

# A TUTOR FONDLY REMEMBERED

by Jennifer L. Hammond, coordinator of tutoring

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: David Cunningham's July 3 death brought an end to nearly 20 years of service to Penn College, ranging from part-time tutoring in the early '80s to his ultimate position as coordinator of tutoring. It did NOT, however, end his influence, as this article by his successor aptly and warmly shows.)*

**I**t's 6 p.m., the Academic Support Services "wing" has quieted down for the evening, and I am missing my Friend, David.

This is the time when I would usually wander down to his office for some conversation. Over the years, when I taught night classes, I would spend time talking to him. He was always here late, too, even though he didn't have to be. He took pride in his work, from the important issues like hiring quality tutors, to the little details like making sure all the chairs were pushed in just right (*a finger's width from the tables*).

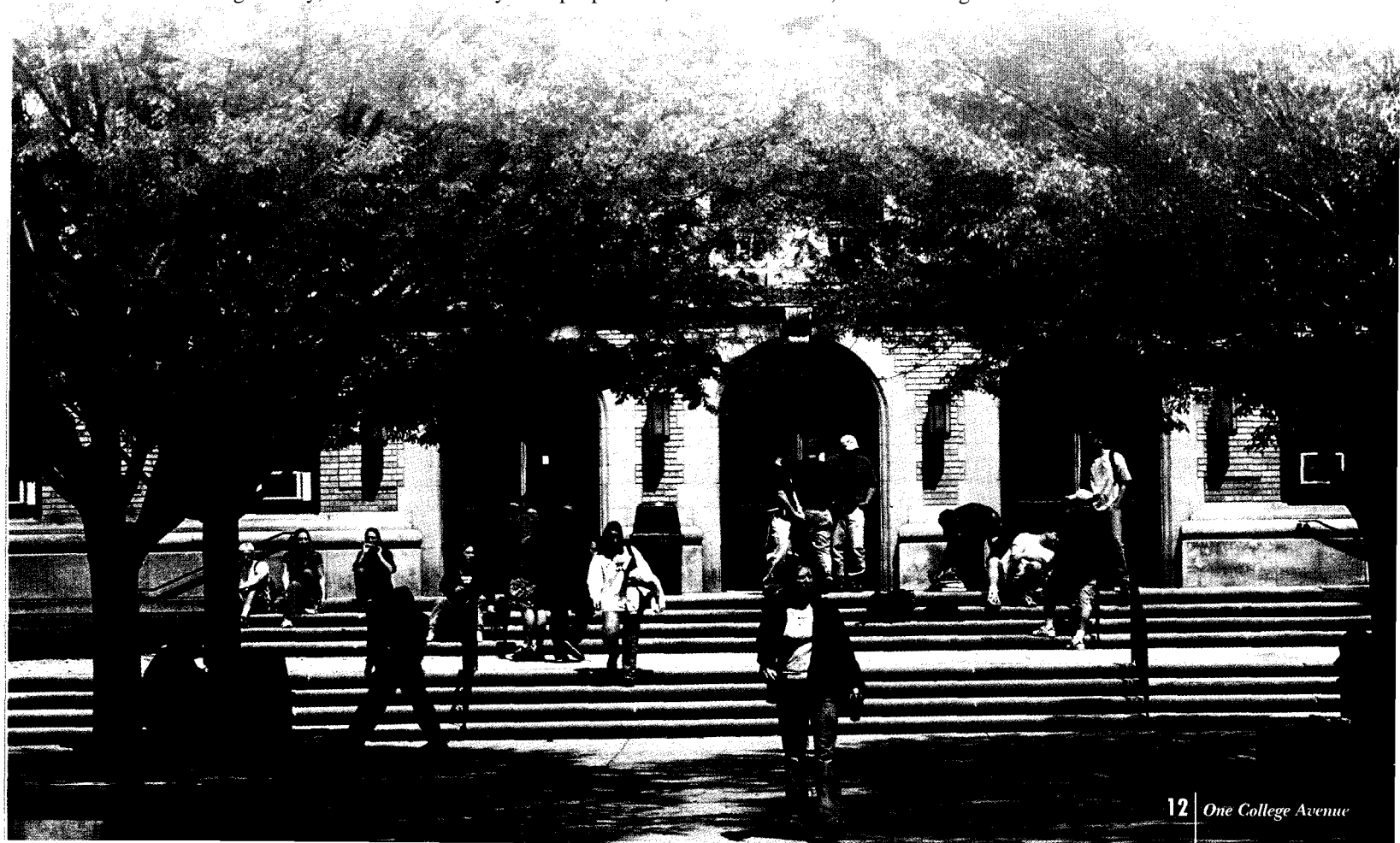
I think he genuinely liked the Tutoring Center; he took good care of it and the people who worked there.

