Comments Made at a Special Remembrance Event for Jim Schwartz, Sept. 17, 2011, Scheman Continuing Education Building, Iowa State University

Eric Abbott
Professor, Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication

I want to welcome you to a very special event, certainly one that is special for me, having been both a student and a faculty colleague of Jim Schwartz. Everyone in this room knows Jim, but for different reasons, in different ways. One of the purposes of getting together today is to give us an opportunity to share a little bit about the amazing contributions this made to journalism—not to mention fishing and family and all the other things that he did. At the family’s request, we have scheduled an opportunity for those of you who would like to make comments about Jim—the ways you know him, the ways he touched your life—to either come forward to the podium, or we can bring the mike to you if you would rather just keep your seat and make some comments. The first slide show you saw was prepared by the family—Mike—and was shown at the memorial service that was held in Minnesota. The second slide show chronicled more of the time while he was a student editor, young professor and later head of the Department of Technical Journalism, later the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The remembrances that people have sent to the School have been captured in a handout that we have on the corner of the table. We consider it a draft, because we keep getting more remembrances. After another week, we will put together a final version and make it available to you. Tom Emmerson has also collected a special recipe—Jim’s soup recipe—I had no idea that Jim was a cook until I read this, but now I have learned. The recipe for his famous soup is also available over on the table.

I was asked emcee this event. At this time, I would like to invite any of you from the Schwartz extended family, or from the journalism extended family, or from the Ames or Iowa family to come forward or to indicate to me that you would like to say something and we will bring the mike around to you.

Mike Schwartz
Jim’s son

I am Mike Schwartz, Jim’s son, and very proud of that fact. On behalf of the family, I want to thank everyone who came today, and thank all of you who have contributed written comments, and all who have contributed to make this event possible today.
All of you either knew personally or at least by reputation, at a bare minimum, my Dad. We all know that he was one of a kind. He was an actual renaissance man. Some people like to pretend they are, some like to think they are. He really didn’t think that way about himself, but he actually was a renaissance man. And of course, as a son, I knew him on all those occasions and in all those ways in which you didn’t know him. I knew him on the many photography trips that we took out to take pictures of sunsets, the actual sunsets you saw earlier in the slide show. Or pictures of the lake or fishing trips with Jeff, an avid fisherman. He has been fishing with him hundreds of times. Hunting, just walks in nature was something he was fascinated with. And after he retired from the journalism department here, he became an avid environmentalist. I would invite some of you or all of you to take a look at some of the things that are on the table back there. I brought a number of awards that Jim got that probably no one outside of the family was aware of.

After he left his journalism job and started living in northern Minnesota, he became extremely active first in the lake association, which my wife actually worked with him on, and drafted the corporate form which became the model for lake associations all over Minnesota. He then worked with virtually every agency, from the Minnesota pollution control agency to the Department of Natural Resources and so forth, around the state, to help preserve the water quality and the environment of northern Minnesota. He was extremely active. His last actual published thing outside of his tribute for his brother Bob, who died two weeks before he did, and his tribute will be published in a lake association newsletter, but before that, the last thing he published was a full page story in the Star-Tribune of Minneapolis describing lake quality associations, steps, preservation efforts, and how you can organize lake associations to achieve those kinds of goals. I think it’s the only single full page article that I’ve seen in the Star Tribune in 20 years. That was Jim’s published contribution. Take a look at these awards. They kind of vary from the trivial such as a master secchis reader designed to measure how far down you can see, and that is actually the measure, the official measure for water clarity in Minnesota in all the lakes. Jim did this and kept records of every one of these readings for something like 26 years, along with water temperature, water level, ice-out date – the man was an incredible list keeper as it turns out.

Those are some of the stories about my Dad. After Iowa State, and I will finish with this because it is very important for me and for him, that as a skeptic about theological matters, and as a solid journalist who wanted to know the facts, who, what, when, where and why, he became a very powerful believer. Some of you wouldn’t know that who didn’t knew him later. But his passing was actually a beautiful thing. Those of us who were there – the entire family – those of us who were there 24 hours before, saw something that we’ll never forget, and also something that will never stop inspiring us. It was God in action. He knew that. He was ready to join his brother, and he was ready to go. It was his time. He led a complete and full life and left a wonderful message to his family. We all met afterwards and opened this envelope. Jim was a planner to the end. We opened this message to his family, and there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. It was a complete and wonderful life. Those were his words.

Thank you all for coming.

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I have particularly fond memories of Jim Schwartz. Perhaps it’s because he hired me some 37 years ago. He took a chance on this guy from Tacoma, Washington, to teach alongside the legendary Jack Shelley, whom Jim had also hired ten years earlier to build ISU’s broadcast journalism program. I had already been offered a job on the faculty of South Dakota State’s fine journalism department. But I had heard wonderful things about Iowa State, and so I had to check it out. I couldn’t have had a warmer welcome.

