

STARLINK®

An Agency of the Texas Association of Community Colleges

LESSONS THAT LAST:

The Teachers Students Remember

PARTICIPANT PACKET

February 20, 2004
1:00 - 2:15 PM CT

If you can read this,
thank a teacher.

--Bumper Sticker

In association with the
Texas Community College
Teachers Association

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Even if it’s a little thing, do something for those who have need of help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it.

--Albert Schweitzer*

*Boxed quotations are from *Chicken Soup for the Teacher’s Soul: Stories to Open the Hearts and Rekindle the Spirit of Educators* by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hanson, Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc, 2002. Used by permission.

AGENDA

Introduction..... Bob Ray Sanders
Moderator

The Impact of Teachers on People’s Lives David Shribman

Audience Members Share Personal Stories of Memorable TeachersAudience

Interview of David Shribman Bob Ray Sanders

Closing Comments David Shribman

Close Bob Ray Sanders

A teacher affects eternity; he can
never tell where his influence stops.
--Henry Adams

EMAIL/FAX/CALL-IN INSTRUCTIONS

There are three ways in which you can interact with the panelists:



E-MAIL: Before the program, you may e-mail your questions for the panelists to hhartman@dccd.edu and they will address them during the teleconference.



FAX: Before and on February 20, fax to 972.669.6699



CALL: You are encouraged at any time during the program to call in your questions and comments.

The toll-free telephone number for call-in questions is:

1.888.873.1566

HOW IT WORKS: Your call will be answered by a member of our staff, who will ask for your name and site location. You will then be put on hold. While you are on hold, you will be able to hear the videoconference through the telephone. Stay on the line so we can communicate with you if necessary.

If your call should be accidentally disconnected, call again and tell the operator you were disconnected while waiting to ask a question.

When prompted or introduced by the program host, give your name and site location, and state your questions as clearly and succinctly as you can. Please be aware that while you are asking your question and while it is being answered you will be “on the air.” Please remain on the line until your question has been answered and your call has been disconnected.

BETTER AUDIO: To minimize the possibility of any technical or program difficulties that may be caused by audio feedback, we suggest you locate the telephone away from the audio speaker at your site.

PRESENTER: **David Shribman**, after ten years as the Washington Bureau Chief of the *Boston Globe*, has become executive editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Mr. Shribman was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in journalism in 1995 for his coverage of Washington and the American political scene. His column, "National Perspective," is syndicated to more than 50 papers nationally through Universal Press Service of Kansas City and he is a Contributing Editor of *Fortune* magazine.



Before joining *The Globe* he served as national political correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. Prior to that, he covered Congress and national politics for *The New York Times* and was a member of the national staff of *The Washington Star*. He began his career at *The Buffalo Evening News*, where he worked on the city staff before being assigned to the paper's Washington bureau. Mr. Shribman is a regular panelist on the PBS show "Washington Week in Review," a frequent analyst for BBC radio, and has appeared on the CBS program "Face the Nation."

I Remember My Teacher, published in 2002, is Shribman's collection of reminiscences about America's greatest teachers. The book includes recollections from people from all walks of life, from Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld to a West Virginia coal miner, from flight attendants to governors and senators. It was featured on National Public Radio and in several national publications.

MODERATOR: **Bob Ray Sanders'** journalism career has spanned more than three decades and three media: newspaper, television and radio. He currently is Vice President and Associate Editor of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, the paper where he began his journalism career. He also is a columnist for the paper.



He worked many years in public broadcasting at KERA-TV, Channel 13, the Dallas/Fort Worth PBS affiliate, where he served as reporter, producer, station manager and vice president. He is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists, the National Association of Black Journalists and the Dallas/Fort Worth Association of Black Communicators. He currently serves on the advisory board of the AIDS Outreach Center of Tarrant County, the board of directors of Goodwill Industries, Inc., and is chairman of the board of Liberation Community, a non-profit organization providing affordable homes for low-income people.

Sanders has received some of journalism's most prestigious awards, among them: five awards from the Houston, New York and Chicago film festivals, five Dallas Press Club "KATIE" Awards, three Corporation for Public Broadcasting awards, a regional Emmy Award, a National Association of Black Journalists award for "Best TV Sports Feature," and a National Headliner Award for "Outstanding Investigative Reporting."

SELECTED QUOTATIONS FROM *I REMEMBER MY TEACHER*

by David Shribman

Tom Finch, who taught mining courses at Montana Tech. He was brash. He was a character. I didn't grow up in a mining town, but he helped me understand what actually works in the real world and in the real mines in the Arctic, where I now work.

—Adam Gould, field engineer, Diavic diamond mine, Northwest Territories

Alexander Lipsky. He was my piano teacher, and I will never forget when he got angry at me. I wasn't practicing enough and he gave me grief. He told me I was slacking off. He raised his voice. But—and this is the important thing—he made sure we were on good terms when the lesson ended. He showed me the difference between what I did, which wasn't much, and what I was, which was still something good.

—Matthew Harre, piano teacher, Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Nachman in second grade. One day I just wasn't paying attention. I must have been a little bored in class. She told me that whenever I wanted to go to the library I could go. I went a lot. I was never bored again.

