What Comes First: Writer or Teacher?
by Margaret D. Bauer, Editor

I can remember the name of just about every teacher I ever had, fondly, for the most part, whether for particular subjects they inspired my interest in, or for the life lesson an experience with them taught me. Indeed, the few I don’t remember positively taught me important life lessons, too, even if it was to be more appreciative of having had so many more good than not-so-good teachers.

As a teacher, few unexpected emails are more welcome in my Inbox than one from a former student reaching out to say thank you: “You may not remember me, but I was in your class in 20— (or even 19—) and . . . ” (I usually do remember them.) My favorite is still: “. . . and I just wanted to say thank you for kicking my a**.”

For twenty-five years now, I have tried to balance my two vocations: professor (and all that entails — teaching, research, service — my fellow academics understand) and editor (and all that entails, which seems to increase annually as we strive to fulfill our mission at NCLR to the best of our abilities). Even as they overlap, both are full-time jobs. But not once have I considered changing professions. While the workload can be overwhelming, as in low salaries and insufficient school funding, as in teaching without respect we and our fellow teachers have earned in the classroom and in the countless hours of service beyond the classroom. And maybe we need to take the initiative: the essays on Paul Green and Paul Green: A Professor of the Practice of Playwriting by Michaux Dempster 34 Carolyn Kizer: Flamboyant Feminist at Chapel Hill the John Ehle Prize essay by Marian Janssen 50 “That’s how we learn”: Ben Fountain Talks with Student Veterans at East Carolina University compiled and introduced by Anna Froula, with Sheena Eagan 84 “an artist’s artist, y’all: weird, unique, and oh so smart and talented”: An Interview with Leah Hampton by Christy Alexander Hallberg photography by Bayard Wootten 118 “The business of writing and the work of reading”: A Conversation with Wiley Cash by Jim Coby photography by Mallory Cash

For writer (and editor)-teachers, lessons extend beyond the classroom. And maybe we need to take our lessons to the public podium and demand the respect we and our fellow teachers have earned in the classroom and in the countless hours of service beyond the classroom. Let’s educate those who still believe teaching is an 8 to 3, five-day a week, summers off job. Dispelling ignorance is, after all, what we do. 

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