

## Great teachers live on

BY MARTY WHITFORD / Editor-in-Chief

**S**ooner or later, all great teachers die — but in many ways they live on in the minds, hearts and works of their best students. We all remember our favorite teachers in grade school, high school, college and even on the job. Though we might not always realize it, family members and friends also share lessons that live on through us at work and home.

One of the best ways to honor our favorite mentors is to “pay it forward” and readily share the gifts they have so freely bestowed upon us. Here are just a few of life’s great teachers from whom I’ve been blessed to learn:

► *Lois Violand, my English teacher in the seventh and eighth grade* — Diagramming sentences was her forte. And because of it, deconstructing and reconstructing sentences became my life-long love.

► *Father Bernard Streicher, S.J., an English teacher at St. Ignatius High School* — This Jesuit nurtured my obsession with words and sentences, and extended it to paragraphs and organized stories.

► *Ann Schierhorn, my feature writing coach at Kent State University's School of Journalism & Mass Communication* — This professor taught me that every person, place and thing has a great story behind it, and that it’s our calling as writers to unearth and breathe everlasting life into each story.

► *Master Chief Petty Officer Grimm of the United States Navy* — “The Grimm Reaper” made a man out of me, and dozens of others, in eight long weeks of boot camp. Every morning, he showed us how

a trash can makes an excellent alarm clock when hurled down our barrack’s floor at 3 a.m. And every night, before we turned in for five hours of sleep, he made us use toothbrushes to scrub away the many scuff marks made by that trash can as it steamrolled down our pristine floor. On the last morning of boot camp, there was no 3 a.m. trash can wake-up call. It was Grimm’s last lesson: If we work closely together and never give up, we all will have our day.

► *James Whitford, Dad* — We are both life-long students and teachers.

► *Patricia Whitford, Mom* — A life lived for others is a life well lived.

► *Timothy Feeney, my beloved uncle and godfather* — Hard work and fun can, and should, go together.

And most recently, Adam Gaspar, my dear friend of 36 years, taught me how to live, and die, with honor, courage, gratitude and love. After a courageous 10-month battle with brain cancer, Adam — a 42-year-old husband of 20 years and father of six children ages 21 to 11 — went home to God on Sept. 30. I recently had the honor of working with God, and my past and present teachers, to breathe everlasting life into Adam’s story:

[www.landscapemanagement.net/  
AdamEulogy](http://www.landscapemanagement.net/AdamEulogy).

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