—George Stephanopoulos, former White House aide and television news personality, New York, New York

I grew up in the White House, but I also grew up in a deep search for the white picket fence, a bunch of kids, and a couple of dogs. I wanted them so badly that I never got my college degree. And later in life I encountered a woman named Pat Hayes, the president of St. Edwards University. She asked me a question: "Are you ever going to make room for Someday, are you ever going to make Someday work for you? I decided Someday had arrived for me.

—Luci Baines Johnson, college graduate at age fifty, Austin, Texas

Alden Poole, who taught freshman journalism at Simmons College. He was a crusty old newspaperman but he managed to make everything seem brand-new and fresh to us. He took a bunch of kids who had no idea what they wanted to do with their lives and made them believe they wanted to be newspaper reporters. It's not clear that he taught us a thing about journalism, but he taught me to love journalism.

—Gwen Ifill, anchor of Washington Week in Review, Shirlington, Virginia

Frank Longstreth. He taught Latin at Western Reserve Academy in Hudson, Ohio. I had gone to a very small public school in Ohio in a tiny town on the edge of Appalachia. I had never really been challenged academically. But this Latin course was difficult, and I wasn't doing very well. One

night, right before an exam, I heard a knock on my dorm door. It was my Latin teacher, and amid all my panic, he gave me a pep talk. He told me to keep my head down and to keep at it. Things haven't always been easy for me, but I remember the time someone made the special effort for me.

—John E. Yang, ABC News correspondent, Washington, D. C.

Professor Daniel. He told me that you should expect more from your teachers than just reading from a book. He said that college was more than a test and a book. That stuck with me. For the rest of my life, I have looked for teachers who did more.

—David Falk, IBM regional support manager, Chicago, Illinois

Victor Menza, who taught philosophy at Dartmouth. He was a guru, a giant. He was a supernova. He was the only brilliant person I have ever met. I took his course by accident, and it changed my life. He had all these acolytes who would hang on every word he said, and he knew it, so one day he came into class and he started in on something, and we were taking down everything, and he stopped and said: "Put your pens down. What I am saying is important."

—Peter Mose, musician, Toronto, Ontario

Gertrude Blakeborough. She was a veteran home-economics teacher when I entered her sewing class as a high school freshman in 1968. She was an accomplished seamstress, and she guided beginners with their first stitches and advanced students through the fine techniques of tailoring. At a time when many adults were throwing up their hands in disgust with those teenage hippies, she listened and counseled countless kids. She had an ear, a heart and a hug for teenage angst that was second to none. Her greatest skill, one I try to emulate as a teacher and parent, is the ability to be angry or frustrated with one student's behavior and then to turn around very calmly and assist another.

—Alice Robinson, teacher, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

Charles S. Hyneman, one of my government professors at Indiana University in the 1960s. In each of the two classes I took from him, the only requirement was a paper. But through the sheer force of his personality and teaching style, I came to believe that the Hyneman paper was the overriding obligation of the semester, not so much for the research he required as for the depth of thought. I may not remember specific topics from his class, but I hope I remember how to think.

—Craig Klugman, editor, Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Paul Connolly, a teaching assistant in my freshman year in college. He taught literature to students who did not give a hoot about the great novels he tried to pack into our lummozy heads. But he retained a verve and love for what he was doing that won many of us over in time. Using good cheer, patience, and rigorous standards he demonstrated how those who succeed in writing wrapped themselves up in honesty, compassion, uncompromising dedication to message and

language. His lessons were simple: Never cut corners, never forget who you are, and never set out without knowing your goal. He was a good soul.

—Denis Horgan, writer, Hartford, Connecticut

Debbie Cooper, who taught travel and tourism. She knew the travel industry inside and out. She's the reason I sit all day at an airport in Toronto.

—Diana Falcone, gate agent, Toronto, Ontario

John Kemeny, who taught me calculus as a college freshman. Professor Kemeny had an extraordinary ability to understand students' questions even when they weren't able to articulate those questions in a comprehensible way. As a teacher, I have learned how important it is to listen to my students as a way of becoming a better teacher.

—Robert M. Salzman, associate dean, University of Southern California Law School, Los Angeles, California

Ms. Owens, who was my English teacher at Mount Vernon High School. I got kicked out of my original English class because I was too rowdy and too rude. I egged on the teacher and was put into Ms. Owens's class and—suddenly—I was an English student. She made me do better than I thought I could.

—Mary Beth Lane, interior designer, Great Falls, Virginia

Perry Meisel. He was a rather mad professor of English literature whose brilliance brainwashed me at NYU. He seemed to be able to articulate thoughts that I had but could not enunciate myself. He was always five steps ahead of where I wanted to be. He told jokes that I understood only days later. He was volatile, frightening, intimidating—and brilliant.

—Gary Morris, literary agent, New York, New York

Colonel Brine. He was a teacher at Selwyn House School, a boys' private school in Montreal. When I was a miserable student, just about failing out of school, he kept me behind at school twice a week even though I made no improvements whatsoever. But the following year I became a good student, and there is no question that the work this man did in helping me focus, concentrate, and learn how to study made all the difference in the world.