Who could resist coming to a school that had on its faculty so many former University of Wisconsin grads -- they were called the Wisconsin mafia, and I would become one of them. And who could resist a school that had a distant cousin of Walt Disney on the staff – as well as Jack Shelley and Jim Schwartz. To be honest, the big attraction for me was ISU’s formidable broadcast operations. Think of it – the university owned an enormously popular public radio station. And a commercial television station that hired ISU students as reporters, producers and photographers.

As a faculty member, I would be right in the middle of it all. In fact, I later became producer of the morning news shows at WOI – staffed by my students. At ISU I could be a college teacher and still be directly involved in daily journalism.

My first meeting with Jim in June or July of 1975 cinched the deal for me. Here was the chair of the journalism department – the one-time news director of WOI-TV – describing opportunities at ISU in that deep, resonant, basso voice. As he described the TIAA-CREF benefits for which I would be eligible, it sounded like he was Moses reciting the Ten Commandments. Jim made everything sound important.

Once I settled in as the newest member of the ISU Journalism faculty, it would have been easy for Jim to forget I was here. After all, he had two dozen other teachers to worry about – as well as the usual challenges of running a growing academic program. But in fact he never forgot about me. In the days before email, it wasn’t all that easy to drop a note to someone. But at least once or twice a week, I’d find a note from Jim in my mailbox, calling my attention to this article or that opportunity. He made a point of helping me grow and develop as a faculty member. I learned later that he extended that same personal attention to everybody on the faculty. He knew what we were doing, and encouraged us all to do more.

We had a truly collegial faculty under Jim’s leadership. We often crowded into his house on Grand Avenue, gathered around the piano, and sang songs as Toni banged away at the keys.

At that time, we were a part of the College of Agriculture, so our deans were not liberal arts types, but rather, agrarians, tenders of the soil. We were the odd man out in the Ag College, but Jim managed to keep us in good standing with our bucolic brethren – even when the Daily did a critical story about some farm related issue, or a journalism faculty member – probably Bill
Kunerth – publicly chastised the college administration for not demonstrating full faith and allegiance to the First Amendment.

Jim was always able to patch things over, and we continued on our merry way, teaching old-fashioned journalism to increasing numbers of journalism and advertising aspirants. As you have (or will) hear, Jim kept our journalism program connected with the professional journalists in Iowa and the Midwest. He encouraged me to get involved in professional associations – such as the Society of Professional Journalists, the Northwest Broadcast News Association, the Iowa Broadcast News Association, and the Iowa Freedom of Information Council. He found money to pay my way to board meetings and conventions. And he himself served as an officer in these and other professional journalism organizations.

Jim retired just four years after I joined the faculty, but his influence continued for 35 more years, until his passing this summer. He had a significant and lasting impact on my life. I am thankful that I knew him and that I was one of his crew.

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**Eldean (Dean) Borg  
’59 Graduate**

I’m Eldean Borg, and I will take you back a few more years than Tom did. But before I do that, I’d just like to say that one of my more lasting memories of Jim and Toni was right in this general area, because during a particularly sorrowful and stressful time in my life in the early 1970s, I encountered Jim and Toni outside of C.Y. Stephens Auditorium after a musical performance. They stopped and took time to talk with me, and I can’t tell you how important that was to me at that time in my life, to be remembered, and to have the compassion and friendship that was shown by persons that I admired so much.

My time in the Department of Technical Journalism—we had majors in science journalism, agricultural journalism, and home economics journalism—was during the years 1955 through 1959. So for more than 50 years elapsed since those undergraduate days, recalling specific anecdotes is a little bit difficult right now. So I don’t have exact details but I do have some indelible memories and I’d like to take just a moment or two to share them with you. My days in the Department of Technical Journalism were the days when K.R. Marvin was head of the department. Journalism faculty—I saw some photos up here just a few moments ago—and it boggles my mind as to what you have here now in the department in numbers of faculty, because it was relatively few at that time compared to the other majors on campus. In addition to Jim Schwartz, there were Bill Kunerth, Bill Ames, and Harry Heath. And Harry Heath, because of his experience with NBC News, was my adviser because of my interests in broadcast journalism. And Tom (Beell), you were speaking here of what you saw as the opportunities here at Iowa State because of the affiliation with WOI television and all the opportunities there. I believe that when I was here, there were three of us who had an interest in broadcast journalism. And so the department has greatly enlarged, but the quality was there. I didn’t even know until I was here
this afternoon and saw some of the things that Jim had done in broadcast news about his news broadcasting at WOI—I wasn’t even aware of that, because we were just aligned in a different way there.