I'm sure he also got some good work done in those quieter hours. During the day, his office was busy with people who,

like me, enjoyed talking to David. He was an ideal listener: He could sit very quietly while people chatted, joked, vented, complained, etc. Not one to be easily ruffled, he always tried to see the positive side of people and situations. Students, tutors, and staff alike loved to go see him. His office was a safe, comfortable place, and he a sympathetic friend.

When I met David, he was a fellow cast member in the musical "Lil' Abner." I knew him first as a singing, dancing actor who loved the theater. That was in the summer; in the fall, when I began my second year as a student at Williamsport Area Community College, I became a writing tutor in the Tutoring Center. And, there, I found a quiet, businesslike professional who appeared to be very shy. Most people had the opposite experience and were shocked to discover that the nice, quiet man who ran the Tutoring Center during the day turned into "The Music Man" at night!

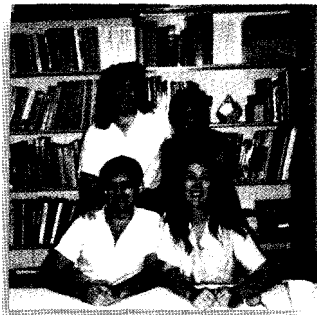
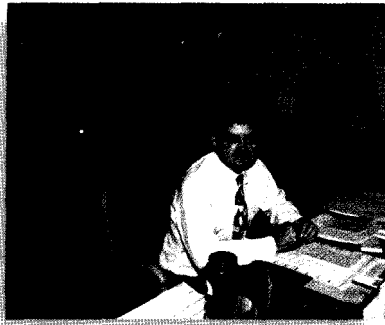
Before David became the coordinator of tutoring, he had a long history in the center as a math tutor. He knew a lot about math, but what made David a truly effective tutor was his patience. He was able to work with even the most challenging students, understanding their difficulties and frustrations.



# ... for Lessons in AND out of the Classroom



"We  
as  
tutor,  
knowledgeable  
professional,  
meticulous  
listener  
friend."



— including the  
author, standing second from left in the top photo and at the left  
in the bottom photograph.

Slowly and methodically, as was his nature, David would show students how to break each problem down and tackle it one step at a time. He never tired of repeating a procedure until a student felt comfortable. His instructions were always clear and direct, and his quiet, calm manner gave them the confidence to keep trying. He never intimidated anyone or made them feel less than capable; that was his gift to students.

He also was a most accommodating boss; I'm pretty sure he never denied any request for time off, and he tolerated so many special scheduling requirements. He also stocked soda in a small refrigerator and sold it for 50 cents, on the honor system (*and he never seemed to mind if the IOUs outnumbered the quarters*). When one of the professional tutors was pregnant with her first child, David even offered to keep cartons of milk on hand!

David gave of himself in so many ways. From great gifts brought back from his annual trips to the beach to a legendary Christmas party, David's generosity could not be matched. Those of us who worked with him received all nature of beach trinkets: tiny people made of sea shells, ornaments made of sand dollars, turtles with bobbing heads, etc. My personal favorite is a gel globe the color of the sea, with floating fish. It's peaceful and calming, much like David was.

The Christmas party, open to faculty and staff from many parts of Penn College, was quite a production, with catered hors d'oeuvres and decadent desserts, and seemingly endless tables of food. David would spend weeks planning and, then, hours on the morning of the party picking up food, covering tables and placing centerpieces to transform the Tutoring Center into a holiday retreat. In typical David style, he made sure that everyone was happy and well-fed, and he had to be coaxed to relax and enjoy his own party! And, whenever anyone asked him if he could use help with the cost of the party, he would decline, saying it was funded with "soda money."

David's generosity went beyond the material, though. His generous spirit is what allowed him to be so patient with students, so tolerant and caring with the people he knew. Even when someone was gossiping or complaining, David would never engage. He was too kind, too generous to put people down or judge anyone.

We will remember him as the patient tutor, the knowledgeable professional, the meticulous worker, the kind listener and the generous friend. We are richer for experiencing his quick, subtle sense of humor. Our mission now is to carry on his legacy of offering quality tutoring to help students succeed. His spirit lives on in the lives of the staff who work in the Tutoring Center and the students who get help there.

We honor the traditions he left us and are better people for having known him. "