—James Stein, developer, Montreal, Quebec

Gerda Kalman, who was one of my teachers at Salem High. She taught freshman Western civilization and Russian history. Her enthusiasm and dedication were impressive. But her great skill was understanding—really understanding—individual students' strengths and weaknesses. She

knew how to critique, push, and encourage students—and to turn weaknesses into strengths.

—John E. Sununu, congressman, Salem, New Hampshire.

Phil Gonyar, who taught an advanced history and government course called “Foundations in American Freedom.” He was the first person who really gave me a real thrill about how this country got started and how important it is to participate in it. People always ask me if I wanted to be governor when I was a kid. The truth is, until I took his course, all I wanted to do was play for the Celtics.”

—John R. McKernan Jr., former governor of Maine

My physics teacher in high school in Rockville, Maryland. He let us blow stuff up.

—Jared Farber, merchandise promotions officer, Rockville, Maryland

Grace Cullen, an English teacher at Outremont High School in Quebec. She acted out everything she read. She bubbled. She made Shakespeare and Dickens seem as if they were occurring in our own classroom. She also made me believe that recess and gym didn’t have to be my best subjects.

—Marcia Schnaar, administrative assistant to the Montreal Expos, Montreal, Quebec

I remember Professor Oliver Schroeder, who taught me in a constitutional law class during summer school.... This guy came in with such energy, such excitement, such enthusiasm, that I couldn’t help but pay attention. I learned some constitutional law that summer, but I also learned that people respond in direct proportion to how much you reach out to them.

—Donald Rumsfeld, U. S. Secretary of Defense

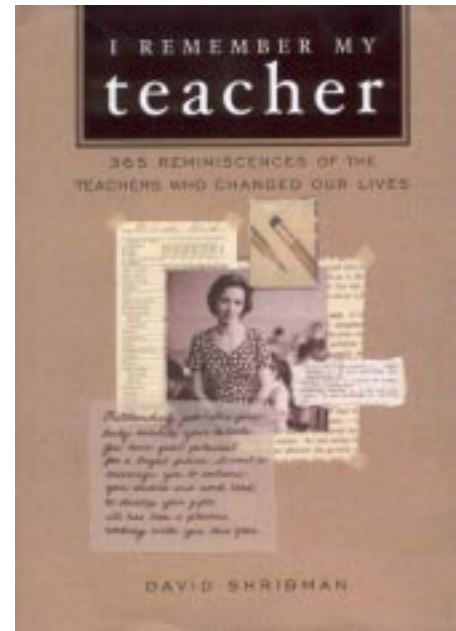
Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.

--Henry Ford

I Remember My Teacher...

365 Reminiscences of the
Teachers Who Changed Our Lives

David Shribman



Over the course of a year writer David Shribman questioned virtually everyone he encountered about the role teachers had played in their lives. The result is this extraordinary collection of personal remembrances of teachers, relayed by people from all walks of life

Readers will be inspired by the Montreal bookseller whose math teacher taught statistics using cards and dice, by the second-grade teacher who let a young George Stephanopoulos go to the library whenever he was bored in class, and by Sister Patricia, a favorite teacher of former Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman, who once told her, “You can fly, but that cocoon has to go.”

These 365 short testimonials offer a tribute to teachers for each day of the year. With accounts from Geena Davis, Clarence Thomas, Norman Schwarzkopf, and others, *I Remember My Teacher...* will move readers with inspiring stories of their most influential teachers, professors, and coaches.

David Shribman is executive editor of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and a nationally syndicated columnist.

Available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

THE JOY OF TEACHING

by Barbara A. Burke

One of my greatest joys as a teacher is to witness the growth and success of my students. Being primarily a teacher of freshmen students, I provide them with one of their first intellectual challenges of college life. As students progress through my class, I feel a sense of pride as they each work toward their own intellectual mastery of the chemical concepts. Many succeed in just one quarter, others need more than that, but either way, I give them the support and guidance they need, but may not always want. My role, as I see it, is to provide students the challenge and the materials to grow intellectually, to introduce them to the bigger picture of chemistry as a real force in their life and to be a role model.

Some students walk timidly into my class whereas others boldly come in and take their place in the class. Through making a concerted effort to know each and every one of these students as individuals, I encourage the bold to remain so and the timid to realize their strengths and believe more strongly in their own abilities. Maria for example struggled with quantitating the chemical concepts presented in chemistry. Yet she was able to very succinctly, accurately and creatively describe these same chemical concepts in one-page essays such as *A Chameleon's Life by Red Cabbage*; *Charged With Adultery, Sulfate Speaks Out!*; *Vinegar's Latest Hit: My Greatest Strength Is My Weakness*; and *My Life As A Spectator by Nitrate Ion*. Maria thus gave compelling evidence of her understanding of chemical concepts, which under other circumstances, may have gone unnoticed and unrewarded. I am very proud to say that an excerpt from one of Maria's essays became part of a publication in a professional journal.