But each of the people that I have just enumerated were outstanding teachers and above all mentors, each with special talents and engaging personalities that shaped students and broadened our horizons, and really gave us enthusiasm—something to work toward. Jim Schwartz, chief among them. If I could find descriptive words about my impressions of Jim Schwartz, it would be calm and thoughtful. I don’t know if I am correct or not, and in fact I asked Tom if my recollection was correct that Jim smoked a pipe. I don’t know. But my image of Jim was just that thoughtful man, rarely, as I remember, in a tie, but always in a turtleneck, usually, and I saw pictures that confirmed that, but I have that image of Jim dressed like that – calm, cool, collected, with a pipe in hand. I don’t know whether that is just image, but highly competent, and thoughtful in responses, collected in most any situation, very eager to share that knowledge and take the time to talk with students. In fact, although he wasn’t my adviser, Jim was a person with whom I could discuss issues affecting my student life and career. We were, and I hope you still are, a very closely knit department of faculty and students.

Those were the days, and I’ll just recall for you to recognize some of these names, and you’ll know the quality of the professional educational experience that we received. Ray and Roy Reiman, Keith Ballantine, Bonnie Rollins, Joanie Will, Bob Bartley, Tom Emmerson, Edi Lilly, and I can go on naming, but I hope I have struck some chords with you to let you know of the student colleagues that I was privileged to have along with the faculty people I have mentioned.

Jim taught me journalism law and he made those cases come alive and made them relevant, and Jim also taught me news photography, and I was really happy to see many of these pictures a minute ago with Jim with either a camera at his side or hanging around his neck, because that’s how I remember him. Our equipment at that time, though, and I did see a photo of him holding a Speed Graphic camera with sheet film loaded into 4 x 8 cartridges that locked into the rear of the camera, and at that time, we didn’t get to use it, but Jim was telling us about a new camera that was just coming into use that was called the Rolleiflex, or Rollei, for short. As an instructor of introductory photography, Jim must have seen the same photos of this campus again and again. Year after year, students like me brought in views of the various statues in front of the library and the Memorial Union. Where we really saw Jim, though, in the work environment, was in the photo lab. It was in the building called Ag Annex, just a short distance from the Journalism building on the ag side of campus directly across the street from Curtiss Hall. And it was in the photo lab there that Jim was, as I would say, especially trusting. Or maybe it was just a different era. Darkroom space was limited, with an enlarger and a sink, and trays of developer stop bath and fix for the 8 x 10 photo paper we were using. It was a tight fit for two students to be in one of the darkrooms, and there were maybe two or three that we could use. But that’s the way it had to be—you couldn’t be in there by yourself because there wasn’t enough time to get a dozen students developing and processing photos and printing them for Jim’s inspection and critique without being two in a room. Well, co-ed Betsy Hoffman and I were assigned a darkroom together. Now think about it. Was Jim wise in putting a co-ed and a young man together in a lab and shutting the door, knowing that door was not going to be opened by anyone else because of
the danger of then letting light in that would expose some very expensive paper? Well, that's the Jim Schwartz that I recall—always professional and expecting the best from everyone.

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**Bob Kern**  
Former Faculty Colleague and Director of Extension Communication

I have a short remembrance. And if you’ll permit me the word “bi-modal,” because I knew Jim in that bi-modal sense. I met him five years before you did, Dean. I was a grad student in 1950. Jim was teaching but none of the courses I took. So it was some years later, when I was working with the some graduate students in the department, having come from the University of Wisconsin with a new doctorate. Carl Hamilton did not want to mess with graduate students, and no one else in the department was on the Graduate Faculty, so I looked after them for a couple of years, and then retreated back to my place in Morrill Hall across the campus. Jim was good enough over the years to let extension list me as a member of the faculty in Journalism and Mass Communication, and was kind enough to even let them promote me to the rank of professor, which I’m sure would be difficult to accomplish today, but which I appreciated anyway. Jim was one of I think five members of the faculty in 1950. The one you left out, Dean, was Rod Fox, the stalwart of the department who was probably here before Jim [Rod came in 1936] and maybe even Ken Marvin. But anyway, that’s the academic part.

The other of my bi-modal acquaintance was the lakeside. In 1966, my family and I began going to a lake in Minnesota up near Bimidji and Walker. Later, I discovered that as a loon flies, it was about 3 miles from Ten Mile Lake—20 to 25 miles on the ground. I did the first newsletters for the lake association for our lake in the 70s or early 80s. That gave the Ten Mile Lake people the idea to send me the newsletter from Ten Mile. And in issue after issue, Jim continued his tremendous ability as a teacher, nearly always teaching on environmental matters and lake quality. So he did not quit influencing my thinking until a couple of years ago when finally, and I’m sure regrettably for him and his readers, he gave up writing columns for the newsletter. So it was for me a prized association. I still admire the depth of voice and wonder why he did not become a radio performer himself. He could have risen to the top there as he certainly did as both an academic teacher, leader, and a leader in environmental affairs in north central Minnesota. We’ll miss him. We used to see him every summer, often with Toni, either at the library or at the Red Owl grocery store in Walker, Minnesota. So it is for us, bon voyage, and we are happy to have had the opportunity to attend this memorial service. Thank you.

