

men's writing about sexism should serve that end. But I also recognize that men are not likely to venture forth as moral soldiers striving to end sexism unless they perceive it to be in their simple self-interest" (*Proving Manhood*, U of California P, 1977, xii). And men's self-interest is tied to the pain and difficulties that compulsive masculinity sometimes causes them. Certainly, Bob's scholarship focused on the harms of manhood rather than its privilege. In his introduction to the issue of *Pre/Text* he edited, he cites a litany of wounds tied to masculinity: men attending college in fewer numbers than women; men experiencing more school disciplinary problems than women; men committing more crimes than women, and killing other men in large numbers, and so on. The danger in focusing on how men are harmed by masculinity is, of course, that it is easy to lose sight of men's entitlement. Bob tried to walk that tightrope. He was not always successful in my view, but I admire his attempt to strike a balance. He is one of the people who have helped me realize that working on masculinity issues is not an either/or proposition, that we somehow have to pay attention to men's privileged positions at the same time that we consider the ways masculinity damages them.

I do not think that Bob would have ever dared to claim that he had everything figured out about manhood, that he had the answers. More typically questions permeate his work on men's studies and composition. Conversation defined his interests more than finality, as is clear in his reply to comments made about "Teaching and Learning as a Man." He writes in his response to Cathleen Breidenbach that he wants the essay "to begin a conversation about the construction of masculinities in the college writing class, not to finish one." The roundtable I participated in with Bob took place because he and Gesa Kirsch had a lengthy discussion about their responses to one another in which they both realized that their differences were not so extreme.

Bob and I never met at the next year's CCCC convention and had our conversation, and now I feel that loss more than ever. For one reason or another, we drifted our separate ways. But I am comforted by the conversation he began about men's studies in composition, and by his willingness to make a space for me in the discussion.

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Saying Farewell to Bob: A Twisted Turn of Fate

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When Robert J. Connors died suddenly and tragically on June 22, the discipline lost an extraordinary scholar, a man of letters, a man who believed in the life of the mind. Many of us lost a friend, a teacher, a mentor. Professor Connors became my teacher at the University of New Hampshire in 1986, and my professional and personal lives have since been the richer. As I write this, I cannot forget Bob's recent memorial tribute to his own teacher and mentor, Edward P.J. Corbett. I am incredulous, angry, railing at the gods for this twisted turn of fate that now has me doing the same for my teacher. And yet, I am honored and hope that by writing I will begin an act of healing, both for myself and for others who knew him professionally and personally.

Bob was a complicated guy in some ways. He was "Robert J.," the quintessential academician, a tad stuffy at first glance, a bit traditional. And he was "Bob," the truck driver and biker, his hair blowing in the wind—anything but the quintessential academician. I first knew Robert J. through his publications. His writing awed me. I could only imagine the man behind such eloquent prose. "Textbooks and the Evolution of the Discipline," "Mechanical Correctness as a Focus in Composition Instruction," "Historical Inquiry in Composition Studies," "Composition Studies and Science"—none of these are topics I would choose to write about, but all are beautifully crafted arguments in stellar prose. I was lulled, mesmerized, hypnotized into believing his arguments by his seamless, smooth, and polished academic style. Here was an academic writer to emulate.

It was Robert J. I had expected to meet when I first arrived at his office on a hot August day. But it was Bob, the man who wrote not for *Rhetoric Review* but for *Yankee Magazine* about the humor of, and his compassion and fear for, a little skunk who, in dire straits, wandered around the yard with a jar stuck on its head. "We are so glad you decided to come to UNH," he said. "We need people like you." Foolishly, I thought he was going to say something about my potential as a member of the profession, perhaps a word about a paper I had submitted with my application. But no, for that would have been Robert J. Connors and this was definitely Bob Connors: "What got you in were all those A's in trapshooting. But Sherrie, why did

you take the easy way out and withdraw from the rodeo classes?"

Later, we walked out of the building together, Bob heading for the library and I for my car parked in front of it. He was like an eighteen-year-old when he saw my maroon, 1971, Boss 302 Mach Mustang. (Months later he drove it and thanked me for never having put stabilizers on the rear.) In this moment I knew I had a mentor, but I also knew I had a friend. And while I am at the moment bereft at the loss of this friend, I will keep him alive in my heart and mind not only by remembering these more personal moments, but also by continuing to teach his work to my students. I want my students to know the joy of his prose, to grapple with the historical tales he has spun, to see historical method in action.

Like all of you, I will miss cracking open the newest volumes of our premier journals to read what Connors has set before us. We will miss his thorough scholarship, his attention to detail, his treasure hunts for obscure primary sources. We will miss his contributions to our discussions on teaching and our understanding of our history. We will miss his intellect. We will miss his wit. Until we meet him again, I like holding a vision of him sitting around a Burkean parlor of sorts with James Britton, Don Stewart, James Kinneavy, Jim Berlin, Ed Corbett, and Jim Corder, gleefully engaging in a bit of male agonistic rhetoric. Until then, Bob, *adieu*. And yes, I still have some things to say to you about this agonistic rhetoric stuff. . . .

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