

## In Memoriam: Charlie Moran (1936–2015)

ANNE HERRINGTON

Charlie Moran was the quintessential WPA: He had vision, he was a collaborative leader, and he knew how to build sustainable programs. One of Charlie's enduring legacies to UMass is the university writing program, a program that Charlie conceived and led from 1982 until 1990, although in an interview with former graduate student Mya Poe, Charlie, the quintessential collaborator said about creating it, "I didn't do this myself!"

He built that program around key principles that remain sound today. I think he would want us to remember these:

- We learn to write by writing and receiving feedback.
- The primary texts of a writing course should be students' writing.
- Writing is central to intellectual life in all disciplines and thus, the development of students' writing abilities is the responsibility of all faculty.

Two corollaries that Charlie modeled by example: 1) teachers of writing should be writers themselves and 2) teachers of other writing teachers should be writing teachers themselves.

Charlie's impact on the profession comes not only through his work at UMass and his scholarship but also through the work he did on so many committees of our key professional organizations and in the generosity of spirit he manifested in all he did and with all of us with whom he worked.

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PETER ELBOW

Charlie gave strong and creative administrative leadership. He set up the UMass writing program in such a politically savvy way that there was almost no bad feeling or even tension between the literature folk and the comp folk. How rare and precious.

He was a master at providing both structure and freedom. I've long cherished his unique form of focused freewriting (an exercise to be used only after students are practiced and comfortable with pure freewriting—nonstop, private, and no topic). He started by giving the class an interesting or perhaps startling fact. The one I like to use is this: “when I ask my first year students to write about important moments in growing up, we often hear more about fathers than mothers.” Then he would ask them to do focused freewriting for ten minutes (still private and more or less no stopping): Then he asked them to write as many more-or-less single freewritten sentences as they could, each one beginning with, “This might mean . . .” He emphasized quick and creative and sometimes controversial thoughts. This helped students harness the freewriting muscle for creative, imaginative, and sometimes analytic thinking.

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CYNTHIA SELFE AND GAIL HAWISHER

Sometimes it just doesn't make any sense to wait until a person is gone before we recognize all they've contributed. This is especially true for people who give a great deal: those who pioneer fields, shape the profession's fundamental direction and tenor, contribute generously of their time and effort to colleagues both junior and senior.

People in the field of computers and composition felt this way about Charlie Moran, who we proudly considered one of our own. In 2003, the *Computers and Composition* journal broke with the professional habit of naming awards for colleagues who had already died and named an award for Charlie, who was very much alive. We created The Charles Moran Award for Distinguished Contributions to the Field, in honor of the twentieth anniversary of the journal. Charlie was a living role model to us, and we wanted to recognize his exemplary scholarship and professional service to the field.

Charlie contributed so many publications to the field—books, articles, chapters—even as he supported the growth of the journal as a valued member of the editorial board. Charlie sat with us over countless dinners and drinks, presentations and committee meetings, workshops and institutes. He was what we all wanted to be: innovative and experimental, active and engaged, committed to good teaching, open to all sorts of possibilities and experiences, gentle and yet wickedly funny.

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BRUCE PENNIMAN

The Western Massachusetts Writing Project, which Charlie co-founded in 1992 and served as site director until 2003, was the site of our longest and deepest collaboration. Like many other teachers, I call the Writing Project my professional home.

I participated in WMWP's second summer institute in 1994. Soon after, Charlie asked me to join the leadership team. Many others could say the same. We all grew into leadership because Charlie encouraged us to tackle problems and design solutions, even in areas where we had limited experience.

Eventually I had the awesome responsibility of stepping into Charlie's shoes as site director. I have tried hard to emulate his practice of creating supportive spaces for others to lead, and I am very grateful to have him—present tense—in my life.

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MISSY-MARIE MONTGOMERY

I found out about Charlie's death early one morning before co-facilitating a collaborative workshop we were holding on our campus when Zan Goncalves (a friend from graduate school whom I hadn't seen in years) told me the news.

Charlie was a true mentor for me in graduate school. I was a single mom at the time and a first generation college student, so graduate school was a foreign planet to me. I immensely doubted my ability to navigate this world. Charlie's courses were never easy, but they were so intellectually interesting and engaging that I was fascinated. I vividly remember passing Charlie in the halls of Bartlett one day; he commented on something I'd written for class, telling me that I was smart and insightful. It was his casual comment that I carried in my pocket—that kept me in graduate school.

Sixteen years ago, with Charlie's enthusiastic letter of recommendation in my file, I applied for the job I have now, a job I love. And this morning, as my friend shared the sad news, I wanted to weep, and I wondered how I'd be able to go in to the workshop at all. But of course I had to. And what better place to be at that moment than in a room filled with people fired up to be talking about teaching. I could feel Charlie there.

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PAUL LEBLANC

Charlie was my mentor, my guide, eventually my colleague, and my friend. Yet Charlie was something far more than a mentor. With the curiosity and

delight he brought to almost everything he did, we worked side-by-side with him, and he convinced us that what we were doing was more than just useful. Charlie made all of us who worked with him feel like *we mattered*.

We wrote together, and he was generous to share the authoring credits when so often he was the source of the intellectual and stylistic substance of whatever piece we were doing.

I learned from him that it is always about doing good work for students and being with quality people and never about status. Most of what I know about mentoring was modeled by Charlie. He set the standard.

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