

Ade Wolfson—An appreciation

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I've been thinking about this for a week now; trying to come up with some clear memories of Ade which sum up my experience of him. It's been pretty difficult for a variety of reasons. We didn't actually spend that much time together, and it was spread out over many years. Most of that time was while working on Campus; this was an exciting, enjoyable and emotional experience. It should be the stuff of stories, but much of it is mundane in it's re-telling: tying shoe laces, sticking on plasters, cooking dinners. In addition, most of my fondest and funniest memories are rather ribald and a remembrance demands a certain solemnity. Ade had a wonderful sense of humour, and joked often. It's probably a reflection on me, that it's all the rude ones that stay in mind.

In one of my earliest memories of Ade, during my second or third year, Ade came into the room while I was settling the kids in. He talked to all of them, each in turn and he knew all of their names. It usually took me till half way through the week before I managed this. Ade was a natural; I wasn't. In the following years, I moved onto looking after the vans, or cooking and cleaning.

A decade after my first campus Ade dragged Craig Burnett and myself out of retirement, to domestic for a week. The work that week went easily: Ade had the shopping and menu committed to memory, and we all new the job. On one of our few outings, Ade nearly caused a van crash: while I was driving, he told me a particularly hysterical joke (and, yes, it was rude!); I ended up in tears and could hardly see when I pulled up to clear my eyes. The back of the van wanted to know what was happening, but we were laughing too much to say. My clearest memory, though, is the simplest; sitting out back, in the calm and peace of the day, with a cup of tea, looking over the fields, talking through our times shared in the past, and hopes for the future.

My final memory comes of one child, whom we helped teach to swim. He was in Ade's group. I was driving the van and was spare, so as to speak. The kid was really scared of the water; we coaxed him in with floats galore, then to kick his feet, then to overcome his fear of splashes, and finally to stick his head into the water. I was shivering a little when we finished each swim; Campus involved lots of swimming then, probably still does. For the rest of the week, Ade and I split the load of walking slowly through the water, freezing cold, ready for a rescue if the child's mad paddling proved ineffective.

I never met the kid again. Ade kept me up-to-date with his development over the next few years. This was well over a decade ago; he will be an adult by now in his twenties, I guess. I can clearly remember his face, but little else. Even his name has gone from my mind. I wish that Ade were here, 'cause he'd know.