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**Barbara Mack**  
Professor, Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication, and former student

I’m Barbara Mack and I teach at the Greenlee School. It was not my privilege to have Jim as an instructor. He was already the department head when I showed up in the fall of 1972 as a wet-behind-the-ears kid. But I had been working at the Register since 1969, and I remember I had an
occasional short little piece when they were really short-staffed. They let me write something. When I showed up at Jim’s office, he said, “Are you Barbara Mack?” And I said, “Yes, sir.” I almost said “Yes, God.” He said, “We have high expectations of you,” in that wonderful rolling voice he continued, “We have seen your name. We’re glad you’re here.” And I thought, “I never, ever, ever want to let you down, ever.”

And after all these years, it’s probably about time I told Toni the truth about something. I really had a “head over heels, just knock your socks off, puppy-moon-eyed” crush on your husband. All he had to do was say, “Hello, Barbara,” and I thought, “I’m having the best day.” And when he came out and read something that had been in the paper, and said, “You did a good job,” in that rolling voice that sounded like Moses, or Moses’ boss, everything was perfect. One day, I happened to be in the Main Office when Toni came in. Until I actually met her, I thought that Jackie Kennedy and Audrey Hepburn were my fashion icons. And then I met Toni, and thought she’s not only brilliant and beautiful and talented, she’s perfect. I’m sure they weren’t; there must have been a chink in the armor somewhere, but certainly never saw it. Heck, they even owned a BMW before it was fashionable. It was a white BMW, and I remember thinking, “how elegant, how European. Wow, I want to be like them.” And for all the years after, I would keep in contact with you all, touch base, and send Christmas cards and just think, “With the two of them, I have met two people who have inspired my life. I think I have been inspired as a person, as a journalist, and I hope that I can always continue to emulate both of them as two of the best people who have graced my life. Thank you.

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Herb Strentz
Former Dean, Drake University Journalism School

I’m Herb Strentz, and I am the former dean of the Journalism School at Drake University. Most of my contacts with Jim were in that regard. I had a deep love and respect for Toni, but never a crush. I had too much respect for Jim! A few thoughts on Jim. One is kind of political, and controversial is some respects, but I think of Jim as a public employee, and I think of all the many wonderful public servants we have in the state of Iowa, and every time I see somebody celebrate a cutback in government or a reduction in government support, I fear we’ve lost another Jim Schwartz, because he was, as all public employees of state universities are, public employees and public servants. He was also a servant of faculty, a servant of students, a servant of fellow administrators. I first met Jim when I was chair at the University of North Dakota before coming to Drake in 1975. At that time, Jim was a leader in national journalism education, and at that time, the Big Eight just had great administrators—Neal Copple at Nebraska, Ed Bassett at Kansas and Jim Schwartz at Iowa State. If you notice that I didn’t mention Missouri, it’s because we never did. It was just a point of pride with us, and we had programs just as good at the undergraduate level.

My recollection of Jim includes this brief story. When I came to Drake in 1975, journalism education in Iowa was kind of unsettled. You had rock solid Iowa State. You had Iowa again in turmoil, and Ken Starck trying to resurrect a program and get a faculty to work together, which Ken did periodically and successfully a couple times. But at that time Iowa State was really
positioned to dominate journalism. After all, a new dean at Drake, Iowa in turmoil. Jim’s response to that was to develop a program involving all three schools. There was a program called the Mauck Stouffer Program where young journalists in the Iowa newspaper and press association, and Jim could have run that program all by himself. Instead, he invited Ken at Iowa and me at Drake to come aboard, and we had a wonderful joint program. And under Jim, the three journalism programs worked together magnificently in probably the best way they ever did. And so that’s a good part of my memory of Jim. A public servant. Not putting himself first. Unlike Barbara, I don’t have any fond memories of Jim saying “good job.” I remember several of us administrators were involved in a conversation, and someone said, “Why do some people think Herb Strentz is a son-of-a-bitch?” Jim laughed and said, “Because he is.” I remember that endearing quality that reflected both the best nature of Iowa State and the best nature of Iowa.

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Bill Monroe  
Former head, Iowa Press Association, former student, and Schwartz Award recipient

Hi, I’m Bill Monroe, and for 10 years after I graduated from Iowa State I worked for Iowa daily newspapers, and for 29 years after that I was head of the Iowa Newspaper Association, so I was here in the years 1965 to 1969. When I look back, if I could pick any four years when I would want to be in a journalism school, it would be in those four years. You have to think of it – those were the best of times and the worst of times – there was the Vietnam War going on, there were protesters, we had a bearded pot-smoking student body president named Don Smith, who rode a motorcycle for crying out loud and slept with a girl named Mary Lou Lifka. It was unprecedented times, and we all had long hair, we all thought we knew everything, and we all thought the older generation didn’t.