I also have the opportunity to work with senior level students on their senior project. Through this I am able to facilitate the culminating experience of students at Cal Poly. For here, they begin to actually do chemistry and experience both the joys and difficulties involved in attempting to make sense of our chemical world. Their level of success is a source of great pride to me, as one who presented the problem and who gave them the opportunity to develop their research abilities. "Sarah", one of my senior project students, received a research fellowship for graduate school. She is now successfully completing a Ph.D program in Biochemistry. I first met Sarah when she was a student in my freshman chemistry class. At the sophomore level, she worked with me on a laboratory project where she began to learn the realities of chemistry as an experimental science. As a junior she was a summer laboratory assistant in my workshop for junior high mathematics and science teachers. Here she worked with me to develop laboratory experiments, to prepare the materials and run a class using these experiments and to introduce others to the wonder of science. Finally, Sarah spent a year on her senior project where she gained first hand experience on the joys and frustrations of doing independent chemical research. Writing her thesis was tremendously hard work, but when she turned in her final copy, her sense of pride and accomplishment was evident! Sarah and I still correspond.

I find that, after being in one or more of my classes, students come back for a variety of reasons: just to talk, asking for letters of recommendation and/or to take part in one of the outreach activities I am involved in. I learn more about them as a person, what their hopes and dreams are. When

they succeed in obtaining a job or going to professional school, I feel a great sense of joy that I may have provided part of the stimulus. Those who return to participate in chemical demonstration workshops for pre-college students start by not believing they can run the show, so to speak. They are encouraged to take an active part in the workshop and thus come to find out that they can give demos effectively, explain the chemistry and have fun as they promote science in general and chemistry in particular. They also gain a sense of the joy that comes from sharing their knowledge and experiences with others as they perform community service. Daniel, for instance, came by one day as we were putting on one of our shows. He expressed surprise and interest that such events even took place and shyly asked to participate. Next time he was part of the group and, as such he had little choice but to lead and explain the “superball” demonstration (with coaching from the other students and myself) and interact with the pre-college students. Well, he was hooked! The next time he brought a friend to help... As I watch these students grow in their knowledge, confidence and ability to be leaders and develop their own commitment to the community, I am happy to have opened the door for them.

Chemical demonstrations are an integral part of my lecture style because they represent the physical reality behind all the calculations and theoretical concepts and show practical examples of chemistry as a real force in their life. What better way, for example, to illustrate oxidation-reduction reactions than showing the breathalyzer test for ethyl alcohol? Or to introduce acid-base chemistry with the rabbit-in-the-hat trick using phenolphthalein (the active ingredient in EX-LAX tablets) and household ammonia? I think students appreciate these interludes mainly because they’re interesting, fun and often repeatable at home. Eva for example, would report on how well she could reproduce these demos for her family. She has even brought in her son who proudly showed me (and explained) his own version of the rabbit-in-the-hat trick he did for his third grade classmates!

In the years I have been at Cal Poly, I have worked to develop holistic teaching strategies that enable my students to grow not only intellectually but socially and emotionally. I will be content if my students look back upon their experiences and think

“[She] met us with smiles on the threshold,
And in that rude temple of art,
[She] left with the skill of the workman
[Her] touch on the mind and the heart”

The Old Brown Schoolhouse, Anonymous

Published (Spring 1995) in *In Celebration of Teaching: Reflections of Cal Poly Pomona Professors* by the Faculty Center for Professional Development at the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Used by permission.

CENTRAL GROUND: THE TEACHING MANTRA

by Bill McAllister

I think everybody who teaches employs a short, “default” assumption that guides their teaching-related decisions and reactions. Instructors routinely process problems, failures, and successes through a personalized interpretive filter. I call this the “Teaching Mantra” (TM), which I define as a bumper-sticker sized statement that animates our teaching interactions. Whether or not we are aware of its existence, the TM informs our reactions when something goes wrong, or right, in our classroom.

My current Teaching Mantra, “Blame students last,” emanates from a bad experience I had a number of years ago when teaching a fourth-year History seminar. A bright student in this small, senior-thesis-type class submitted a mediocre paper. I graded her accordingly, and she in turn became upset and complained bitterly. A previously happy working relationship turned sour, and in subsequent months I puzzled at length over what had gone wrong. It would have been easy to conclude that this woman represented the oft-discussed spoiled U.Va. undergrad who expected faculty to cater to her own overblown assessment of her work. As I mulled over our interactions that semester, however, I recalled several instances where I *thought* I communicated my expectations clearly. She *said* she understood, but had she really? Did I truly comprehend my own criteria sufficiently to explain them to a neophyte, or had I retreated to the amorphous land of “awk,” where my ability to articulate was reduced to imprecise notes in the margins expressing sentiments such as, “Well, this doesn’t *feel* like an ‘A’ paper.” I decided to reconsider whether I could be more coherent in explaining my expectations, and how I could construct the semester’s work in a way that would avoid another disaster.

After tinkering with my syllabus over several semesters, I believe I have concocted a much better way to move students through the process of creating their own historical text. I now require students to check in frequently with portions of what will become their final paper; I collect writing samples very early in the semester to spot problems; I have borrowed from a rich literature on critical thinking to help students structure meaningful questions; and I articulate much more clearly my goals for the semester. I believe this approach has produced good results, and it is based on my decision to take a very hard look at how I contributed (unintentionally, of course) to creating conditions that diminished my students’ capacities to produce high-quality work.

