Jim Egawa photo in the Ritchie Family art collection

Jim's gone.

Jim Egawa died this month, on August 6, 2003. I wouldn't have known if I hadn't glanced at the morning news at my local coffee shop. I go there every morning and read and write. On my way out I paused to skim the paper, and there was Jim's name and photograph!

He hadn't changed much in his appearance since I knew him in the early '60s. Jim and I traded artworks before we left college. His is a photograph of a bucket of fish—herring, perhaps—that he made in our photography class. I may have job-shared with him in the AV lab.

It bothered me that he'd been living and working in Tacoma all these years but we never met again. I liked him a lot. Everyone did, I think. Now he's gone, and we won't have a reunion and we won't get to talk about ways the art education we had has figured in our careers as teachers. Why does it seem to me that the college—Central Washington—is partly to blame for keeping us unaware of one another?

How many times have a looked at Jim's photo in our collection and wondered what became of him? It never occurred to me to ask or see if he was in the telephone directory. I wonder if he ever thought about me when he saw my artwork (I don't recall what it was, a photo or a screen print, etching or some such work I did in Ellensburg). It's too late now.

I think, "If he had a Web site, an archive on-line, I could visit his legacy. His legacy would, in a sense, transfer across space to my desktop, via the Internet." But this isn't going to happen until, perhaps, his wife or one of his kids decides to make a project out of it. It makes me feel like some principle has been forgotten, a principle that was born when I was in college and making associations with people who would—or could—become partners in some grand scheme later on. Jim was an idealist, upbeat and ambitious. The newspaper article says it all.

I'll clip that article, electronically, from the on-line version of the paper, and attach it to the listing of our family's art collection next to Jim's photograph of fishes. In doing this I will add to the value of that photo because it is then more than a picture of some fish, it is a link to a good man's life that people can, although he's gone, read about and possibly identify with as a role model.

The feeling that we—Jim and I—were let down would not go away. Then I came to a line in a book (*Developing Online Games: An Insider's Guide* by Jessica Mulligan and Bridgette

Patrovsky). "You may need to reassign, or even remove, 'stars' from your team if they do not publicly embrace your view of the necessary organizational culture, especially if they consistently violate key principles."

It was a line at the end of a section on developing a culture of organization intended for the business of online game production. This section was addressed to senior management. Lines in the paragraphs preceding it—reading backwards—had built up to this end: Remove the stars if they consistently violate key principles. Those words somehow pointed to the gap between Jim's and my years at Central Washington college. I went from this gap to the gaps, the loss of connectedness between myself and the other students at Central those years, people like Madalon Lalley, Bruce Wild, Bob Mowad and others I can't think of at the moment. If senior management—to whom Mulligan and Patrovsky are advising—at Central had provided a 40-year networking instrument to us, then I would have known about Jim's work in the Tacoma Public Schools. He would have known about my work at the UW art school.

Perhaps a phone call between us might have helped us at key points in our careers. If he had lived, we could now—in our 60s—be the senior management that Mulligan and Patrovsky are teaching. Organization was not part of Jim's and my education. The idea that organization is anathema to creativity in the arts dogged me all my days as an artist and teacher, but I somehow overcame that myth. Maybe Jim achieved what he did, too, because he was practiced a culture of organization.

Continuing to read backward, from the "Key Principles" phase, you'll read about the anathematic view of organization that designers and developers of games seem still to believe in. I began to feel I was reading the pages in Mulligan and Patrovsky backward, like looking at my life from this year backward to 1963, when I met Jim Egawa. What key principles were ignored by senior management (the faculty, the deans, etc. of Central)?

Number one, I believe, is the principle of asset values. Jim and I exchanged photos voluntarily. It was probably Jim's idea; I was too selfish and interested in my own images to think about collecting other peoples'. Jim, in other words, sensed the values of other peoples' works and wanted to trade for them. He demonstrated the key principle: There's value in the works of your associates in the learning and production endeavor. Keep them as part of your assets.

Today I would add to this, "make them fit for transfer." Transfer of legacy is every individual's responsibility. The Egawa photo, with its accompanying news item about Jim, is part of my legacy. How I make it transferable is a matter of passing it along to our daughters' families or, on a grander scale, make it available to the public for purchase

Yet another form is put an image of it on the Web. On the Internet it can include the news article. With some additional work, links can make Jim's photo part of his legacy if someone in his domain or his family can create a Web site for it.

As I work from the last words in those pages in the book, "Key Principles" I come to the beginning of the section, which is about educating senior management. This is a book about online game development, so senior management means the people who fund and launch online games. The authors warn the readers about the wizardry of artists and programmers and the delusions that can result when key principles of business and technology are obscured.

My game, Emeralda, is about key principles, the main one being asset management (the care and preservation of Jim's photo and what it means, and what Jim's life meant) and legacy transfer—how to adapt the physical black and white photo of Jim's work to the age of digital reproduction. Not only do the mechanics, but in such a way as to fit it into the culture of organization.

I've read several paragraphs "backward" in thinking about Jim and what the authors are advising game developers to do. This will help shape Emeralda into a game that we, as "senior management" can help become an asset in the education of students from here on.

Postscript

Around 2017, Bothell High, where Jim went to school, was sold to a developer, and turned into a luxury hotel. One room was given to Jim's memory. Our daughter, Billie, worked at the restaurant and told me about the room. Jim's daughter contacted me, and I tried to get the management to take the artwork and install it in the room. It didn't happen, and we still have the artwork. It needs restoration.

About the Author: Bill H. Ritchie, Jr. is an Itinerate Professor of Art in Seattle. He taught 19 years at the UW as a professor of art, traditional printmaking and media arts. Resigning at 43 to start his own learning, research, and production company, he began work on *Emeralda: Games for the Gifts of Life* in 1992, a game featuring an imaginary place accessible by his computer. He's immersed himself in an artist's virtual promised land for the age of digital reproduction.