One of my two memories of Jim Schwartz took place during my undergraduate years. As you know, Iowa State is one of the few journalism schools that requires 400 hours of work in the real world before you can graduate. I don’t know if that was started under Jim’s era or not, but it was certainly the case when I was a student. I lived in Vinton, Iowa, and there was a small daily newspaper there, and so I thought “I’ll get my internship there.” I had two courses in journalism before I went there. One was on ethics and one was on history. I hadn’t had a writing course yet. All my courses had been in broadcast, because I had a double major. Well, as luck would have it, that summer was quite tumultuous at the Vinton Cedar Valley Daily Times. And due to a combination of things which included a small staff to begin with, the editor suffering a heart attack and being gone for six weeks, the publisher being gone for a three week vacation, I ended up being the editor of that paper for four weeks—having never written a headline, never laid out a story, never used the wire service, and it’s one of those things where you learn by doing. And the staff helped me and we got through it. I felt very proud that we survived. So I came back that fall quarter, and I was taking a photo class with Jim, and we were in the photo lab doing the pan developing, he was wandering around talking to students and critiquing their work, and I just couldn’t wait to tell him this—I didn’t know how I was going to say it, but I wanted to tell him how much I had learned there in comparison to my days at Iowa State. So he came up and said, in that voice, “Bill, how did you enjoy your internship in Vinton?” I said, “Jim, I learned more in three months in Vinton Cedar Valley Times than I am going to learn in four years here at Iowa State.” He didn’t skip a beat. He said, “Bill, why do you think we require it?”
Now fast forward 40 years and I’m now on the journalism advisory council, and when we look at the strengths and weaknesses of this department, that’s one of the major strengths. And when you hear employers, as I did for 29 years, who are hiring people out of journalism schools and they can pick from any school they want, and the reason most of them choose graduates from Iowa State is that they hit the ground running. That was the credo and the culture back then.

The other memory, briefly, that I remember, when you are in a job long enough you get a lot of plaques to put on your wall, and I have my share. But the one I treasure the most was the one that I received from Jim Schwartz in the parking lot of the Greenlee Building when I received the Schwartz Award. And I cherish it. It is above my desk today. I am retired. I see it every day. And I will never forget him, and I will never forget the school, and the good news, Dean, is that the atmosphere that he started, the culture, is still alive and thriving, and it’s fabulous. Thanks.

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Chuck Knapp
Friend of son Mike, and former student

I’m Chuck Knapp, ISU journalism class of ’68, University of Wisconsin class of 1972. I’m glad to have this opportunity to bring to you perhaps a little different perspective. I knew Jim as a mentor and a friend from about the time I was 14 years old. Jim and Toni gave me one of the most important things in my life, and that is my lifelong friendship with Mike – friends now for 45 years and that relationship, a friend of a lifetime. The context in which I knew Jim best was a sort of a “happy days” period of growing up in Ames before the Vietnam War. And as it happens, both of our families had cabins on Ten Mile Lake, and spent the summers up there. My first recollection of Jim, actually, was during 9th grade at Central Junior High School. Mike and our great friend Craig Mack, who now lives in Dallas, and I were having an evening of watching TV in the Schwartz’ study or family room. Not at the house on Grand. I even go back before that to the house on Harding. Ostensibly we were supposed to be watching TV. Actually, what was going on was Johnny Mathis was on the phonograph, and the lights were down. And Jim would, every 10 minutes or so, make a foray into the room to check to see if we had enough popcorn—actually checking to see that no illicit activities were occurring in the room with our girlfriends at the time—none of whom we actually wound up marrying—so don’t worry about that. But it was the first time that I can recall—and I think this is consistent with what a lot of you have said—about getting from Jim what those around the Journalism department have referred to as getting “the look.” The “look” is a kind of wry smile and arched eyebrow. I guess he was kind of looking through his bifocals at you. And you just knew, when you got that look, whether you were a faculty member in journalism or a ninth grader, you were going to behave.

Jim was in many ways a professional mentor in my life as I look back on it, a young person growing up in a college town with a lot of professors around that you could look to for guidance and leadership. Jim really turned out to be that model, and there were a number of things that kind of struck home as I look back on that period. Integrity—always doing things right or you get “the look.” Mike and I did a lot of things wrong, and we got “the look” because we weren’t doing things right. Jim was a serious person about serious issues. I think this kind of flips over to a later period when Jim was so involved with environmental affairs in Minnesota. I can
remember times over at the Grand Avenue house. There were a lot of places you could go as a high school student where you wouldn’t hear about serious issues. You wouldn’t have discussions about civic issues, national issues, or what was going on in politics, government or world affairs. But with Jim around, we always did. We had those discussions, and he treated us as adults and led us through that. It was a great learning experience, and Jim was a person as again was reflected in a number of your comments from faculty that he was a person of serious issues.

He was always the adult in the room, and I mean that in the best sense. I don’t mean that he was stuffy. Jim could have a great time and was a great storyteller, and loved to laugh. But you always had a sense – I guess you picked this up at some point—that this was a person who was the adult, the mature person, you saw that facet of him from time to time. You get after each other, but at the end of the day it was Jim that brought you back to core values.

