teachers like Mr. Jim Zolnowski.



MR. JAMES ZOLNOWSKI
Religion and Business Education

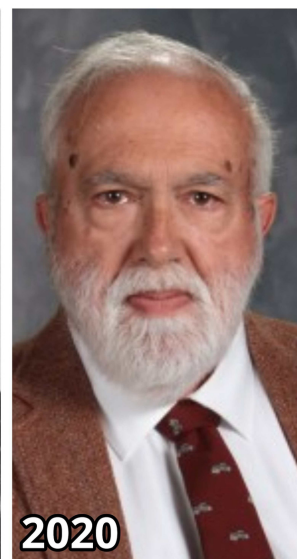
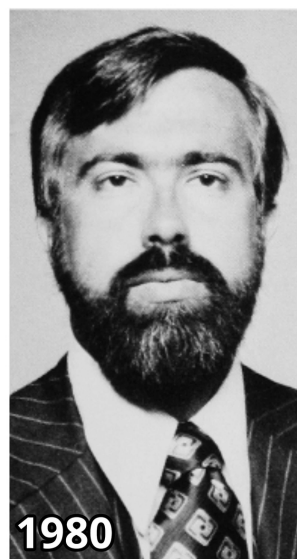
"Who's tall, bright and handsome?"

"Jesus loves you, now go away."

In my first week at Chaminade, I went to soccer tryouts, but I wasn't sure I was going to make the team. So one day that week I skipped tryouts. Mr. Z came into my dorm room and asked why I didn't show up to soccer. He then went on to convince me to stay in soccer as it was a sport that I loved. He didn't know me too well and that time, but thanks to his advice, my time at Chaminade was one I'll never forget. I met people that became like family.

The 'Mexican Magician' happened thanks to him. He could have said nothing, but he did. He cared, he always did. He was always there at the dorms.

Mr. Z was dedicated to *Esto Vir* no matter what was happening in your life. His dry, sarcastic humor was his genuine way of saying, "I care about you and your problems. Now that you know that, let's deal with it and move on."



"No no. No no no no."

My favorite memory of Mr. Z was when he ran into me while I was working at Target. He saw me pushing a trash can, and we immediately recognized each other. He looked me up and down, paused, and then said, "I'm glad they're using your talents well."

You were there in some of my darkest moments when no one else was. You literally saved my life as a sophomore, and I can never thank you enough.

For three years, I was lucky enough to live in the student dorms with Mr. Z. He covered my supervision shifts when I was busy preparing a lesson for the next day. We talked for hours when we were on supervision together. He always asked me about my family and genuinely cared about their lives. We talked about summer camp and life at Chaminade. We talked about concerns we shared for students or shared stories of their successes. When my wife and I married, Mr. Z gave us a Christmas ornament each year as a gift. And when we had a son, Mr. Z bought him a toy train. Mr. Z was always kinder and more generous than I deserved. He was always a better friend to me than I was to him. He believed in me and encouraged me to grow professionally. One of the last things we spoke about was a paper he longed encouraged me to write. I'm just sorry he won't be able to read it. Thank you, Mr. Z. For everything. – Dr. Will Armon

Thanks Mr. Z for being such a great mentor. I always appreciated your honest opinion. Sometimes it was brutally honest.

"Have a wonderful day and thank you for choosing...CHAMINADE."



Mr. Z: "How's basketball going, Mr. Greer?" Me: "I'm not Anthony Greer." Mr. Z: "Since when?" We had this conversation at least twice a week. I miss that guy.

I came to Mr. Z after getting into a car accident my junior year. "Your parents can buy a new car but not a new son." He calmed me down and made me feel loved.

Mr. Z was always happy to tell me what I was doing right, and even happier to tell me what I was doing wrong.

"Don't correct me. I went to college."

