

From: **Loren Salter** <lorenfsalter@hotmail.com>

Date: Sun, May 8, 2011 at 9:51 PM

Subject: RE: Tin Cetic...

To: millawithlove@gmail.com

Milla,

I am sitting here at the computer in tears. I am so overcome with humble gratitude to you for sharing this with me. I would never have known that there were feelings as powerful out there for me and for my teaching had you not contacted me with your son's letter. These disclosures are so "transformingly" raw and heart felt that I am dumbfounded and floored by that they came from a boy of 12! I do remember Tin. I remember the disbelief, even hostility at first, toward me and toward our drama class. He wore his heart on his cuff, and his feelings played across his face...he was unable to disguise them. I also remember his slow change from disbelief to belief...and his working through his fear. His work was ever so laudable!!!

Please know that as a teacher I was not unsympathetic to hostility. I saw it, knew it for what it is, and worked even harder to unlock students from the fear that ignites the feelings that they will not live up to themselves, go wanting, be left behind, not be included...in short: fail. I know that in their youth, they blame the one who sets that fear directly in front of them. I took his challenge very seriously. Tin stood his ground, and behind my teaching persona, I remember loving his courage, deeply respecting his sticking-to-it, and was rewarded by him as only a teacher can be rewarded: by his growth and belief in himself!!!

But this letter goes even further than that. It reveals the whole story with a modest unpretentiousness that astonishes me in anyone of mature years...but at 12 years old, it stands as the most beautiful expression of trust in a teacher that I could ever hope to be rewarded with. I struggled to love my students, not with a sentimental, gushy, or needy affection, but with "tough love" gloving the hand of empathetic understanding of their struggles in the classroom, on the campus, with their peers, and with themselves. I tried, sometimes at great odds, to teach the WHOLE CHILD and not just my subject matter. Tin honors me greatly and I cherish his words.

I retired that year: June of 2003. They were downsizing...especially those of us who were "over the hill" and were costing the district more than the teacher just entering the profession. I had a wonderful career "in the trenches" (as it is frequently said of Junior High/Middle School). I retired very rewarded by my career of service to young, struggling adolescents. Your son's letter will be framed and hung on my wall (right next to my three degrees, 5 teaching credentials, and various educational honors and awards for teaching. It will be the only student's letter to hang there. I will prize it above much that it hangs there with.

Tears of gratefulness are still running down my cheeks. I do not know how I missed this letter, but you are a saint to recover it and to share it with me. I am now 70 years old, happy and healthy. However, I am so much more rewarded to know that I was of such high service to your son...a very rare and special young man.

In deepest gratitude to you and to your son,

Loren F. Salter