

# IN MEMORIAM:

## CMC LOSES LONGTIME TEACHING LEGEND HAROLD WILLIAM ROOD



### “ROOD WAS A GREAT POET.

*He was able to talk about anger or love in such a way that showed us what it was like to be in anger and to be in love. He did the same with his love of country. He seduced us this way into thinking, and we loved it, and we loved him for it.”*

He was known as a variety of things: tough grader, intense academic, devoted professor, walking encyclopedia, obscure scavenger hunt organizer and—in the words of his wife, Juanita—a beautiful man, in whose memory former students have been calling and e-mailing to share their deepest sympathies. On Thursday, October 6, 2011, CMC lost teaching legend Harold William “Bill” Rood, the W.M. Keck Professor of International Strategic Studies, Emeritus. Dr. Rood died at his home in Manchester, California, in Mendocino County, after battling cancer.

*The following are remembrances that have been shared with the College, and with fellow CMCers, since his death.*

Bill was punctilious when speaking to every one. He unfailingly used whatever title or honorary form of address due as an indication of his respect. His academic achievements, while stellar, were matched by his richly developed humor and his impeccable courtesy. I have had the great good fortune of knowing two true gentlemen in my life and the blessing of being married to one of them.

— *Juanita Rood*

I am so sorry to hear about Dr. Rood’s passing. He was one of my favorite professors. I took my first class from him I think as a sophomore, or maybe a freshman. We called his reading list, “Rood’s student library.” I remember buying a box load of books for my first class with him. It turned out, they weren’t required reading or even to be discussed in the class—they were books he thought you should read! He was right and I still have a number of them. I remember writing a long, long paper for him and in the last page, where I summarized the brilliant points I was sure I had made, he circled the paragraph and wrote: *This of course is simply not true. B+* Still one of my favorite reviews. He was a great professor.

— *Robert Milnes*

Professor Rood was a brilliant, passionate and gentle teacher, the rare kind that challenges you to think through the bigger picture, connect the dots, work harder and respect the lessons of history. I feel so fortunate to have had him as a teacher and thesis advisor, and also grateful for his intervention with library officials when those terms forced an all-night trespass to collect the requisite primary sources. Thank you, Professor Rood, you will always be remembered by a very grateful and fortunate student body.

— *Laure Darcy ’86*

Professor Rood was by far the most important educator I have ever had. He was an extraordinary American. I am not alone ... I would audit Rood classes (which we termed Rood raves) that I couldn’t fit in my schedule.

— *Harry McMahon ’75 P’08 P’09*

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Although I never had Professor Rood...the stories are legendary: the map projects, the term papers and his commutes between Palo Alto and Claremont. One story in particular is noteworthy: Professor Rood would often be in Northern California when term papers were due. A large stack (2-feet high or more...) of term papers would be stacked outside of his office door. One student believed that Professor Rood would not be able to carefully read all these papers before grades had to be submitted. The student then inserted the following sentence in the middle of his 25 page term paper: *Professor Rood is an a\*\*h\*le*. The student picked up his graded term paper a week or so later— on the cover was a note stating: *See comment inside*. The student opened his term paper to the sentence he had inserted. Written next to the sentence in felt tip ink was: *SOURCE?* The student still got an A.

— *Doug Malcolm '77*

Harold Rood was the professor we would call home about, the one who defined our collegiate experience. His class took us on a poetic journey through counterintuitive thought— where he would explain that exactly the opposite of what we read in the newspapers was more likely the truth. He was usually right.

— *Luke Stedman, CGU '96*

This entirely American man, loving and kind and sweet, was a great teacher. ... Rood didn't test the logos in the same way; he didn't simply grab the truth as it revealed itself in front of him. Rather, he talked and the story came out about how men wanted to live rather than die, and what they may then do, and why that is always so. He was able to portray things outside of our experience in such a way that we could see the shining stars above to be the same as the shining campfires in the soldiers' tents below. Rood was a great poet. He was able to talk about anger or love in such a way that showed us what it was like to be in anger and to be in love. He did the same with his love of country. He seduced us this way into thinking, and we loved it and we loved him for it.

— *Peter Schramm\**

He was not some scolding professor with a pointer in his hands and a frown on his face looking down his nose at you and your pathetic efforts through spectacles perched on the end of his nose. No. He was much more likely to be smiling, passing around the classroom some sort of weaponry (I have distinct memories of his charging a trashcan with a bayonet attachment!), and perhaps squinting up at you or off into the distance as he gave serious thought to something a student had asked or said. He was just a more experienced soldier showing the new guy the ropes. And he took to that and to us as a calling, and with a fervor few professors can hope to approximate.

— *Julie Ponzi\**

Professor Rood was a truly great man and one of the reasons I so enjoyed my time at CMC. I started as an econ major and changed to poly sci simply because I was taking so many of his classes! He was a brilliant man who inspired one to think about international issues that were not always so enjoyable to contemplate. I was at CMC from 1980 to 1984 during a period of the Cold War when saber rattling was at a peak. The comment that he always had time for his students is certainly true, but you had better be prepared in your questions and for his responses for he did not suffer fools ... I have never written about a professor before, but none have had the impact on my life as did Harold Rood. I shall miss him and wish him God speed.

