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Chiu, Ener

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A Tribute to Kaye Bock

Ener Chiu

It's been almost seven months since Kaye passed, and I still haven't taken her number out of my speed dial. There's no good reason for keeping her old office phone number in my cell phone. It's an act of denial, perhaps. Or maybe it's just comforting in some way to scroll through my phone and see her name come up again and believe for half a second that I could still press a button and hear her matronly voice and full laugh ring in my ear. That brief moment of comfort is always followed a few seconds of tightening behind the eyes as I remember where and when we are today.

Kaye Bock was born in Dallas on July 7, 1944. As one former DCRP student wrote shortly after her death, "Most here would agree that she was one of the best things to ever come out of Texas." She received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Dallas and went on to earn a Master's degree in English from Marquette. In the early 1980s, Kaye arrived in Berkeley to attend Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, part of the Graduate Theological Union. She completed coursework towards a Graduate Divinity degree, but somewhere along the way, ended up answering a slightly different calling.

In 1984, Kaye came to the Department of City and Regional Planning (DCRP), and her 23 years in this institution left an indelible mark on all of the students that passed through the department in that time. Although

Figure: Kaye Bock and Ener Chiu backstage at CED's Commencement Ceremony, May 2004.



she did not finish her Divinity degree, Kaye was a natural minister, and she made DCRP her church. She led us not with flowery ideas or thunderous orations shouted from a pulpit or high hill. Her beatitudes were gently delivered each day, while seated in a chair from Office Max, surrounded by stacks of applications piled four feet high, out of a modest office framed by concrete pillars and unfinished wood paneling. What more architecturally brutal place than within the walls of DCRP could she have found to shine her light of religious humanism on? In what other place would she have had the opportunity to reassure so many insecure, searching souls, in need of a kind word and hug, or a cluck of the tongue, or a knowing wink and smile?

The reason we all miss Kaye is not because she was a great administrator or student affairs officer (she was). What is irreplaceable will not be her selfless dedication to her job, her willingness to be constantly accessible to students, or even her elephantine memory. What we will miss and long for is having someone in our lives who believed in us more than sometimes we even believed in ourselves. Someone who looked at us, sized us up through little more than our graduate school applications, and recognized our uniqueness and ability to contribute something of extraordinary value to our peers, the program, and to the wider world. Amazingly, even after she met us, after she saw many of us go through low and petty moments, she kept her faith in us. She believed that we would all do great things, that we would create new knowledge, and that we would be generous and compassionate to each other along the way.

It's difficult for me to believe that in just a few weeks, a new group of graduate City Planning students will begin their coursework at Berkeley, and most of them will never know who Kaye was and the role she played in the lives of DCRP students for more than two decades. Who will greet these newly disoriented students with an immediate and genuinely affectionate hug? Who will momentarily melt their doubts about their new surroundings and themselves? Who will efficiently and magically coordinate the seemingly mundane extracurricular events that turn strangers and classmates into lifelong friends and soulmates? Who will remind the new students that while they came to Berkeley to develop their minds, they should not neglect each others' hearts?

Ener Chiu received his Master's degree in City and Regional Planning from UC Berkeley in 2005. Currently, he is working for the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), a nonprofit housing and community developer. He has developed 86 units of tax-credit housing in the City of San Pablo, and is working on a health clinic for the Native American Health Center, which will include 36 units of affordable housing on the top three stories. Ener is also in predevelopment for a new 50 unit senior housing project in Oakland's Chinatown.

Remembrances of Kaye Bock

John Landis

[This text is an edited transcript of the eulogy presented by Prof. Landis at Kaye's funeral service at the Grace Lutheran Church in Richmond on January 25th, 2007.]

I first met Kaye Bock almost exactly twenty years ago. In contrast to all those people who wrote such wonderful tributes to Kaye on www.KayeBock.net—and I wanted to say thank you so much to all of you who shared your thoughts and memories—I don't remember the exact circumstance of our meeting. Kaye was there, in her office, of and inseparable from DCRP, as if she had always been there and always would be.

This is what makes Kaye's passing so difficult. For every one of us here today, and for the countless others who wanted to be here but couldn't, Kaye was an ever present part our lives. The best part of our lives. The part of our lives to which we most aspired, and were most proud. Even now, a week later, the thought that Kaye is gone from us is inconceivable. All of lives are immeasurably diminished because Kaye is not here to be a part of them.

To David and Debbie and Diana and Martine and Teddy and Diego, you were the love of Kaye's life. You were her life. My last conversation with Kaye was about how Teddy was now ten, and how he was no longer a little boy, but was already becoming a little man. Whenever I went into Kaye's office and looked around, I would realize that the true purpose of all those cabinets and bookcases was not to store stuff or —God forbid—organize stuff, but to be a bulletin board for pictures of Kaye's family, so that she would never have to turn her head more than a few degrees to see the family she so loved and of which she was so proud.