Last semester I taught the Pedagogy Seminar for Teaching Assistants in the Engineering School. I asked the graduate student participants, most of whom are novice teachers, to articulate their own Teaching Mantras and add a short paragraph explaining their default assumption. I found many of their responses both thoughtful and thought-provoking. Succinct, pithy statements include “Be nice to your students, because one day they could be your boss” (Alex Nice, Civil Engineering) and “The main thing is not to panic” (Tim Wenk, Civil Engineering). With direct honesty, Chad Cole (Electrical and Computer Engineering) notes “Patience IS a virtue” and explains, “Sometimes you just want to scream, but instead step back, take a breath, and realize that at one time you were just as dumb as them.”

Other insightful Teaching Mantras from Engineering TA's include these:

Pursue Aha

Bob Rockwell, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

To “pursue aha” is to strive constantly to help the student reach a deeper understanding of the material—to help them move from simply regurgitating what is in the textbook or lecture toward really understanding the principles and relevance of whatever is being taught. As a TA, this requires patience in dealing with students who just want an answer they can put on their homework, but it also requires patience in letting students work some things out for themselves. You can't force *aha* on a student, you can only guide them toward it. The reward is being part of that moment when a student's face lights up in understanding, or they give a particularly insightful answer, or even when they ask a particularly insightful question. If it weren't for those moments, and knowing that they're out there, I'm not sure what appeal teaching would have.

Push them; they will push back.

Todd Summers, Electrical and Computer Engineering

If you challenge students to do better, they will rise to the occasion. Without some stimulus, students will instinctively put in the bare minimum of effort.

Where's base camp, what gear do we need, and what routes can we take?

Sue Kazanjian, Materials Science and Engineering

Students build their knowledge on their own unique foundation. It's my job to provide tools, materials and techniques. My TM reminds me to identify a student's level of understanding so that I can supply the appropriate means for educational growth.

Keep explaining it until they smile like kids in a candy shop.

Phil Varner, Computer Science

The purpose of teaching is to convey information you know to the students. If the students don't or can't understand it, it's not fun. If they do understand it, it's exciting, and they're happy (well, at least happier). Happiness is an externality of learning, so our objective has been met.

We don't really teach students; we create opportunities for them to learn.

Zhongkai Wang, Systems Engineering

The important thing for a good instructor or TA is to motivate students to learn, not to force them to learn. You should help students to discover the interest of learning. In order to achieve that goal, you create opportunities for them. Furthermore, teaching and learning are interactive processes. You teach while you also learn at the same time, because students will keep you thinking about and updating what you are teaching through their questions. You can benefit from students' feedback.

Inspiring instead of pouring.

Hai Zhang, Electrical and Computer Engineering

Guide students to think; prepare something stimulating and tricky for students.

Have you figured out *your* Teaching Mantra? You've got one, whether you realize it or not, so why not articulate it clearly? Your students would no doubt like to know, and your colleagues could profit from it as well. If you'd like to share your Teaching Mantra with the University at large, send it to the TRC. We'll consider publishing submissions in future editions of *Teaching Concerns* and on our website.

Source: *Teaching Concerns: Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants*, Spring 2002, The University of Virginia. Used by permission.
<http://trc.virginia.edu/tc/2002/TeachingMantra.htm>.

And education is not a thing one gets,
but a lifelong process
--Gloria Steinem

MY FIRST LESSON

By Chris Offutt

*On the eve of his 40th birthday, Chris Offutt moved back to the hills of eastern Kentucky to take a teaching job at his alma mater, Morehead State University. His goal was to teach writing in a region where 30 percent of the people were functionally illiterate and where “doing well is a betrayal of mountain culture.” Offutt, who also teaches at the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop, here recounts one of his early classroom experiences. Excerpted from *No Heroes: A Memoir of Coming Home*, published recently by Simon & Schuster. Copyright ©2002 by Chris Offutt. Used by permission.*

Appalachia suffers from “brain drain,” in which the bright and ambitious people depart and seldom return. Those left behind tend to perpetuate the social problems that forced folks out in the first place. People who leave crave the opportunity to assimilate by erasing their accent, speaking vaguely about hometowns, and embrace the trappings of a new life. Many tend to hide who they are and where they are from. I had been through this myself.

For the first time in two decades, I could stand in a room full of people as a member of the majority. My favorite class was Intro to Creative Writing because of the sense of freedom young people brought to their work. The top two students, Eugene and Sandra, were in the class. Eugene arrived early to return the books I’d lent him — Flannery O’Connor and Breece D’J Pancake, writers from rural worlds.

“I never read nothing like those,” Eugene said. “In high school, we read *Romeo and Juliet*, the biggest bunch of bullshit you ever did see.”

“I know what you mean,” I said. “Two teenagers in love and their folks mad at them. Families feuding with each other. People saying one thing and meaning another. Getting killed for no reason. Nothing like where I grew up. What about you?”

“Well,” he said as a grin slid along his smooth jaw. “I know what you’re doing. But we never had sword fights up my hollow. And we don’t talk funny, either.”

“Let me tell you something, Eugene. You might not think you talk funny, but the minute you step foot out of these hills, everyone else will think so. Next time you read Shakespeare, just substitute guns for swords. The best thing, though, is to read what you want to.”

