

In Memoriam: Max R. Martin

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When I was asked to write about my dear friend Max Martin, I was honored to be able to remember him in this way. I am however overwhelmed as I stare at the blinking cursor and try to figure out what to say. I've known Max for years. It seems like this task would be easy, but the idea of a memoriam for Max is surreal. All of us who knew him are in shock over his untimely passing. Also, it's hard to know what to say about someone like Max. How do I sum up such a special life in just a few words? No doubt, an impossible task; still, I will try. Max passed away on August 18, 2000 at age 52 – eight days after suffering a massive heart attack at home. Prior to his death, Max used his amazing computer and statistical skills as the senior evaluator in the Research and Evaluation Systems Technology Department for one of the poorest school districts in Texas. Ironically, Max began his career as a chemical engineer. He could have done anything he wanted to do, been anything he wanted to be, but after a stint as a math teacher at a Catholic school, his career path was clear. Education was his calling and it was that road that crossed with mine.

I first came to know Max when we were enrolled in the same doctoral program at Texas Tech University in the early 1980s. We struggled through graduate school together (I struggled more than he) and we formed that special bond that only fellow doctoral students can understand.

We had the same last name and that often led to confusion. His mail was in my mailbox; his student messages were on my answering machine at home - "Would you please tell your husband . . . ?" The idea that we were husband and wife was a natural assumption and we had a lot of fun with it over the years. By coincidence, we both ended up living in San Antonio and we both have served as past Presidents of the Southwest Educational Research Association, so the confusion (and fun) continued.

There's nothing like a good story to provide a composite picture of someone, especially Max. Max and I had the same dissertation chairman, Dr. Paul Dixon. Dr. Paul Dixon was tough as nails, but Max and I were both wise enough to realize a smart choice when we saw one. Everyone knew two things before enrolling in one of Paul's classes. First, be ready to work hard, and second, we were going to learn more than we probably wanted to know about the subject matter. Paul's take-home final exam in Learning Theory was inspired and infamous. The final exam was a dialogue between learning theorists we studied during the semester with questions in between that we had to respond to by Wertheimer, Pavlov, Skinner, and others. The exam was

extremely difficult and we were required to work independently. We all scurried home to work into the wee hours of the morning drinking gallons of coffee for days on end. Finally, the exam due date arrived. Max's answers were brilliantly composed, thoughtful and insightful, but he had an added surprise. His answers were not in English, instead with a little help from his friends, his wife, and his own language skills, Max had written Wertheimer's responses in German, Pavlov's responses in Russian, and so on. In order to grade the exam, Dr. Dixon had to enlist assistance from the Foreign Language Department, and with the help of an international student, his graded comments to Max were written in Korean.

There are so many things we will miss about Max. If you were around Max you had to at least smile, if not laugh out loud, doing otherwise was against the rules. He was creative, brilliant, kind, and gentle; a giant of a man, everyone knew when he entered a room. In graduate school and later in other professional arenas, people were in awe of his intellect and wit. Even when surrounded by some of the greatest minds in the world, he was respected for his intelligence. Charlotte Keefe, Professor, Texas Woman's University, was another of Max's dear friends. She described him eloquently, "Max shared his intellect and insights graciously and willingly and usually with uncanny wit. He could 'nail' the essence of a problem with elegance. When I had the privilege of working with him on projects, it was such a pleasure – never a grind because he found humor in even the most trying situations."

Max had so many special gifts. He was a computer whiz, artist, musician, calligrapher, jewelry maker, and photographer. What stood out the most about him was his spirit. His passing is a loss for us all, even those who never knew him. We will never know what additional contributions he could have made or influenced in the field of education, the nation's school children, teachers, professors, and administrators. His statistical expertise was sought after by many, "Hey Max, how do you think I should crunch this data?" "What's the best way to design this study?" He was always willing to take the time to help you figure it out. His own research pertained to a variety of topics including statewide testing and evaluation, hierarchical linear modeling, and complicated cross-cultural issues. In addition to Hispanic educational issues in Texas, Max also considered cross-cultural issues related to Turkey and Korea that undoubtedly touched many lives around the world.

I think we all wonder what people will say about us after we're gone. What will be our legacy? More than anything else, Max was dedicated to his family and to

God. His faith was deep and strong. He was happily married to his wife Diane for 25 years – a real accomplishment these days. They were blessed with four children, Jeremy, Max II, Miranda, and Johanna, who are as brilliant, creative, and talented as their dad. Max Martin was my dear friend for almost 20 years. I had the utmost respect and admiration for him both professionally and personally. I am a better person for having known him and I will miss him deeply. Max, from all of us, “Well done, my friend. Well done.”

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