

Thinking Of Ron Reed

Richard «Mort» Morehouse...

The Monday morning I opened my email to find a message from Michel Sasseville that Ron Reed had died of a heart attack, I did not think it was possible. I had just spoken with Ron on Friday. A month earlier he had been at the NAACI conference in La Crosse. We were planning a joint writing/editing project with Tony Johnson. This project was just starting and Ron was the inspiration for it.

Flying down to the funeral on Wednesday evening. I was overwhelmed with memories. We met in 1980 at PEEK - the Pocono Environmental Education Center, a sort of a Mendham before Mendham. Even though I was new to Philosophy for Children and Ron one of the trainers, somehow he was not intimidating; he was accepting, welcoming. He made me feel like I had something to contribute. He was one of several people who welcomed me to Philosophy for Children.

After PEEK, we stayed in touch by phone. When he started *Analytic Teaching* that year, I submitted my second professional article to him for consideration. To my surprise, it was accepted. I was welcomed again to this quirky group of scholars.

Later, we talked about having a book review section for *Analytic Teaching*. Ron said he thought that it was great idea - and was I interested in being the book review editor. This was Ron, delegating and inclusive. With his encouragement, I accepted the task.

We also exchanged teaching invitations - he taught once at Viterbo with me, and I with him twice at Texas Wesleyan University. It was a great joy to teach with Ron, to see both sides of his teaching; his student side - relaxed, easy-going, and casual, and his teacher side - thoughtful, scholarly, and overprepared. Ron worked very hard to make teaching look easy. I became aware of the long hours that he put into those relaxed classroom discussions. It was great fun to see him work in and out of class.

After passing *Analytic Teaching* on, Ron would always ask before publication, what will be in this issue? After it arrived in Texas, he always called to say how much he like the issue. He wasn't very good about subscriptions though. He always renewed the Library subscription several years ahead and let his own subscription expire.

Ron was also a great gossip. Not a mean-spirited gossip, a chatty, did-you-know-that-this-is-happening gossip, filling in personal details of what was happening in Philosophy for Children. Because of Ron, I didn't feel like an outsider, he was always inclusive and looking to the future. At the NAACI meeting

this July, his concern was «How do we cultivate the third generation of Philosophy for Children scholars and teacher trainers? Now without his presence, that task will be even more of a challenge. But it is a challenge that we need to take up in his name.

His work at Texas Wesleyan University had those same qualities of including people and building for the future. He introduced me to students and faculty at «his» University, some of whom I still keep up with and who have become colleagues and friends.

Ron will be missed as a scholar, and a friend. It's hard to believe that I have not spoken with him on the phone in over a month. I miss him.

Tony Johnson...

I met Ron Reed in 1980 at a Southwest Philosophy of Education Society meeting in Edinburg, Texas. Through the years we taught together, planned numerous Philosophy for Children conferences and workshops together, and, more recently, began to write together. Though we rarely saw one another more than once a year, we developed a friendship that transcended the geographical boundaries that separated us. We talked frequently about Philosophy for Children, about our families, and - almost daily this past summer - about our writing projects. I miss him more than words can convey, but I am thankful for knowing him and look forward to working on projects that we had conceptualized together.

Ron Reed was many things - a devoted husband and father, an outstanding scholar and writer, a down-to-earth friend and colleague - but, most of all, he was a teacher. He combined a «natural» ability to work with people of all ages and backgrounds with a willingness to reflect upon his own teaching in a never-ending quest for better, more effective ways of helping students of all ages to appreciate and practice the skills of thinking. His ability as a scholar is superseded only by his mastery of the art and craft of teaching. It did not matter whether his students were New Yorkers or Texans, Australians or French, Ph.D. candidates in philosophy or third graders, Ron connected with them first as human beings and then helped them in building bridges between their lived worlds and the world of ideas.

Again, I am thankful for Ron's friendship. I loved him like a brother and am a better scholar, teacher, and human being for having known him. I know that others have similar feelings, for Ron - like all great teachers - truly impacted the lives of all who knew him.

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Jeremy Reed...

My first memories are of snow, cold winds and Canada. There were memories from before in Brooklyn in Park Slope. I do not remember that time, but photographs and my father's words have

almost made them into fond memories. In Canada, we lived in an apartment complex with speed bumps in the parking lot. It was there that I learned to ride my first bicycle, with my father trailing behind. It was in Canada during that time that my sister was born. *My* father and mother were in love, and our house was full.

Soon after we moved to Rochester, New York, because my father had completed his doctorate, and had taken a job. *My* dad became our baseball coach, my brother's and I. He loved baseball, but he hated dealing with the parents. He hated having to decide who plays what. Which is odd, because year after year, he was our coach. It was in New York that I first remember hearing Bob Dylan records being played when we ate. It was here at our house on the corner of Dorking Road, that we played basketball in the driveway. *My* mom planted rhubarb on the side of the house. Along with the neighbor, my dad converted our attic into a bedroom for my brother and me. *My* father was never very handy with tools because he just didn't care for that kind of work. But, he did it anyway. That room my brother and I shared in the attic remains my favorite of any bedroom I had growing up. And I remember taking trips to New York City in a faded, blue Volkswagen bug. *My* dad in front driving, and controlling the music. *My* mom beside him, controlling us. In the back of this small car was my brother, my young sister, myself and our dog, Tuesday. Rochester is an eight-hour drive from New York City, and we went there often.

