

Anyone who has taught for forty-five years – with forty-four of those being at the same place – is bound to evoke a variety of responses from students. Most of these come from people who, having had the prof. for only one class, don't really know him very well. From these thousands (in my case the number is in the five figures), comments run the gamut from "he walks on water" to "he's the spawn of Satan"! Sometimes, though, an entire class has something to say: I have been flattered to have been the recipient of many cards signed by whole classes, by rounds of applause at the end of a semester, and by *ad hoc* party invitations (e.g. from Muslim students breaking their Ramadan fast). Students will simply never know how much such expressions of appreciation matter to a teacher.

Outside the classroom, there are students who need extra attention, sometimes during a given semester, often over many semesters – in some cases for hundreds of hours. A few become lifelong personal friends, others say "thank you" and are gone – like ice sculptures melting away. (A few get back in touch after many years, surprising you with words so kind your own mother might have written them.) Below are four examples of notes that will touch me for . . . a very long time. Behind each is a tale; more importantly, behind each of these particularly is a person whom I admire.

"Dear Mr. Como,
. . . please accept this [Mexican chess set] as a token of my appreciation for being the Socrates in my life. It is difficult for you to realize how grateful I truly am for all the things you have done for me in all the years you have known me. I cannot thank you enough."
– Carol M., 1976

"Dear President Davis,
. . . Dr. Como . . . made a real difference in the tone and depth of my education. . . . Not only did [he] grant [us] the ease to express our convictions, he also challenged us to be honest. . . . My experience in Dr. Como's class was profoundly satisfying. . . . I thank him for his courage." – Mrs. Irene Andrews, 1994

"I just want to thank you for all the extra time you took with me throughout the semester. I thank you greatly for those talks we had. It is sad news to know that you'll be retiring, but I hope it will be a [wonderful] time for you and your family after you leave the place that you have been working at for over 40 years. And Speech 101: an experience I will never forget, not the course – but the Professor! You not only helped me prevail but also made me more human. Thank you again – for everything." – Z.A., 2011

"Hi Professor Como. As you know, on June 3rd I attended Commencement at York College and officially graduated as a Bachelor of Arts in History! I wanted to take this time to offer my sincerest thanks to you for acting as my mentor during my time at York. It was because of your guidance, patience and generosity that I was able to stay focused on my academic interests. I will continue to use what you have taught me in order to excel both academically and professionally. Once again, you have my lasting thanks." – Emmanuel Thelusma, 2011