Expect the best. In everything you did, or you would get “the look.” Whether you are playing basketball for Ames High School or writing or doing your work as a high school or college student, Jim always expected you to do your best.

This indeed was a life well-lived, in almost every way. When Jim died in July, Mike was going through his things, and he sent me two things that I was stunned and deeply flattered that were in Jim’s things. One was an essay that I had written as a high school junior in an advanced literature class at Ames High School. The other was a poem that I had written as a senior. I hadn’t seen them in years. I will always love and cherish the fact that somehow that ended up in the things that he thought were worth keeping. This was my friend and my mentor Jim Schwartz, and I know, like all of you, that I will miss him.

Wayne Davis
Former newspaper publisher, journalism instructor, ISU Center director of public relations and Schwartz Award recipient.

My remarks are going to be very brief, but it’s an anecdote that I wanted to share. Many years ago, and a lot more years than I like to remember, Jim Schwartz and I were both connected with Iowa Newspapers in various capacities. But during those years, our paths never crossed. So it was not until I left the Seymour Herald and moved to Ames in 1977 that I first got to meet Jim. I had taken a job at the Iowa State Center as director of public relations, and, needing to learn a lot more about what I was supposed to do, I enrolled in the graduate program at Iowa State. It was during the period just before Jim stepped down as chair. I did finally get a chance to get a glimpse—a chance to put a face on the legend that I had heard about. And after I retired from the Center and got my Master’s degree, Tom Emmerson asked me to fill in as a part-time instructor. Later, I performed other duties for the department under two subsequent chairs. And at one time, I even served on the committee to nominate candidates for the Schwartz Award. And Jack Shelley was the one I remember. But as a temp, I never got a chance to vote on any of them. I surely never expected to receive the Schwartz Award, so I consider it a great privilege to have accepted the award in 2005 from Jim’s own hands, and was one of the last to do so. It was a great memory.
Abby Ostrem  
Jim Schwartz’ office secretary

I waited until last, because I knew that I had things to tell you that no one else would say. I was hired by Carl Hamilton to work in the Reading Room during the school year, and have my summers off. Well, at that time, Carl decided that he was going to move up to higher levels at the university, so Jim was appointed head of the department. I’d had a little problem in the department with a certain person, and I told Jim, “I don’t have to put up with this.” Do you remember that, Toni? Anyway, we were up in Minnesota fishing that summer, and Jim says “Come on over to Ten Mile Lake. I want to talk with you.” So we went over, and Jim said “I want you to come to work for me.” I said, “Well, I’ll think about it.” Came fall, and yes, indeed, I did come to work for him, and I’ve been ever so grateful ever since. He was wonderful to work for. We were both starting a new job. He was starting as head of the department, and I had been working in the Reading Room, so being the office person was new to me too. But we got along well. We helped each other, I think. Anyway, this went on, and there was a serious moment in my life, when I was really down, and faculty members know who that is. This faculty has been a family to me ever since, and I’m so grateful to you all for the attention and the compassion you showed me at a very difficult time in my life.

Now, Jim, he was so easy to work for that it was a pleasure. I grew up in a newspaper family. My father was a newspaper editor in a small town, and my brother after that. And so it was kind of in my blood. I thought “This is a great fit for me.” So I did start to work for him, and things went along really well. I think it was 10 years that I worked for him before he retired. I was there 26 years and never regretted a moment of it. It was a great fit for me and I enjoyed it. But the one thing nobody mentioned was, it was so fun for me to look out the window and see Jim arriving in his little – what is it?—a little moped. Every morning, every noon, and every evening, he wasn’t too proud to ride his moped to work. I’m sorry that there were so many that were in the department when I was working that are missing now, and I miss those people too. But it’s been a pleasure to come here and meet the rest of you, and other people besides, and the Schwartzes, and Toni. How many times did we dance and sing to her music? We had some really good times.

Garrett O’Keefe  
Former graduate student

I was a graduate student from 1965 to 1967 on this campus. It was a delightful time. I had a job as a research assistant in the program. I was working on a couple of projects, basically trying to help as much as I could, and learning about scholarship and research in journalism, about which, when I arrived, I had no clue, and was kind of suspicious of, actually. The thing I remember most about Jim in that respect, which I don’t think has been brought up too much either, was while I got a pretty good basic education here and previously, I really recall Jim’s solid dedication to scholarship and research. Jim was on my graduate thesis committee. He really tried to push and emphasize the importance of it, even though at that time and in those years most of the emphasis was really on the professional and occupational part of the job. I still remember some key things he said, and I’ll just mention one. It was on this order: “You know that doing research is really exciting, and it’s really important, as long as you’re doing research on something that somebody
else is eventually able to use.” That’s something that many of us academics can still think about. I’ve been doing that kind of research, or trying to, for too many years now, but I still recall that message I got from Jim. He was always respectful, always on call, always willing to chat.