“Got one for me?”

“Still want short stories?”

“Yup.”

I gave him books by Mary Hood and Larry Brown.

"Georgia and Mississippi," I said. "Talk about talking funny."

He slipped the books in his bag. Students flowed around me, the twang of their accent bouncing off the concrete walls. The day's assignment involved reading a poem that used the word "waning." Sandra said she didn't know the word.

"You're an English major," I said. "This is a writing class. When you don't know a word, you should look it up."

"I can't look up every word I don't know," she said.

"Sure you can, Sandra. In fact, you're supposed to. That's how you learn new words. I know one guy who makes a mark by a word he looks up so he can know if he's searched for it before."

"Well, I went to school in the hills," she said. "There's a lot of words I don't know."

"I understand."

"Since you're from the hills, you should give me a break."

"No way," I said. "That's even more reason not to give you or anyone else a break. You can't think that way. That's buying into the whole victim status we've been given. The federal government thinks that way, and they throw money at the problem. This college tells new faculty that the students are a 'special population.' Do you know what that means? It means they don't expect anything from you. Once you think you deserve special treatment simply because of who you are, you're in a lot of trouble. You are then participating in your own subjugation. As long as we act like dumb hillbillies, people will always see us that way. The stereotype comes from within the culture, not from outside! We must defy the expectations, not feed them! We cannot voluntarily participate in our own social oppression!"

Out of breath, I stopped and looked at the faces of the students. Some were visibly upset. Others showed the familiar glazed expression of having turned inward for protection. I realized that my yelling was in itself a form of oppression.

"Class dismissed," I said. "Go look up the word subjugation. I'm sorry I yelled."

The class left silently, no one remaining behind. I walked out of the building, thinking that I was the same as a father being cruel to show cruelty was wrong, or a boss belittling workers to increase morale, or a preacher judging his flock. I had just behaved in a way that I had always despised.

Sandra was waiting on the sidewalk outside the English building, an expression on her face of shame and dismay. She wanted to talk in private, and we walked half a block to my office.

"I lied," she said.

"What do you mean?"

"About why I didn't look up that word. I don't have a dictionary, Chris. I'm sorry, but I don't have one. I never saw one except in school. I don't even know where to get one."

"You can get one in a bookstore."

"I've never even been in a bookstore, Chris, not a real one. They don't have one where I'm from. The college bookstore is just textbooks and T-shirts. I'm sorry, but it's true."

"How old are you?"

"Going on 20."

"Well, you're on the same track as me, Sandra. I went to my first bookstore when I was 19. I had to leave to find one, too."

"Morehead's where I left for."

"It was the first step for me. Maybe you can go a little farther."

"I've thought about it," she said, "but I don't have any idea where."

She stood to leave. I grabbed the dictionary from my desk, a hardback college edition, and offered it to her.

"Please," I said. "I want you to have it."

She took the heavy book. Her lips pressed together, and her eyes got wet.

"Thank you," she said. "No one ever did anything like this for me."

"You deserve it, Sandra."

She nodded and turned away, then spun back and gave me a quick hug, the dictionary between our bodies. She hurried from the office. I sat for a long time, realizing how ignorant I was of my students' needs. The first lesson was mine, not theirs.

Source: *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (May 31, 2002) . <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v48/i38/38bo1201.htm>. Used by permission.

RANDOM THOUGHT: WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT

by Louis Schmier

I just had a teacher ask me, "What do you think is the most important part of being a teacher."

To be honest, I don't have an answer. I don't know what THE most important part of being a teacher might be. I do know what the most important part of being a teacher is for me. It is keeping ablaze that burning desire to learn.

I don't mean learning about my subject. That's the least of it, and the easiest part of being a teacher. I mean learning about myself, about each student whom I serve, about others around me. In this age of high speed access to information, we must be wary that we don't get swept up in undervaluing the need for the skills of reflection, pondering, and rumination. I am my own raw ore and I am my own smelting plant. As I challenge my prejudices, as I question my preconceptions, as I ruminate on my perceptions, as I ponder my biases, as I reflect on my fears, as I think about my negatives, as I destroy my idols, I can help others help themselves do the same.

Make it a good day.

—Louis—

Source: www.therandomthoughts.com. Used by permission.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS--“RE-IGNITE THE FIRE WITHIN OR | FACING THE TEACHING SURVIVAL GAME”--TSCA CONVENTION 2003 - CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS--OCTOBER 8-10, 2003

By Teresa J. Lee

You wake up an hour-and-a-half earlier than usual because you're afraid of being late. The night before you weren't able to sleep more than two hours at a stretch. Instead of being tired, you're wide-awake because you're so nervous. Will the kids like you? Will you make a mistake? Will you know any of the answers? You put on the outfit you laid out the night before, the perfect combination of clothes that says you're hip, comfortable, but still authoritative.

All of us spent years training for this day. Four years of college followed by at least one semester of student teaching. But no number of classroom lectures or hours in front of real students at an experienced teacher's side can adequately prepare a teacher for that day when he or she has to stand up in front of a room full of kids for the first time and try to help them learn.

