

Sylvie Rosenthal

Thoughts about my dear friend, mentor, and second father Doug Sigler.

Doug taught, inspired, and encouraged countless people as an educator, mentor, and friend during his time as a professor at Buffalo State, RIT and at Penland. People have walked through his home and studio, houses he was building, listening to his stories about life, woodworking, pranks, and friendships. What he showed so many, was a way to make a life that folded everything you do into one. Doug and Kathie's handmade home and the houses he built are full of the workmanship, history, and furniture of Doug, his friends, colleagues, students, and mentees.

Early in my time working with and for Doug, we had a conversation about the difference between a boss and a mentor. A boss is someone you work for, a simple exchange. A mentor is someone who has the others best interest in mind, encourages them, and holds them accountable to their own dreams. Doug is mentor in the truest sense, for those of us Doug mentored, he words and encouragement are with us.

I wish I had recording of the stories Doug told. He would explain the history of contemporary American woodworking and how it evolved, his teacher and mentor Tage Frid, the 'old days' at RIT and Penland, C.R. Skip 'the former boy wonder' Johnson, old grudges between woodworking legends, baseball—the topics were endless. Doug couldn't keep years in order and had a penchant for embellishment, but the man could hold an audience and make laughter ripple through a room. His knowledge was vast and not limited to stories, and I loved just talking with him. He knew about wood and building construction, from material to joinery, houses from the ground up, tree to the finished piece. And if he didn't know something, he would tell you that while giving you his best guess.

Doug was a skilled craftsman. He was also fearless (except for snakes) and a gambler. One of his greatest skills was starting and finishing projects. He had incredibly high standards for craft and he expected you to stick the landing. Do the work. If it wasn't up to standards, you either fixed it or did it again. It was an important lesson for a young maker, to not get overly up in the preciousness or fear. Through building houses and projects with Doug, I learned a lot about trust. Both in myself and others. In a house, you couldn't go back and check everything. Someone else might have nailed the trusses and you are putting the roof on. You have to trust that they did a good job, you won't make any progress. It is the same in the studio, you have to trust yourself, that you made the best decisions you could and keep moving forward. Stick that landing.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned from Doug was generosity, in all its forms. He shared what he had: his vast knowledge of wood, his knowledge of building and construction, jobs, a drink, a connection or resource. He was generous with his time, lending a hand or a tool, explaining one thing or another, talking on the phone to his friends near and far. He was generous with his home and his TV cable—everyone knew

you could always watch a game with Doug. My favorite part of watching sports with him was when he would stand up, turn his baseball cap backwards, and go yell at the television.

You had to have a sense of humor around Doug. Maybe that's why we hit it off so well. Pranks, jokes, and some trouble-making were part of daily life. It was about entertainment, levity, and not taking things too seriously, and always in the name of adventure and fun. There are endless stories and memories of these shenanigans.

Though his life, the way he worked and lived, Doug showed countless others that what you do is more than a job, that it is making a life. Doug was a dedicated friend and mentor who influenced, encouraged many. He took chances on projects and more importantly on people. I will love and miss him forever, though I am no one feels his absence more acutely than his wife, Kathie.