One other thing I recall I will mention briefly, even though I think it was vitally important. We were still a small department in those years. As one of two or three of the departmental research assistants, we were invited to the faculty meetings also. I’m not sure if it was as much invited or coerced, but we usually showed up. I was completely clueless about the way faculty operated and the organizational functions of a faculty and university, but I could not help but be struck by the way Jim conducted those meetings. He was completely respectful to all points of view, even though quite often making it clear that he had a point of view of his own, and it was up to somebody else to give him a darn good reason why that view should be changed. But he was always carefully listening and exploring and explaining issues. Over the past subsequent years, I have served as a department chair in two or three other academic departments. I’ve always made an effort, not near as successfully as Jim, but to carry that kind of demeanor into meetings, and try to show the same kind of respect. That carried over extremely well. As we’ve moved over the past 40 to 50 years into more and more complex types of administrative roles, rules and regulations, and faculty governance, and so on, that’s probably become more and more difficult. But it sure is good to keep in mind that that kind of approach in at least some cases is possible. If you’ve got somebody who is really good at doing it—and that was certainly Jim. Thanks a lot Jim.

Jeanne Schwartz  
Wife of Jeff Schwartz and former student

I was a journalism student, and graduated in the class of 1979. My best year was my junior year, 1978, when Jim decided to let his son Jeff, although he was a history major, go on the annual trip to Europe with the journalism school, which is where I met him. We were married a year later. I get accused a lot of marrying Jeff because Jim was the head of the journalism school, and I insisted that this was not the case. It wasn’t, but I just want to say that I am eternally grateful for Jim introducing me to Jeff. Jim has been a wonderful father-in-law and a super grandfather to my son and my two daughters. He has had an extremely lasting impact. Stephanie, my youngest daughter, is also an Iowa State graduate, and we came up here for Parent’s Weekend when she was in school and had the occasion to attend a few Schwartz Award ceremonies during that time. We were here the year that Pat Dean received the award. Jim didn’t present the award that year, but he was there. And it was in the car on the way home that I just was intrigued – just listening to her speak about the impact that he had on her life, and the way that she chose to pursue her professional career—it just mystified me. How can somebody who appears so ordinary be so extraordinary? He rode his moped to work. And he and Toni had everyone over to their house and served spaghetti and sang songs. And he was serious. He did have that arched eyebrow and that sort of sardonic smile, and he did have very high expectations of everyone. So what was it? What was that spark in him that causes him to have such an extraordinary impact this many years later? People are still talking about him. So I decided to explore that on my own, and had as my ambition that I would write his story, which I have not done. But over the course of a year, I
interviewed him once a week, and talked with many of the people in this room and many others who aren’t here to try to get at the answer to that. I think that everyone here today has summed it up. He was an extraordinarily supportive individual with high expectations who was going to be for you no matter what you did. I appreciate that about him so much, and I know all of you do too. I just want to thank you for coming today.

Eric Abbott
Professor, Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication and former student

As emcee, I guess I get the opportunity for a few closing comments. I first met Jim and Toni Schwartz and the family about 48 years ago when I was asked to babysit for Mike and Jeff one evening when I was visiting Ames. That was before I became an undergrad science journalism major at ISU, and later a professor.

Jim Schwartz was a giant in journalism education both at Iowa State and nationally. He joined the department as an assistant professor earning $3,000 per year in 1945, doing both teaching and professional newscasting at WOI-Radio and WOI-Television. In his file over at Special Collections one can find his notes from some of the many classes he taught. Radio news, TV news, editorial management, advertising sales, and photography. He developed the introductory journalism course we now know as 101. Later, he launched a course for non-majors known as 225, and now known as 305. With colleagues in the department, he edited the Publicity Process book, which not only provided instruction for students, but also a secure funding base for the Journalism Reading Room for many years. His teaching of law was singled out by a number of those remembering him and the famous Scoop Cheltenham, a journalist who was always running afoul of the law and needed help from students. It is amazing to me that 50 years later, students can still vividly recall not only Scoop, but some of the creative cases Jim developed to educate journalists about libel and the First Amendment.

Alan Oppedal wrote about remembrances of Jim as a photo instructor. Said Alan:
“My first exposure to Jim Schwartz came in his photography class. He gave us a very demanding list of assignments, and informed us before the class started that anyone who turned in a picture of the swans on Lake LaVerne would get an “F” not just for the assignment, but for the entire course….I knew absolutely nothing about photography, but I was soon lugging a Speed Graphic around campus trying to find photo material that would be suitable. One of Prof. Schwartz’ most memorable comments after I turned in an assignment was, “What’s your plan, Oppedal? Do you point that camera and put your faith in God?”