When thinking of a convention theme as Vice President last year, I thought to myself, hmmm.... What do I know a lot about would generate incredible panels for VP Hart to work with? And what do I know a lot about that I know other speech educators in Texas could relate to? Well, the one thing I knew I could answer both of these questions with was...**burnout!**

My first day in front of a classroom in Oklahoma was pretty much a catastrophe. I came to school and there was no chalk in my room because I didn't know I had to buy my own. I didn't have any textbooks for the first two weeks of class so I went out and bought some used Theater books from the bookstore so my students would have something to read and use in class. I was stuck in this tiny, old smelly classroom with 36, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders who never stopped talking or moving, usually hitting one another or jumping in and out of their seats. I thought I had it all under control after the first week so I decided to take this class on stage to practice stage directions and a 7th grade girl decked an 8th grade boy out cold for calling her a name. What did I deserve to get this as my first public school teaching job? I was young, bright, full of ideas, and passionate about helping kids learn. After a semester, I moved to Texas and began working in a district that had a great reputation and prayed would support me and provide me with the basic necessities for running a classroom. Well, they did and teaching got much better. I could have burned out after my first year, but thankfully found ways to overcome my stress levels caused from teaching.

Sandy Ewing, a motivational speaker and theorist on employee retention and career burnout, defines burnout as, **“A physical, emotional, and mental state of exhaustion caused by a demanding environment and/or the inability or desire to meet the demands necessary for success. Untreated burnout can lead to health problems such as high blood pressure, headaches, insomnia, stomach ailments, weight gain/loss, and much more.”** Well, I don't know about you but I've experienced the definition and result of burnout a few times during my 21-year teaching career. I know at some time in our professional and personal lives, everyone experiences some sort of burnout; hopefully you can learn some strategies this week to survive the challenges of overcoming burnout.

So, this convention theme, “Re-ignite the fire within.” Within. Yes, that means inside the body, mind, and the spirit. This convention's theme focuses on Stephen Covey's seventh habit for highly

effective leaders-**sharpen the saw**, this habit teaches us the daily process of renewing our physical, mental, spiritual, and social/emotional selves. Without this renewal, or the re-igniting the fire within” it is scientifically proven we can no longer sustain or even think of increasing our capacities and capabilities as educators or any other role we take on in our lives as we experience the extinguishing of our inner-flame, or other words, burnout.

According to the article, *Teacher Burnout, 1997*, research indicates teachers leave the profession due to either unreal expectations or harsh working conditions. Basically, the system wore them out. The long hours, the low pay, the unruly students, and the ineffectual administration all combined to make them reevaluate why they went into teaching in the first place. And for many, the result of the evaluation is “not for this.” It’s estimated that nationwide as many of 50 percent of all new teachers leave the profession within five years. Does it surprise you that we are told that we are supposed to take care of everyone else in our classroom FIRST before we take care of ourselves? Most educational theorists insist that success in the school setting can only happen if there is sacrifice. Sacrifice on the part of those responsible for the education of students-the teacher. I know that as a young education student in college I was never prepared for the stress level teachers encounter on a daily basis. We were not prepared to discover that the teaching profession was not always going to be “rewarding!” We were not prepared to discover that we would not always make a “difference in the world” because no matter where the bar is set, there will always be someone out there raising it higher and higher with students performance becoming lower and lower each year. We were not prepared to encounter the unrealistic and often overwhelming demands society has placed on the shoulders of all those in the profession of educating the youth. So is it a wonder that our passion for teaching, or that “unquenchable fire” has died out? Is it a wonder that so many educators leave the field to go to work in a less stressful, higher paying field?

So, what do we do to “re-ignite the fire within?” How do we survive the effect of career burnout? I know this may sound crazy and WAY too simple, but survival **MUST** come from taking care of our selves first! In a culture that labels **self-care** as “selfish” or “uncaring,” it takes courage for anyone to insist that the act of **self-care** is best for everyone. Within our profession, we much learn to establish healthy boundaries between our personal and professional lives. Most of you sitting in this audience today think those are one in the same. For the good of the students you work with, and the friends and family who care for you, we need to preserve ourselves for the time that we are here for them. Eventually, we all reach a limit where we realize that although we do several things well, we find we cannot do all of them well at the same time. You may be a great teacher, professor, coach, mentor, administrator, manager, husband, wife, sister, brother, daughter, son... but you cannot be great at these roles if you are playing them all at one time.

In life, renewal is a must! You must grow, change, and continuously improve to meet the daily challenges of a changing culture, customs, and classroom. Renewal is a lifetime journey that we can progress one small step at a time.

