Richard Straub died on Saturday, January 5, 2002, as the result of an accidental fall that occurred the previous evening. Rick had spent the holidays in his hometown, Dunmore, Pennsylvania, with his parents, Joe and Eileen, his older brother, Joey, his younger sister, Carol, and his nieces and nephews. On the evening of the accident, his dad was taking him to the airport to catch a 9 p.m. flight to London, where Rick was to have taught this semester as part of Florida State University’s International Program.

Richard Straub is highly regarded for his outstanding scholarly work on responding to student writing. He wrote numerous articles on response and published three books with Hampton Press: The Practice of Response: Strategies for Commenting on Student Writing (2000), A Sourcebook on Responding to Student Writing (1999), and Twelve Readers Reading: Responding to College Student Writing, with Ronald F. Lunsford (1995). When he died, Rick was in the final editing stage of his fourth book, Key Works on Teacher Response to Student Writing, a book he described as “a collection of the 24 most frequently cited works on teacher commentary from 1950 to 2000” that includes “a critical introduction to the scholarship on response and a comprehensive bibliography.” With the help of Ron Lunsford, Rick’s close friend and former teacher, Boynton/Cook-Heinemann plans to publish the collection later this year. Rick’s article that appears in this issue is the last manuscript he prepared for publication. He mailed it to Peter Vandenberg just four days before the tragic accident that claimed his life.
While I hold in the highest esteem the valuable contributions Rick made in helping us as composition teachers learn to more effectively read and respond to our students' writing, I value him most of all for being my mentor and dear friend for over fifteen years. I first met Rick in the fall of 1986, his first semester as a faculty member at Florida State University. He had finished his graduate work at Ohio State the previous semester and had come to FSU as our first hire in composition and rhetoric. His first day as a faculty member was my first day as a graduate student working on a PhD in literature, and after my first course with Rick the following spring, I switched. Rick was the finest teacher I had ever had, and his passion for wanting to help students grow as writers was contagious. I wanted to be just like him. I took every course he taught and worked closely with him in my capacity as graduate student coordinator of FSU's Reading/Writing Center while Rick served as the RWC Director. I worked with him as I studied for my preliminary exams and wrote draft after draft of my dissertation under his direction. Later I had the privilege of becoming his colleague as I served first as Director of FSU's Reading/Writing Center and now as Director of the First-Year Writing Program.

Rick Straub had a quick wit and a beautiful smile. He also had a fiery temper and loved a good argument. He was a devoted son, brother, and uncle, and the best friend anyone could ever hope to have. He was always there for me, even when he was thousands of miles away. Rick stood up for me and defended me, even when I didn't deserve it, and on a couple of occasions, even when I didn't want him to do so.

The last time I talked with Rick was on Friday morning, January 4, the day of his tragic accident. It was almost 10 a.m., and I was about to dash out of my office for our beginning-of-the-semester spring TA meeting. The phone rang, and I thought it just might be Rick, so I took time to answer. He called from his parents' home in Dunmore to tell me he would be thinking of me as I stood in front of "my" TAs, that I would do fine, that he wished he could be sitting in the back of the room, and that he was proud.

I can imagine no one who has ever set a finer example of what it means to be a stellar scholar, teacher, mentor, and friend than did Richard Straub. We are indeed richer because of the life he lived and the person he was.

Tallahassee, FL