

Excerpts from chat log from the Billie Jean Wiebe memorial

13:38:41 From Program to Ronald Herms(Direct Message) : Yes the chat is open for everyone

13:38:59 From Ronald Herms to Program(Direct Message) : Awesome, thanks!

13:39:39 From Ronald Herms to Everyone : Friends, the chat is now open for any reflections or comments you might wish to contribute.

13:42:37 From Elizabeth.Lake@fresno.edu to Everyone : Thank you to everyone who has presented today. What a wonderful tribute to a unique woman. Billie Jean was both terrifying to me and inspiring. Every meeting I ever attended with her left me holding my breath...waiting for her to point out something essential that had been left out previously. I was very lucky as a (then) 27 year old woman to have her as a role model. We were all blessed to have Billie Jean at FPU.

13:42:54 From Profesora Pérez to Everyone : I will remember our conversations, her flowers, her cards, her thoughtful emails, all of these indicate a colleague that wanted to be present and close to me. I am a better person and a better faculty enriched by her presence in my life. I celebrate that as it takes a special place in my sweet memories. I celebrate the warm human being without disregarding her scholar work in academia that I had the opportunity to share many times. She will be remembered and missed...

13:44:29 From Linda Hoff to Everyone : As I watch this gathering, I am reminded of the gift of being a part of the FPU community. Billie helped me understand the Anabaptist understanding of the wisdom and power of community. I started my sojourn at FPU around the same time as Billie. We were friends and colleagues for 30 years. Her presentation on the FPU Idea during an HRSS caucus some years ago was priceless. Your stories have enriched my own memories.

13:44:50 From Stan & delores friesen to Everyone : Her influence and impact on Mennonite Writers' Conferences and encouragement of good writing is another legacy.

13:45:08 From Eleanor.Nickel to Everyone : FPU has awesome staff. I love you guys!

13:45:20 From Walter Saul to Everyone : Elizabeth, you speak so well for all of us. I am also indebted to all of you for creating such a beautiful tribute to Billie Jean.

13:45:58 From Wayne Steffen Fresno Pacific University to Everyone : The laugh when I said something that surprised her. The stare that said "Do you really think that? You can do better."

13:46:13 From Todd Vasquez to Everyone : Billie Jean brought a

“careful seriousness” to everything she touched, and she planted that seed in everyone she met.

13:46:17 From Adam T Schrag to Everyone : Here’s a link to the remarks about Billie that I gave at the student memorial event: <https://www.adamschrag.net/billie>

13:46:25 From April Holloway to Everyone : I didn’t know Billie Jean that long, I have only had two interactions with her through an inquire circle and over zoom, BUT she made a big influence in my life. She is so intelligent, the way she spoke was just so proper and in a way it made you nervous to speak after her. When I am speaking to people I am not familiar with, I tend to try to make situations funny and assume because of my age people won’t take me seriously. I can’t remember exactly what I said but it made her laugh and I was so happy someone laughed at me. She then gave me a gesture to keep going, telling me I was onto something. Just in that brief second she gave me confidence, she let me know what I say matters. Though I don’t have as much memories with her, I am grateful God put her in my life even though it was for just two meetings over zoom. I am thankful to have those two meeting.

13:46:31 From laura.roberts@fresno.edu to Everyone : I first came to know Billie Jean when my sister was an undergraduate at Fresno Pacific in the early to mid-80s, working for Richard Wiebe in the bookshop. I got recruited to help on a bookshop inventory day when I was home on break from my freshman year at Cal. I remember distinctly the intensity with which Billie Jean looked at me—looked to see me, and the attention with which she listened as I answered questions about life in Berkeley.

When I candidated for a teaching job here at Fresno Pacific ten years later, standing before a semi-circle of faculty in Sattler 101, Billie was one of three women faculty who had positioned themselves in my direct line of sight. That steady, seeing gaze was present again, as was the attentive listening, communicating support and encouragement. Billie was tremendously kind to me as a new teacher in my first-ever real job. She was a mentor and a friend. I remember long conversations about pedagogy, voice, inclusion and marginalization, and about the challenges of being a young

13:46:43 From Larry Dunn to Everyone : Billie welcomed me as a new member of the faculty, not only – nor most importantly – in the formal way. She invited me into her office as she did with so many. She invited me to come along, for reasons unknown to me, to Friday afternoon pizza and beer with her and her closest’s female colleagues. She invite me, in perhaps in her only unsuccessful effort, over and over again to join her as a member of the COM faculty. And when Billie felt no longer invited herself into the center of FPU – what to

call it ... politics? – she invited me to let her “in” as someone now involved in such things through regular conversations around the lunch table or on either end of meetings, always asking for my perspective and then offering hers in the way that she did, usually surprising me that I hadn’t considered what was most obvious to her and almost always the real crux of the matter. Whether these invitations felt, at times as they did, like some Mennonite form of “policing” FPU Ideas and ideals – a term which Billie

13:46:46 From Larry Dunn to Everyone : might object to – or like a way to participate more deeply into the community that she loved, which they most often were, they will remain at the center of my experience of returning to FPU as her colleague. Thank you, Billie.