When we moved to Texas, I remember thinking of two things: rattlesnakes and the Dallas Cowboys. I remember how excited my father was to begin teaching at Texas Wesleyan University. I remember wearing corduroy pants to school, in the one of the hottest summers Texas or I have ever known. I wore them because I was the son of a philosopher and that is how we dressed. I remember the nights around the dinner table as a family, eating spaghetti and listening, still, to Bob Dylan.

When I was in my late years of high school, I began to truly realize how brilliant this kind and funny man was. I began to read biographies on Dylan and Phil Ochs, and, with the guidance of my dad, I discovered Jack Kerouac, Thomas Wolfe and F. Scott Fitzgerald. I had so many questions, and he had all of the answers.

Once, when I was on my way back to college at Southwest Texas State University after spending a weekend at home, my car broke down on the highway. I called my dad, and within an hour he was there to pick me up and take me the last two hours. But by the time we got there, it was midnight, and he still had to drive the three hours back home. He taught his class the next morning after only getting a few hours of sleep. I can still see the look in his eyes; he was beaming with happiness because he knew he got a chance to help me out. And, I owed him. He was funny like that, in the same way that a child plays tag.

Learning from my father was easy. I graduated from Texas Wesleyan University in 1991, but it was those discussions outside of the classroom, with my father at lunch and in his office, that I learned everything that makes me who I am.

As I read back over this text, I think I shouldn't be sad, but grateful. But, I am in tears. Having my father for so long, being so good to me, makes it all the more unkind. Like all of my family, I love my dad very much.

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Rebecca Reed Pfleger. . .

My father was the first man that I ever loved. It was so easy to love him. My dad always made time for me and my brothers, and he and my mother showed us what it meant to be a family.

My dad joked with me when I would get in my «reminiscing moods.» I think he thought that I would rather be in the past, than in the present. Well, at this moment he would be right.

As a little girl, I can remember taking trips to visit family in New York My most vivid memories are of my dad and I taking «our» day into Greenwich Village. We would hold hands, walking around trying to locate the cafe we had visited the summer before. (I am not sure if we ever went to the same one twice.) Dad and I would get a bagel with lots of cream cheese, apple juice for me, and coffee for him. We would sit, talk, and people watch. We would make up stories about the people and laugh. At the end the day we would go to the bookstore, and he would buy me a book. Looking back now I guess that might have been his way of getting me to read. When the day ended, I was a little sad, but always knew there would be next year.

I got married November 15, 1997. I was nervous that day but I think my father might have been a little more nervous. I went into his bedroom that morning, Jeremy and my mom were helping him put on his tuxedo. He looked so handsome, and at the same time so out of character. I had never seen him in a tuxedo. He just smiled that wide grin, and said, «I look good, don't I?» The four of us just laughed, and at that moment I was as happy as I could be. As we were about to walk down the aisle, he looked at me, with tears in his eyes and said, «This is it, baby!» I gave him a big hug and whispered «I love you, Daddy». Walking down that aisle, with my father holding on, and my future husband in front of me I felt like I could conquer all. As Dr. Schrum asked, «Who gives this bride away?» my father, for the first time in my life, was at a loss for words. He finally remembered, but with a bit of hesitation. I think my dad just could not believe that I was getting married. Dad and I danced. I cried, and he laughed. Jeremy, Mom, and I had kept the song a secret, and he was determined to find out but never did. As we danced, we talked about how happy he was about Wade and me being married. He was a very proud father that day.

My dad became the life of the party that night. Wade and I commented to each other how talkative he was being. My mom and he were out on the dance floor, grooving and moving the entire night. Then the d.j. called for all the men to come to the dance floor - little did they know what was in store. Then all the women had to pick a partner and roll up the men's pants above their knees. It was «The Best Legs» contest. I thought my dad was going to die. His face got all red as he strutted across for all the women to see. My father would end up winning that contest and being teased about it for months. He was a good sport.

The memories I have of my father are very special. My dad was a very kind, generous, and loving man. For as long as I live, he will always stay in that special place in my heart. I love you, Dad.

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Gerard Vallone...

When I learned of Ron Reed's untimely death, I was saddened by the loss of a friend whom I had just seen after an absence of several years, which seemed like only yesterday. And I thought of John Henry Newman's description of a gentleman as «...one who never inflicts pain. ... If he engages in controversy of any kind, his disciplined intellect preserves him from the blundering discourtesy of better, perhaps, but less educated minds, who, like blunt weapons, tear and hack, instead of cutting clean, who mistake the point in argument, waste their strength on trifles, misconceive their adversary, and leave the question more involved than they find it. ... his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home.» Gentle Ron, we love you. We miss you. Be with us.

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Gil Burgh...

On our last meeting together, Ron and I made a delightful discovery. Our favourite Bob Dylan album of all time was *Street Legal*. It may not seem like much, but it's a very nice thing to share together.

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