



## Fort Lewis Alumnus Remembers Dr. Reece Kelly

I am writing this note on the day of the memorial for Dr. Reece Kelly. He had an enormous positive influence on my life. I thought about him a lot over the years and what follows is an example of one especially fond memory:

I entered FLC thanks to some very understanding folks in the admissions office. They helped me pick out a couple of classes including Western Civ 2. My first day in Western Civ was also my actual first class at Fort Lewis. I strategically selected a chair next to an exit door. The thought of slipping out was rather appealing. Dr. Kelly entered the room and began to speak about covering the momentum of history, the great events, etc. (he said this so much better). From that moment on I was captivated.

From a predetermined reading list, I selected the first book that was available in the library—Nicolas and Alexandra by Robert Massie. As the semester progressed, I never missed a single class!

The book was about the last Russian Czar, Nicolas II, his family, and how the tide of history overwhelmed them and then swept them away. I covered all that in my required book report but I included my amazement regarding the opulence that surrounded this family. Everything that family touched was covered with diamonds, rubies and emeralds. I really was not sure whether that personal side note should be included in a college book report. At that time, retyping the paper was not option, and I turned it in.

I don't remember the grade Dr. Kelly gave the paper, but I clearly remember that his remarks about my personal reaction to a small portion of the story were very encouraging. I did not expect that. I felt that he understood my amazement.

25 years later, my boss and I made a trip to New York City and met with representatives of the New York Stock Exchange. We toured the building and walked on the trading room floor. After the tour, we were ushered into a conference room and I noticed a very large vase in the corner of the room. I gave it a long look. The NYSE representative pointed out that the Faberge vase was a 100 year old gift to the stock exchange from Nicholas II. I turned to face the vase and was back in Western Civ thinking of how much I loved that class and missed Dr. Kelly. He did not know it, but he was there with me. I turned and asked, "Can I touch it?" The representative nodded his approval. Nicholas himself had likely touched that vase, maybe Alexandra as well.

It would have been very tempting for me to share this story at the memorial. I am not sure that many listeners have understood the excitement about a vase and its connection to an amazing professor who taught that class. I suspect that the people in the room today will fully understand and have similar stories.

My wife and I will be making a donation to the scholarship fund that carries his name. We truly hope that because of Dr Kelly, some future student will have a moment 25 years or more after attending Fort Lewis College that brings back the joy and excitement of their education.

Sincerely

Steve Day

Fort Lewis College professor emeritus Reece Kelly died Friday, July 15, 2011, in Durango from complications of renal cell carcinoma. He was one week shy of his 73rd birthday. Dr. Kelly taught at FLC for more than 30 years before retiring in 2003.