Studies on burnout suggest that to overcome it, organizational leaders must promote a healthier, more stable, productive and rewording work environment ALONG with encouraging their employees to take time for their personal lives. I think we, as teachers and professors, department chairpersons, administrators and mentors need to stress this not only for ourselves, but for our students as well. Here are the steps to overcome burnout:

Step One: Effective Communication (imagine that)

- A. Open up the lines of communication with all parties involved
- B. Set realistic and achievable goals
- C. Offer rewards for reaching goals
- D. Speak on your audience's level-leave buzzwords behind
- E. Follow up and don't just give people "lip service"

Step Two: Keep Employees (Students) Challenged

- A. Find creative ways to avoid ruts and monotony
- B. Make everyone accountable
- C. Have different parties take on active leadership roles
- D. Provide incentives: money, praise, contests, gift certificates, comp time, freebies

Step Three: Provide Career Development and Educational Resources

- A. Educating is cheaper than recruiting and hiring new employees
- B. Never consider any training opportunity a waste of time or inapplicable
- C. Try not to mandate training- believing that you can MAKE someone learn not only wastes time, but money

Step Four: Provide the Tools and Resources Necessary to do the job

- A. Provide the equipment necessary to do your job
- B. Provide the training and knowledge of how to use the equipment
- C. Promote a spirit of cooperation and not competition among the staff
- D. Motivate people to help one another with projects and share ideas
- E. Teach your staff how to work smarter, not harder

Step Five: Be Flexible with Deadlines and Projects

- A. Plan alternative deadlines and contingency plans to be flexible in case of conflicts.
- B. Show genuine care and concern for employee's issues, problems, and challenges meeting deadlines
- C. Don't think conflicts are always excuses-work with people and you may be pleasantly surprised of what you can get from them

What can you do to overcome burnout?

- Do relaxing activities
- Organize your time and set your priorities
- Maintain a healthy diet and exercise
- Discuss your problems with professional colleagues
- Take a mental health day, or two

This is all common sense, but we have to keep hearing it and trying to accomplish what we know is best for all of us because we are teachers, and overachievers and have the tendency to try to fix everything and everybody but ourselves first! Although it may be difficult for us to preserve the unquenchable fire that burns within each and every one of us, hopefully you will find ways to renew the flame in the upcoming months.

Treat yourself to time with your loved ones. Go out to dinner with friends and family. See a movie just for fun! Take a nap! Use convention to renew old friendships; establish new ones to our profession. Gather as much wisdom and insight as you need to help you face the ever-changing, challenging field of communication by attending these wonderful workshops and seminars others have planned for us. Remember, the leading reason teachers leave their positions is stress. It is my hope that you leave Corpus Christi and Convention 2003 relaxed, renewed, excited, ignited, and ready to overcome the obstacles of daily life as an educator. Treat yourself well, so that you are able walk into your workplace environment this Monday, energized and ready to face the game of “Teacher Survivor”-ready to “outwit, outplay, and outlast”.

I want to leave you with a passage from a book I recently read entitled, “Wake-Up Calls: You don’t have to Sleepwalk Through Your Life, Love, or Career! By Eric Allenbaugh. He notes, “Remember, What I focus on in life is what I get. And if I concentrate on how bad I am or how wrong I am or how inadequate I am, If I concentrate on what I can’t do and how there’s not enough time in which to do it, isn’t that what I get every time? And when I think about how powerful I am, and when I think about what I have left to contribute, and when I think about the difference I can make on this planet, then that’s what I get. You see, I recognize that it’s not what happens to you; it’s what you do about it.” I want us all to survive the Teaching Survival Game and Re-Ignite the Fire Within.

Source: TexaSpeaks (TSCA Newsletter) for TCCTA Convention. Used by permission

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

(All times are 1:30 - 3:00 PM CT unless indicated otherwise)

FEB. 26, 2004	THE REAL COST OF ONLINE COURSES
MARCH 3, 2004	ANNUAL CARL D. PERKINS RFQ TELECONFERENCE
MARCH 25, 2004	COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES (COLTS)
APRIL 8, 2004	CYBER INSECURITY? PREVENTION AND PROTECTION SOLUTIONS
APRIL 20, 2004	MAKING MENTORING ACCESSIBLE: INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHER INDUCTION
APRIL 21, 2004	TEXAS SUCCESS INITIATIVE
JUNE 2004 (TBA)	DISTANCE LEARNING NURSING RE-ENTRY PROJECT

Programs to be streamed and available via the Internet include:

FEB. 2004	COOPERATION, COMPASSION AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM
MARCH 2004	CHANGE YOUR MIND AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE (WELLNESS)
APRIL 2004	CRITICAL THINKING: REQUIRED LEARNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
MAY 2004	CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM USING THE INTERNET
JUNE 2004	ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN THE PROFESSIONAL SETTING --a special three hour in-service program for professional counselors and healthcare providers
JULY 2004	DOES YOUR ONLINE COURSE NEED EXTRA CREDIT TO PASS?
AUG. 2004	RETIREMENT PLANNING FOR EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES

Education is not preparation for
life; education is life itself.
--John Dewey

EVALUATE “LESSONS THAT LAST”

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, rate the videoconference in terms of its value to you.

	Excellent			Poor	
Timeliness of topic	5	4	3	2	1
Program’s format	5	4	3	2	1
Moderator	5	4	3	2	1
Panelists or Instructor	5	4	3	2	1
Handouts	5	4	3	2	1
Technical quality	5	4	3	2	1
Overall evaluation of program	5	4	3	2	1
Local site activities were held?	____ YES		____ NO		

1. Institution name: _____

2. My current position is: (circle one)

a. Faculty

c. Classified Staff

b. Administrator/Professional Staff

d. Other _____

3. What did you like most about the videoconference?

4. What could have been done to make it more valuable to you?

5. What topics would you like to see addressed in future videoconferences?

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