Flower for a Teacher

Edwin Romond
Retired

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by Edwin Romond

I’m here to place a rose in this room where he taught my sophomore English class. I want to leave a tiny flower with a mighty beauty to honor a teacher who never threatened us, never got in our faces but did get in our hearts. He taught us the tragic soul of Death of a Salesman, introduced us to Laura in The Glass Menagerie, to Holden in Catcher in the Rye, and opened the door to poetry in all its splendor and truth. And we learned how to write because of all his hours of giving our words on loose leaf his scholarly attention. He didn’t yell, he didn’t insult us, he was demanding but never demeaning and he never let the specter of the S.A.T. get in the way of authentic learning.

So I’ve come to this room 50 years later to thank with a flower the soft spoken priest who asked almost as much of us as he did of himself and gave me the model of English teaching excellence I could only strive for but never attain. I leave a rose here in memory of Father Carlton, who stirred in me a passion for literature and writing, who every day in this classroom quietly changed my life.

Edwin Romond is the author of eight collections of poetry and has been awarded writing fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and from both the New Jersey and Pennsylvania State Councils on the Arts. In 2013 he received the New Jersey Poetry Prize for his poem, “Champion.” Garrison Keillor has twice featured Romond’s poetry on National Public Radio and his memoir, “The Ticket,” appears in Tim Russert’s New York Times bestseller, Wisdom of Our Fathers.