Remembrances of Eric

by

Michael Maloney

Eric was a visionary. He saw his world not as it was or what it was expected to be by others, but as what it could become in the hands of fluent performers. Learning, to Eric, was the principal means of becoming. Eric pushed the envelope of conventional wisdom in the same way that test pilots push the limits of prototype aircraft. Like a Chuck Yeager, Eric was flying high and fast, a specialist, at the pinnacle of technical excellence in his field.

Eric's visionary bent often led to controversy with established ideas.

One of the clearest images I have of Eric is contained in a story Annie Desjardins related to me about a case conference of a severely developmentally delayed child with whom Annie worked. Annie and Eric were working on gross motor development skills including teaching Linda to walk. The physiotherapist was aghast when Eric indicated that they expected Linda to learn to walk at 130 steps per minute. "Impossible" she declared, "Nobody walks at 130 steps a minute!" How quickly do they pace?" inquired Eric. "I'm not sure, but probably more like 30-40 steps a minute," retorted the now angry physiotherapist. "Show me," said Eric. "I'll count and you walk." Pushed to the professional brink in front of an audience of colleagues, but unwilling to concede anything, the poor physio tried to walk at 30 steps per minute. Perched on one foot for 2 minutes then on the other, continually in danger of falling flat on her face in a physical, as well as a professional sense, she finally sat down.

"We'll teach Linda to walk at 130 steps per minute," summarized Eric. "I think she'll be happier that way." And they did.

Eric Haughton