

Obituary: Peter H. Liotta

By Jim Miskel

The Norwich University community lost an important member on August 31, 2012 when my good friend, and esteemed colleague Dr. Peter H. Liotta was killed in a car accident in Newport, Rhode Island. He was only 55 years old –too many productive years left on the table.

Peter has been called by those who knew him a modern renaissance man and he certainly deserved the title. The range of his intellectual interests and attainments was, to say the least, impressive. He was also an unusually prolific scholar and author – I would need several pages to list the books and articles he has published – and he wrote authoritatively in an amazing variety of fields. He was also an engaging, dynamic educator.

Peter and I taught together at the US Naval War College from 1997 to 2003 and during that time we worked together on a number of different projects – including seminars that we offered at universities and think tanks in South America. It was during those long flights and layovers in Miami and Atlanta when we missed connecting flights that we really got to know each other and learn that despite our different philosophies we had much in common and could work together well.

Peter and I left the War College at around the same time, each for different reasons and each to go in different directions, but we continued to collaborate on issues about which we cared strongly. One of those issues was online, graduate education. We each signed onto the Norwich diplomacy program and behind the scenes immediately started bouncing ideas off each other about how to teach a concept in the online setting, asking each other to review draft lectures and discussion questions, and discussing the topics that needed to be covered in our individual syllabi.

Apart from his good humor (he had an outrageous, booming laugh) I will always remember two particular things about Peter: his enthusiasm for whatever the subject matter at hand and his intense desire to improve the educational experience of the students. Peter was full of good ideas about how to make a concept clearer, what new concepts should be introduced into a syllabus, and ways to make the learning experience more fun.

These are the same characteristics that drew me to Peter as a friend on the Naval War College faculty. He was continually probing and pushing, trying hard to do an even better job in the classroom and developing ever-better curricula.

He was fun to work with and I always felt that I learned a lot from our interactions.

Those of you in the Norwich community who worked with or studied with Peter know what I m talking about, I am sure. He loved teaching and he loved being in the physical and virtual classrooms. He brought energy, light and *joie de vivre* to whatever he did.

I am going to miss him.