

COMMUNITY COMMENTARY

Mentor left a legacy

By Morgan R. Evans

I was deeply saddened by the recent passing of Linda Mook. The community has lost an exceptional teacher.

I had the privilege of taking journalism from her as a freshman at Corona del Mar High School and was honored a couple years later when she asked me to serve as editor in chief of the school newspaper, *The Trident*, during the 1988 and 89 school year.

In fact, my younger brothers Matt and Brad were both students of Linda Mook and editors of *The Trident*. In reflecting on my four years as a student of hers, it was apparent that she not only had a tremendous impact on my life, but on the lives of all of her students.

Linda Mook's students learned many valuable lessons, but the following three stand out in my mind and stay with me every day.

- *You have an obligation to act ethically.* Much of Mook's journalism class focused on ethics and journalistic integrity. She taught that the 1st Amendment was not a

license to publish anything you wanted to, but was a valuable freedom which came with a corresponding obligation to act ethically. Mook gave the newspaper staff broad editorial authority, while still keeping a vigilant watch over what we proposed to investigate, write and/or publish.

On more than one occasion, she met with us, sometimes as a staff and sometimes as individuals, to discuss the consequences of pursuing a prospective story. In each case, she would first let us know whether what we proposed was legal. Assuming it was, the next issue was whether it was ethical.

She expected the journalist to think critically about the ethics of going forward and about the consequences that could result from doing so. She encouraged students to arrive at the right decision on their own.

Of course, this lesson transcends the subject matter of journalism and applies to all decisions we make in life.

- *The ability to write clearly and concisely is invaluable.* Although only a handful of Mook's journalism students

ever went on to careers in professional journalism, all of them benefited from her demand for excellent writing.

Unlike many student newspaper advisors, Mook was a true journalist. She graduated from University of Missouri with a degree in journalism and had real-world journalism experience that made her an exceptionally talented writer and writing teacher.

She taught us the importance of organizing and analyzing the facts and then constructing written work that cleanly and effectively communicates to the reader.

It is apparent that in most walks of life, the person who can clearly and concisely communicate in writing has an advantage. I would bet that most of her former students have enjoyed that advantage.

- *Getting the job done right requires extra effort and long hours.* We published *The Trident* about every 2 ½ to 3 weeks.

This meant that during production weeks, the editing staff and Linda Mook were routinely in the journalism room until 11 p.m. —

sometimes later — "putting the paper to bed."

I am quite certain that she was not paid for the extra hours she dedicated to helping us turn out our product, and I am also quite certain that she never complained to the administration about having to put in the extra time.

Linda Mook was a true professional. Her dedication to us and to the craft would not allow her to do anything less than what was necessary to do the job and do it right, and often that required working late.

By her example, she taught her students that no matter what you choose to do in life, doing it well requires hard work.

On behalf of myself and on behalf of the thousands of students she has taught to think critically, write effectively and work diligently, I would like to thank Linda Mook for dedicating herself to our education and development as students and as human beings.

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