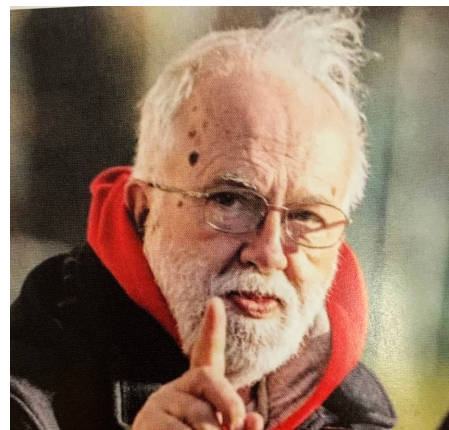
"Who's my favorite senior?"

Mr. Z taught me, my two younger brothers, my three sons and two of my nephews. We all have our own fond memories and funny Mr. Z quotes. His wit, wisdom and compassion will be truly missed, but he will never be forgotten.

I would not be the man I am today without the influence you had on my life, and I know that I am not alone.

Though I never fully understood you, you understood me. You understood all of us, quietly--and sometimes loudly--observing us in our most vital environments of growth: the library, the cafeteria, the atrium. You told me, "You'll grow up, go to law school, and be a great judge just like your dad." And when I'd reply that I don't want to be a judge, you'd roll your eyes and laugh--as if I didn't know what you knew. Now as I mature, I realize just how similar my dad and I are with regards to our values, interests and thoughts. My dad was a freshman when you first started at Chaminade. You watched him just as you watched me. You saw what I couldn't see.

I remember back in 2002 the first time I spoke to Mr. Z. I introduced myself. He replied, "Ahhh, nice to meet you Mr. Allen. I remember your dad. Class of 1981, right? Yes, he was a trouble-maker."

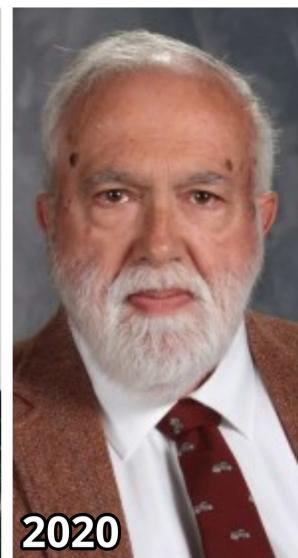
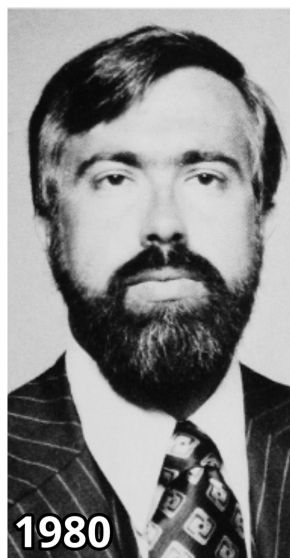


"Be careful driving home, we need your tuition."

Mr. Z would always tell me, "You should be more like your brother." I don't have a brother, but that was something he always told me to do. It would make me laugh. He'd also tell me, "I know where you live!" I can finally say that I know where you live too, Z.

Thank you Mr. Z for so many years of guidance, wisdom, love and friendship. Your legacy and impact will continue to be felt for many decades.

Mr. Z had a memory like an elephant of legend. His (often) caustic wit masked his genuine care and concern for Chaminade and its students. He made me cry the very first day I worked at Chaminade, but soon became a good friend and mentor. Even though he was larger than life, he was also an accomplished ninja, working tirelessly behind the scenes. From the small things like picking up the newspapers in the morning, to the larger things like decorating the entire campus for Christmas, he floated silently or stomped loudly and got things done. I miss you every single day, Mr. Z. -- Mrs. Janice Fleming



I was told once that a Marianist from many years ago said of him it was like he had been cast in a role of librarian and dormitory prefect for a long-running play about a boys' school, and he played that part without ever breaking character. A character he was. His humor could be cutting and his critiques withering, but this dedication to the boys over the decades could never be questioned, and I daresay no one in recent memory exhibited more thorough commitment to the institution than our Mr. Z. I think his absence is felt by us all, regardless of how much or little we knew him. For me, it is the loss of a genuine friendship and I hope to see him again, beyond the region of thunder.
-- Mr. Jack Keithley

"See you in Church."