13:47:16 From laura.roberts@fresno.edu to Everyone : Part 2!

13:47:17 From Walter Saul to Everyone : My image of Billie Jean will always be reading the Gospel of John in the Lessons and Carols right after the choir sang my arrangement of “When Jesus Left His Father’s Throne.”

13:47:19 From laura.roberts@fresno.edu to Everyone : woman in academia, in my field, and at Fresno Pacific. I also remember long conversations about institutional culture, about how the narrative told of a place shapes the reality of it, about where power was lodged and how it was wielded and what might be done about it.

These were, in fact, always Billie’s questions, the weight of which (truth be told) I sometimes grew weary of. Upon reflection I realize they were another way in which her steady gaze was looking to really see –how things really were and might be, who a person was and could become. That critical, sometimes hopeful, probing reflection was central to who Billie Jean was as a faculty colleague and friend. We feel its lack in her absence.

13:47:27 From Jim Ave to Everyone : One of the things that I am missing because of the pandemic is lunch time discussions with others. For several years I had lunch with Billie and we had many fun and serious discussions about many topics. From the NCAA tournament to FPU policies and procedures. You are missed Billie.

13:48:29 From Darren Duerksen to Everyone : I had Billie as a teacher at Immanuel high school in the 80s. She taught Senior Humanities, and was willing to push boundaries even then. She let me read “Catcher in the Rye,” which was a little edgy for me and our school. She had us orally read out passages of our chosen book and I chose one where Holden Caulfield used some choice swear words, and I said these with particular volume and relish, since it was a school assignment. I was a little nervous about what Billie would say, but her only comment to me on that was that I said the swear words “a little loud.” I think there was a small smirk on her face.

13:49:28 From Jason.Munoz@fresno.edu to Ronald Herms(Direct Message) :
Thank you Ron

13:50:59 From Randy Haggard to Everyone : “May light perpetual shine upon her.”

13:51:08 From Donna.Callahan@fresno.edu to Everyone : Praise God for the gift that Billie Jean was to all of us! Words fail me, but I send my love and prayers to all of you as we all grieve this loss.

13:52:05 From Doreen Ewert to Everyone : It has been an honor to participate in this honoring of Billie, and to see so many good friends from days past.

13:54:32 From Larry Dunn to Everyone : Thank you so much, Doreen!

13:55:59 From Henrietta Siemens to Everyone : Often skeptical of online education, Billie Jean ended up developing one of the most quality and creative online courses in Communication. She approached her online course preparation with her students in mind – she spent an enormous amount of time planning and creating a learner-centered virtual learning space for her students - a course in which students will continue to learn. It was a pleasure and privilege to accompany Billie Jean on this journey.

13:56:39 From Walter Saul to Everyone : Thank you, Henrietta, for this precious memory

13:57:27 From Quentin P Kinnison, PhD to Everyone : Thank you to all who shared. And thanks to all who prepared this time to remember our friend and colleague.

13:57:30 From Shawn.Wirts@fresno.edu to Everyone : Thank you to everyone who shared.

13:57:31 From Gail Newel to Everyone : Thank you all for this taste of “the Billie Jean experience”. God bless us all during these difficult times!

13:57:32 From Joy Rubio to Everyone : This was such a special time. Thank you for allowing us to share and remember Billie.

13:57:43 From Walter Saul to Everyone : Thank you, Ron, for leading so capably in this remembrance. This has been a healing time.

13:58:05 From Becky Bradley to Ronald Herms(Direct Message) : Thanks Ron! Really appreciated this time and appreciated all that went into making this so special.

13:58:44 From Fran.Friesen to Everyone : We love you and grieve with you, Richard.

14:00:25 From Jeff Bryant to Everyone : Tim Neufeld, thanks for the beautiful music & photography

14:00:44 From peggi.kriegbaum to Everyone : It made me smile when someone shared a recent conversation with Billie when she stated that she hated Zoom; what an irony...I think she would enjoy...that one of her memorial services would be held via Zoom. Thank you all for sharing

wonderful pieces of this remarkable woman, friend, and colleague.

14:00:58 From Darren Duerksen to Everyone : Thank you everyone for such a special and fitting remembrance for Billie.

14:02:06 From Doug Caskey to Everyone : I heard about Billie before I ever met her. She and I started as full-time faculty at FPU in the (then) English, Communication & Drama Dept with Wilfred Martens, Luetta Reimer and with Dalton who was then UG Dean. I clearly heard the excitement in their voices that Billie Jean was making the big move from Immanuel to FPU. I was coming from the Midwest with my freshly-minted PhD in Theater and there was a sense of joy and anticipation that these two “youngsters” were providing some renewed energy for an already strong dept wanting to do more in comm, literature, theater and performance. I am one who had the privilege to occupy the office across the hall. We started at the same time, but Billie was much more mentor to me than I was to her. We possess vastly different personalities but somehow found a beautiful complementary relationship as colleagues. I returned to my alma mater Goshen C in '97, but we continued many conversations and encouragements in the years since. I miss her voice in word and deed.