

had a great opportunity to practice translating. We were allowed to witness a live weather report. I found this very interesting since it looks totally different watching it from behind the scenes. On the whole, this was a phenomenal educational experience for both Tom and me; consequently, it has opened my eyes to a new possible career opportunity.

As I continue my process of reaching my goal of becoming internationally employed in Germany, I often stop and think of how deprived I would be if I had not had the opportunity to begin my study of German in high school. Every year schools across this country consider cutting the foreign language classes from their budgets, and some already have. I know that not everyone will feel as strongly about learning a foreign language as I do, but it has helped me to see part of the world that I may never have seen; and it has given me the basic tools to build my career goal. With our global economy growing so rapidly, it will only benefit students to continue to fight for keeping the foreign language classes in their schools and to enroll in as many as possible. The more languages you know, the more options you will have to choose from in your careers.

THE CARING TOUCH

William W. Porter III

Biology/Pre-Med
Preble High School, Green Bay, Wisconsin

The Sunday was like any other Sunday in March. I did homework all day because I had procrastinated until the last day of the weekend to do it. At ten o'clock I went down stairs to watch the evening news with my father. The leading story was about a tragic car accident. A man, whose name I never learned, side-swiped another car on his way home from a bar. He knew that he was drunk and would get arrested if he stopped, so he sped off. He ran a red stop light at sixty miles an hour and slammed into a car with two young high school girls. One of the young ladies had her neck snapped and died instantly. The other girl, alive when the paramedics arrived at the scene, bled to death before she could be cut out of the mutilated steel that was once a car. The girls' names were not listed because they were both under eighteen, but they announced that they went to a high school other than mine. It was, however, revealed that the drunk driver's blood alcohol level was at 0.2, twice the legal limit in Wisconsin. I remember feeling oddly relieved by all the information given because I

assumed I didn't know the young ladies that were murdered. This was the last I thought of the accident for three days.

My first hour class was, as commonly called, "Bio with Berken." Mr. Berken was a young biology teacher who taught an exciting class. He was always thrilled to see his students. Likewise, he was always playing the proud husband and father, boasting of his family's deeds. He was always listening for new ideas for research and labs we could do in class. Mr. Berken always encouraged his students to take their own creative approach to learn the class material. I remember that Mr. Berken once spent an entire weekend devising a method to extract DNA from plants so we could use it in an experiment. The creative procedure that he devised for our class was based upon meat tenderizer. He was also the teacher that had his door open during lunch hours and was always there for a needy student. He was full of energy, and everybody loved him in and out of the class room.

Wednesday morning, three days after the accident, I arrived to school and went to class as normal. However, when I got to class, Mr. Berken was not yet there. This was highly unusual. A few minutes after the bell indicating the start of school rang, Mr. Berken came into the room with a solemn look on his face. All his normal energy was absent. The class sat silently, knowing something important was going to be said. Wayne C. Booth, an English teacher, once wrote about students and teachers, "If and when they discover something to say, they will no longer bore us; and our comments will no longer bore them" (316). Although Booth wrote of students boring teachers, it is an age old fact that the converse is also true. This was one of those days when we, as a class, knew that Mr. Berken wasn't going to bore us with a lecture like his job required him to do on occasion. Mr. Berken had discovered something to say, and he had our undivided attention.

Mr. Berken surveyed the class for a few minutes. All of the sudden he started to yell at a student. The student was wearing a shirt promoting alcohol. This was against school policy. However Mr. Berken usually turned the other cheek on the matter. Mr. Berken told the student to go out in the hall and turn his shirt inside out. This was common practice among the teachers who enforced this rule on a regular basis. The entire class sat in silence until the student returned.

Mr. Berken then picked up a picture off his desk and taped it on the chalkboard. He made all of us go to the front of the class and look at the unfamiliar man in the picture. Based upon the paper the picture was printed on, we could tell it was out of the newspaper. The man in the picture was scruffy looking around the face, but was smiling the same way

a sheep smiles naively walking into the slaughter house. He was wearing a dingy red sweatshirt that had "Budweiser" written across the front of it and a pair of faded blue jeans. The man was shackled in handcuffs.

The only actual words I remember Mr. Berken saying that day were, "I'm sorry about the scene about the shirt. I never understood the rule against alcohol shirts in school. I used to think that it was just a bunch a bullshit. Students against teachers and teachers against students. But I was wrong. The rule is there to try and teach and impose some responsibility into students."

Mr. Berken, with a look in his eyes that I had never seen before, then explained that the man in the picture was the man that killed the two girls in the car accident. He also explained that this picture was taken at his trial the previous day. Mr. Berken was enraged because the man, who had just killed two young women, wore a Budweiser shirt to court. The man also insisted that he was innocent because he was drunk at the time.

I had a vision of my sister, my parents, my children getting murdered in a senseless and unnecessary car accident. I could feel the rage as I saw myself sitting in a court listening to a man proclaim that it wasn't his fault that my loved ones were killed because he was drunk. Suddenly, I understood the desperate look in Mr. Berken's eyes. It was the look of a man who had seen his wife, his children, his students killed in that car accident. It was the look of a man who desperately wanted an explanation for something that could never be comprehended. I finally understood what the lesson of the day was. Mr. Berken taught me about drunk driving in a way that I will never forget. He taught me that lesson with a desperate passion that I have never seen in a teacher before.

Still today, almost a year later, I remember this lesson. Some people say that you forget eighty percent of what you learn. I say this is not always true because I remember one hundred percent of that day's lesson. I absolutely refuse to get in a car with someone who has been drinking. For me, this has meant missing curfew and being punished and having to walk several miles to get home. I will always be grateful for that day's lesson by Mr. Berken. It was a lesson that was not in any of the class literature, but was taught because Mr. Berken had the caring touch.

Works Cited

Booth, Wayne C. "Boring From Within: The Art of the Freshmen Essay." *The Norton Reader*. Eds. Linda H. Peterson, John C. Breston, Joan E. Hartman. Shorter Ninth Ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996. 313-324.