— *John Anderson*

A liberal once mocked him: "Professor Rood seems to think only of power; surely he doesn't think of power when he's in the bedroom!" To which Rood responded, "Buddy, if you don't have power in the bedroom, then you're really in trouble." He was unfailingly kind to all his students, not just those who breakfasted at Walters. I once made a crack about "the spoiled young men at CMC," and he replied, with his characteristically sad eyes: "It'll be hard for them soon enough. They'll learn when they must."

— *Joe Woodard\**

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How could one person combine such a kind and gentle soul with such a brutal assault on conventional wisdom and muddled thinkers? Bill taught us all not to be afraid to think out of the box. Isn't that what teaching at the college level should be about? He built courage of conviction one student at a time. "That was the way it was in the real world" at CMC, thanks to Bill.

— *Jim Roberts\**

In one of his classes, I gave a presentation on the military organization of the Roman Empire. I brought a book with me that had a centerfold with a marvelous picture of a Roman legion standing in a field with the different cohorts color-coded. Joe Woodard was one of the students in the class. As I held up the book and revealed the image, Joe said, "That's beautiful. I want one!" Another student said, "You want what, the legion or the book?" Rood piped up, "If you had the legion, you could get the book." It was impossible not to love a man like that. I loved him. Rood looked like the Grinch who stole Christmas after his heart enlarged. Rood had a great heart and great courage.

— *Ken Blanchard\**

Professor Rood was instrumental in my career decisions and in encouraging me to go East to university at the Fletcher School and pursue a career in international development. He was indeed an inspiration and helped us to think critically while retaining a sense of humor and a deep knowledge of world affairs. Of all my professors, he and Professor Harry Jaffa stood out and represented the best that Claremont had to offer.

— *Peter A. Hall*

In Claremont, your education was deemed deficient if you did not frequent the "Rood Awakenings" held over breakfast at Walter's, the local Afghani restaurant. The man taught me how to read a newspaper, especially during the Cold War. Then there was the time we took Rood to see Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V*, with Rood reciting passages en route from memory. (He preferred Laurence Olivier's movie version.) Sobering to think he's no longer with us. May he rest in peace.

— *Lucas Morel\**

One of my favorite memories of him was when he asked, rhetorically, if the United States would get the attention of the Russians if we sailed a carrier battle group into Helsinki Harbor. Since then I always appreciate the value of having a strong Navy—and lots of aircraft carriers. And that's coming from an Army guy.

— *Steven Eggert '82 P'15*

He was one of the great inquiring minds on campus. Being around him makes you think twice and dig deeper. And he had a remarkable impact on his undergraduates. He seemed to always have a group of students that formed around him, like the nucleus of an atom has electrons. They were kept together by a magnetic quality he had.

— *Jerry Garris*

Bill startled and shook up generations of CMC students. He taught them to distrust much of what passes for news, to question idealism, to look beneath the surface of events to geo-political realities, and to face up to the perils of life in an uncertain world.

— *Alan Heslop*

One of my most pleasant memories of CMC is Harold Rood, which says a lot when the college had not completed its transition from a men's school. He always seemed to have a blue collar under his academic tassels ... He epitomized the penetrating questioner, the steely eyed evaluator, and the wry smile belying silent, secret knowledge (like my uncle, who never had the chance to get an education). Bless them both.

— *Thomas A. E. Hesketh*

What a wonderful tribute to an amazing man. Dr. Rood was a legend even before he left us. Thank you, President Gann, for reminding me of someone so inspirational. He is already missed.

— *Debbie Starr*

Harold Rood and Martin Diamond were my two favorite teachers at CMC. I did not know until I read the Memoriam that he arrived the same year that I arrived: 1962. He impressed me immediately, as already being a major contributor and scholar regarding American diplomacy and military might. He apparently then went on to 50 more years of great contribution to political thought.

— *Anson Rego*

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It is a sad thing that I will now have to submit to CMC another of my “Remembering...” pieces. I had indulged in a fantasy of somehow getting Professor Rood to come to our next class dinner—a very long shot, I know, but a fun thought. I am very saddened to learn of his passing.

— *Dan Goldzband*

I was very sorry to hear about the death of Professor Rood. He was one of my favorite professors at CMC.

— *David F. Cooper '66*

We always thought he had been a spy because he on occasion would have men in grey suits audit his lectures.

— *Robbin Cromer-Tyler*

Very sad...  
He was a great professor.

— *Tom Rees*

I hadn't seen him since 1988, but I have thought of him often and his teachings continue to guide me.

— *Mark Palmer*

Sad news of a substantial loss. Thank you for the thoughtful obituary. He will be missed.

— *Geoff Mousseau*

Thank you for the e-mail. This is very sad news indeed. Dr. Rood was my thesis reader and a wonderful professor.

— *Ed Trumbull '84*

This hurt. He was one of the truly amazing professors I had at CMC.

— *Tom Leppert '77*