
REMEMBERING KIM B. ROTZOLL

The death of Kim Rotzoll last November was not the usual situation in which a cherished colleague dies. Such news usually comes long after colleagues have retired, and however active they may have been at one time in an organization dear to us, they have ceased attending meetings or otherwise participating in our activities. As a result, our memories have faded, and we have many new members who have no remembrance of them at all.

That was certainly not so this time. Kim and Nancy, as always, attended the 2003 American Academy of Advertising (AAA) meeting in Denver, and mingled with us in their customary maturely youthful way. Kim gave a presentation about his experience on the National Advertising Review Board (NARB) that, as Ray Taylor said on Adforum, was “especially memorable.” He prodded his colleagues at the Past President’s breakfast with questions and opinions. He met new members and cultivated his many longtime friendships. He asked us what new movies we had seen recently (we’d never seen them all, so we’d never seen enough).

Kim died at age sixty-eight, from bone cancer and related ills. He had just retired as dean of the College of Communications at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, but even though he had officially finished, Kim was still working when he entered the hospital. He was in the midst of teaching a course for freshmen on advertising ethics. His work was not done; his opportunities to contribute had not ended.

All of that imposes such a tragic aspect on his death. We grieve for Kim, and we also grieve for the loss to ourselves and to our academy. It is a consolation to know that his name will be kept alive through the AAA’s creation of the Kim Rotzoll Award for Advertising Ethics and Social Responsibility. The award will be given for “outstanding contributions to furthering the study and practice of ethical and socially responsible advertising.” That was Kim’s primary teaching and writing topic, and in his lifetime he headed the list of those who supported and furthered the area.

The news of Kim’s death prompted many comments on Adforum. Although they reached only those who were subscribers at the time, they are still available. My own comment was a lengthy history full of pictures, some from long ago, and I will be happy to e-mail it to anyone who requests it (e-mail your request to ipreston@wisc.edu). Many others may be found at www.aejmc.net/advertising/.

The College of Communications at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign is undergoing revision, and questions have been raised about the future of the advertising program. At the time of this writing, however, Ron Yates, the head of journalism who is serving as interim dean, reports that all of the college’s courses will continue to be taught. He also reports that an effort is underway to create a Kim B. Rotzoll Professorship, and that both it and the Sandage Professorship will be in the hands of scholars who will do their teaching and research on advertising topics. That will be another way in which Kim’s name will be remembered to old and new AAA members, and to many others, for a long time.

Ivan L. Preston
Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin

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