Donald M. Murray
Writer, Teacher, Friend
1924-2006

“Never a day without a line.”

2007 Conference on College Composition and Communication
Winter Storm Lessons

No school and side staggered
by icy wind we ran to Winthrop's
sea wall, waited for the seventh wave
to draw back, then curled our mittens
round iron railing, braced rubber boots
watched the entire Atlantic rise
until there was no sky.

Lee, our middle daughter, sunniest of all,
lay in the comfort of tubes, wires,
green monitors that read her secrets,
so recently a woman. In turn
we spoke words to her unhearing brain.
I was last. I nodded to the nurse
and Lee was gone.

When my nurses, summoned to my bed
by electronic chirp, looked down
excited by the exercise of their craft,
I saw that great Atlantic wave, blackgreen,
crash down, remembered to keep my mittens
tight round iron rail, yet knew Lee
was waiting, my smiling daughter still.

murray 2/2/90

Early in 1990, Don spent a week working with high school
students and their teachers at Iolani School in Honolulu as the
holder of the school's annual "Keables Chair," created to honor a
former English teacher and celebrate the teaching of writing.

During that week Don taught several classes daily,
demonstrating the importance of "lowering your standards until
you can start," and trusting in revision to get the writing "right."
His audience was a tough group of naive 9th graders, jaded
seniors, and (sometimes skeptical) English teachers, some of whom

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still believed that if students couldn’t write a good sentence, they
shouldn’t be allowed to write full paragraphs. By the end of the
week, students’ attitudes toward writing had greatly improved, as
had the writing instruction in many classrooms!

I had the honor of hosting Don in my classroom for that week.
The poem in this booklet began there and developed over several
days while my students and I engaged in parallel work under his
tutelage. Don’s wisdom and generosity taught me lessons about
both writing and teaching that I continue to share with students in
my English methods and English Education MA classes today.

-Kathleen Dudden Rowlands
No school and we rushed to the sea wall to study winter storm. Side staggered by icy wind that caught our laughter, bent it back across our throats, we waited for the great seventh wave to draw back that rushed for the front row, slipping into foam. Until we could curl our mittens over the iron railing, brake our rubber boots, watch on the great Atlantic white background, white plume of snow spraying up and down, spinning us back. We hung on, then a moment of guilt, until the seventh wave back. A new rising wave.

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Winted Stream Lesson

No school and side staggered by icy wind we ran to the sea wall at Wintry Beach, washed up in seventh wave to such back to hostage, wait curled our mittens over iron railing, brake our rubber boots, watch on the great Atlantic white background, white plume of snow spraying up and down, spinning us back. We hung on, then a moment of guilt, until the seventh wave back. A new rising wave.

26/96

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