Many of you have written of Kaye's role as a friend or a mom or a confidante or the person who made the University of California, Berkeley, human, but to me Kaye was a first and foremost a teacher. A teacher of how one should live a life of dignity and service and friendship and love. So, if you will indulge me, I would like to share with you some of the things Kaye taught me in our twenty years of friendship.

- I always marveled at how Kaye treated everyone who walked into her office—even people she had never met before—as a friend or a friend to be. Kaye embraced the differences in each of us because she understood that it was those differences, and

not the similarities, that added the most to our community. If I ever commented to Kay about how someone had done something disappointing, she would sternly but nicely remind me of the many terrific things that person had done.

- Kaye taught me that compassion is humanity's greatest gift. Whoever you were, Kaye had an unerring ability to put herself in your shoes, and to feel what you felt. I have never met anyone with Kaye's gift of empathy. Putting yourself in someone else's place, and seeing the world through their eyes, not only changes how you act, but it changes who you are. It makes you more forgiving, which makes you more human.
- Kaye taught me about the importance of second chances and third chances, and fourth chances. Actually, what Kaye really taught me about chances was not to count them at all. If you were her friend—and everyone that Kaye ever met knew she counted them as a friend—you always got the benefit of every doubt. Maybe this was her training in the ministry, but Kaye was somehow able to see the good that lies at the core of each of us, and to bring that good out.
- Kaye taught me to appreciate the wonder of being surprised. Like many of you, I have served on DCRP's student admissions committees, and having, over the years, read thousands of applicant files, often thought that I'd seen and read it all—to the point of being able to predict what an applicant or reference would write before I had actually read it. Many times over the years, Kaye would ask me to take a second or third look at some applicant file, because, hidden between the lines, away from the conventional, was something that made this applicant so special, so unique, so perfect for our community, that we should admit them. Over the course of 20 years and maybe 3000 reviews, Kaye was never wrong. Not once.
- As Mike Teitz said so eloquently last week, Kaye taught me that one person could change people's lives, and in doing so, effect great good in the world. Kaye understood that good doesn't happen because of policies or plans or elections or even education. Good happens because individuals act to do good things. Our everyday lives confront us with scores of choices, and many of these choices offer opportunities for action. Kaye had an unerring ability to separate the important choices from the unimportant ones. Her formula was simple. The important choices were those from which good would follow.

- Kaye taught me that family is a lot more than relatives. Everyone here today is a part of Kaye's family. Not a son or daughter or grandchild, but family nonetheless. You do things for family without any expectation or reciprocation. You protect your family. And you let them know how important they are.
- Kaye taught me that there are many ways to tell the truth, and of the importance of communicating harsh truths in a gentle way. Kaye was a truth teller. I don't think I ever heard her utter a lie. An exaggeration maybe, especially when Grad Division was on the other end of the phone, but never a lie. At the same time, Kaye understood that you could tell the truth—especially difficult truths—gently, without rancor, and without judgment. Kaye knew that honesty is at the core of trust, and that there are many ways to be honest.

Not everything Kaye taught me was quite so serious. She taught me how not to get a parking ticket from the campus police when my car registration was out of date, a lesson I use to this day. She taught me how to look really, really busy while finishing that very last move in solitaire to win the game—three-card solitaire, by the way, not that easy one-card stuff. Almost miraculously, Kaye taught me how to defy the laws of physics and bend time, so that the student recommendation I had somehow forgotten to hand in on time would be as gratefully accepted by Grad Division as if it had been submitted two weeks early. That drinking out of a coffee cup that hadn't been washed wouldn't kill me. And—now this is really cool—how to pre-date an e-mail reply so that it would seem to be delivered before the original message was sent.

Most of all, I think Kaye Bock taught me what it means to live a fulfilling life.

I know how difficult it is for all of us to be here today to say goodbye to Kaye. It reminds us of the frailty of human life, and also of the goodness of human life. No matter how strong our spirit, no matter how big our heart, no matter how profound our impact, we are all flesh and blood.

There were some days when I would walk into Kaye's office to find her quietly crying about something. Usually, it was a problem a student was having that no matter how hard she worked, she couldn't quite make right. We'd talk about it a bit and agree that while you can't win them all, the important thing is to do the best you can, and have faith that if others do the best they can, it might work out in the end. Later those same days, I'd meet up with Kaye in the hallway as we were both heading out to our cars—usually to see that we hadn't gotten a parking ticket—and Kaye would tell me about a student who would be graduating even through

they hadn't completed a single required course; or a great applicant who had overcome some difficult challenges and just been admitted, or an alum who had just gotten married or had a baby. As we were walking through the Wurster doors, Kaye would say in her gentle way, "You know, this was a good day after all." If each of us walks out of these doors today committing ourselves to living the type of life our beloved Kaye lived, this will too, will be a good day.

John Landis is the Frank Crossways Professor of City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. From 1987 through 2007, he was a professor at DCRP, and served as DCRP department chair from 2002 through 2005. Kaye Bock was always his favorite teacher.