



THE OKLAHOMA EDUCATIONAL MEMORIAL TRUST FOUNDATION HONORS

Paul E. Dykes



The Paul E. Dykes Memorial Scholarship was established to honor the memory and life of Paul Dykes (1936-2015).

During the richest ten years of Paul's life, he married Sharon, a deeply compassionate and courageous woman. In his later years, he appreciated time on the farm, hours spent with members of the Unitarian congregation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and his good friends.

Paul taught English in Tulsa Public Schools, beginning in 1959 at Central High School, and then transferring to Memorial High School in 1962. In 1973 he was asked to join the faculty during the integration of Booker T. Washington High School, where he taught until 2007.

His joys in teaching included introducing several courses in English and philosophy and knowing the remarkable students he had every year. They know who they are. As a teacher, he understood that one of the great lessons of being in the classroom is to watch young minds realize the great gift of being alive: not to know, but to be at liberty to find out.

One story out of thousands from the classroom is worth retelling here. A class was reading "The Second Coming" by W.B. Yeats. In it, a falcon circles its falconer until it can no longer hear the falconer's commands. "What do you think the falcon feels when he is beyond his master's voice?" Paul asked. Two students answered at once. One said, "He's confused." The other said, "He's free." One student described our natural state, the other our capacity to explore that natural state. From those answers, Paul concluded that students don't always need teachers. They have the ability to understand on their own.

- Adapted from the *Tulsa World*, June 18, 2025