

Remarks by Ari Moskowitz at Robert Potter Memorial Celebration

Hello, my name is Ari Moskowitz and I am a sophomore here at Huntington High School. I took Mr. Potter's class first period, everyday, for the past year and a half. He was the first teacher that I met on the first day of ninth grade. He welcomed me with a warm smile and of course, a bad joke. This was my first day in a new school after switching from a private middle school, so as you can imagine it helped alleviate some of the stress.

Mr. Potter always used to talk to the class about his life prior to teaching and about his family. He would tell us about cool innovations, famous artists, things we could invent (Like glow in the dark soap bubbles to name one) and interesting works of art.

Mr. Potter's favorite piece of art was *The Great Wave*, a color wood print created by Hokusai. This is a picture of a gigantic wave overtaking three small boats with Mt. Fuji in the background.

I believe that life is a picture. Everyone's picture is different. Everyone's picture has different colors, shapes, patterns and rhythm. Some people don't get to finish their picture, some people don't get to start their picture, but everyone has a canvas. Some people paint on other people's pictures, some people can try to help you paint your picture and give you ideas on how to paint it, but in the end, it is simply the painting of your life. No one else's. Just yours.

When I envision Mr. Potter's picture, I immediately see water. I see the strength of water as well as its fluidity. I see a fisherman and quite possibly a fish. This explains why when I reexamined *The Wave of Kanagawa*, I was able to more easily understand why he loved it.

Mr. Potter loved this picture because Hokusai pays such attention to detail. The snow on the mountain, the caps on the waves, the shading on the caps on the waves; the people on the boats, the clouds; the list goes on and on.

Now I'm not here to lecture you about this print, but I am here to show you what you might have missed when you looked at it. Mr. Potter embodies a wave. A wave is strong and unafraid. Once a wave is set on a path there is nothing that can stop it. Mr. Potter never hesitated to give a student a referral for throwing clay in class, he never hesitated to give a student a bad grade, if that's what they deserved; he had his opinions, and he stuck by them.

If any of you have ever been under a wave as big as the one in the print then you know that all you can see is the side of the wave facing you. A wave has many sides, but from one view point you can only see one side of a wave.

I used to think that I knew a lot about Mr. Potter, but when I went to his wake, I realized that I know only one of his many facets. He was aware of where he was and only showed the side of him that was appropriate for that occasion. As I looked at the many picture of his pre-teaching life, I saw a little bit of what was a life of learning and teaching. He taught me that you must be professional about how you conduct yourself, but that does not have to come at the expense of fun and play.

When a wave sweeps a boat up and capsizes it, it does not discriminate which boat to destroy. It will tip the big boat over just as it would take the small boat over. It will tip the black

boat over just as easily as it will tip the white boat. What I admired most in Mr. Potter was his impartiality. He saw everyone as equal.

“No painter ought to think less of sculpture than of painting, and no sculptor less of painting than of sculpture.” --Michelangelo Buonarroti. That was the quote stenciled on Mr. Potter’s desk.

His classes most often consisted of people of all different backgrounds. Mr. Potter would take on the challenge of teaching students for whom art did not come naturally. He was a great teacher.

He was pure energy. Just like a wave. A wave is the transfer of energy through water. Technically, the water never moves. Mr. Potter died in his birthplace. He didn’t have to move to transfer his energy. Because the number of people that he touched is so great, one day, the people he has touched will transfer his energy throughout the world.

The last and most important comparison between Mr. Potter and a wave is their ability to change someone’s life in seconds. Just like a wave it didn’t take much time for Mr. Potter to change my life. It started with the first day of ninth grade, it continued with the encouraging and critical words and it will continue through a lifetime of inspiration.

Mr. Potter is not just a wave; he is also mountain, just like Mt. Fuji. He is strong and stable. Even though he isn’t in the foreground anymore that doesn’t mean he isn’t part of the picture.

Mr. Potter changed my life; he helped me paint my picture. He is the Mt. Fuji of my painting. He is the constant in the background. If you never met him, you can always go to the beach and just like his favorite picture, he will always be by the water.

“Just because the sun sets, doesn’t mean the moon won’t shine.”

-Original Quote by Ari Moskowitz

Robert Potter

Rest. In. Peace.