Jim was department head for 13 years, from 1965 through 1977. It was a tumultuous time on campus – Vietnam demonstrations, a radical student body president, a new student assertiveness, and unprecedented growth for the department. When I came to the department in 1963 as a freshman student, there were about 140 majors. This number doubled in only a few years, and then doubled again. Along with the avalanche of students came a change in focus. Jim wrote in an annual newsletter message that while agricultural journalism and home economics journalism continued to be important, many new students were more interested in the sciences, and especially the social sciences. Jim was a strong proponent of specialized journalism – he promoted Engineering Journalism. But he also recognized an engine of growth for the
department that soon resulted in most students being in the social sciences. One of Jim’s points of pride was that he was in charge during a transitional period when Iowa’s newspaper editors and reporters became armed with college degrees and training. When he entered academia, a journalist with a college degree was a rarity. When he left, more than 60% of journalists at Iowa’s daily newspapers had college degrees – many of them from Iowa State.

Jim also was chair of the ISU Press Board during his time as department head. That was a big additional duty. Jim’s brother Bob Schwartz joined the press as manager to replace the retiring legendary Bill Holmes in 1962. Together, Bob and Jim helped the Press move from letterpress printing to offset printing, outsourced the Iowa State Daily’s printing, and later made the decision to move from hot type to cold type. More important, Jim steered the Press financially so that it could continue to support the student publications as well as the journalism program. Although the relationship between the Press and Journalism had been started much earlier when the first building was built in 1940, Jim oversaw a major addition in 1965 to the Press Building (now Hamilton Hall), and more important, the move of the Press’s book warehouse and later the Press itself from the Press Building to a new building south of campus. That left the entire building for the growing Journalism program. Without that partnership, I’m not sure the university would have been able to accommodate the tremendous growth that was occurring in the program.

Jim’s leadership style was what I would call “the benevolent dictator.” Yet he was so good at anticipating problems and dealing with people that it seldom seemed like a dictatorship. Jim was without question one of the best bosses I ever worked for. Journalism professors, students, and university administrators are not the easiest people to deal with. Yet somehow he herded the flock, and it even seemed like one big happy family at the time. Longtime journalism professor Bill Kunerth summed it up this way: “Jim’s low key leadership style was effective because of the respect those of us who worked for Jim had for him. You just wanted to do well for Jim.”

When I was editor of the Daily, it was printed in the building on an old duplex press at the east end of the basement. Students usually got the job of running the press, which for a 12 or 16-page paper took most of the night. One night, a couple student pressmen got the bright idea of changing the headlines on page 1 to insult the university president and about everybody else. Of course, it was supposed to be just a joke for friends. They ran off about 100 copies. Before dawn, Jim and Bob Schwartz were busy rounding up every one of those 100 copies. It was certainly enough to give a boss gray hair.

Then there were the students who started including 7-deadly-sin words in their journalistic stories. Administrators and probably some alums demanded that Jim take action. Jim’s response, reprinted in the 1970 Department Newsletter, made four important points about journalism at Iowa State – all of which are worth mention:

1. There is no prior censorship of student publications;
2. Editors are free to make editorial decisions and, at the same time, are accountable for those decisions to publications boards;
3. Four-letter words have not been used indiscriminately, but only in situations where such language was critical to the context of the material; and
Seldom have the student publications been of such consistently high quality and seldom have they dealt more directly or effectively with issues of importance to the campus community. [Jim added, parenthetically, that the Daily had, in fact, just earned two consecutive All American ratings – 1968-69 and 1969-70.]

A few years later, in 1976, the Daily ran a full frontal photo of a naked male student streaking across central campus. The student at first was flattered, and then threatened to sue. Jim defended the Daily’s right to run such photos.

Probably my most trying time as editor was when radical student Don Smith ran for GSB president. Should the Daily provide equal coverage for this radical candidate? We did, along with coverage of two other candidates. Smith won. Later, I wrote a story in which Smith admitted holding a marijuana party to which Life Magazine was invited. Smith and his friends were not amused by that story. It led to my first threat of physical violence as a reporter. But through it all, Jim backed us.

I returned to Iowa State as a new assistant professor in the fall of 1974 – hired by Jim. It was a challenging beginning. Four courses to be taught that first quarter, and no office. The department was in the process of moving downstairs, and office space was in short supply. Jim soon solved the space problem, and my years under Jim’s supervision were some of the happiest teaching years of my career. In addition, who could forget the Thanksgiving get-togethers at Dick and Jean Disney’s house, with Toni Schwartz playing the piano and all of us singing?

Back in 1967, when my term as Daily editor was over, Jim hand-wrote me a short message. It said: “Job well done.” Jim was not overly free with compliments. When you received one, it really counted. Now I skip ahead to this past summer. After Jim’s brother Bob died earlier in the summer, I wrote Jim a letter, recalling how important his work with Bob and the Press had been in the department’s survival and development. Then I traveled to Uganda. Upon return, I learned of Jim’s death. When I checked my mailbox, I found a letter from Jim written shortly before his death. It commented on Bob’s death and its impact on him, but for a second time in my career, this time referring to my time as a professor, Jim again said “Job well done.”

In closing, I’d like to return the favor. Jim, for your many accomplishments as a teacher, mentor, department head, national journalism educator, and fisherman, “Job well done.”