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Thank You Note

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Thank You Note

David Schelhaas

You signed your letter of request “one of your slower students,” intending, I suppose, modesty and acknowledgement that you were not an “A” student. You were slow like a philosopher—meditative, reflective—always with another question that took us deeper into the subject during those long talks in the library when I should have been shushing the other students in my care. “I remember your reading us a poem,” you write. “I think the poet was Sandburg, but I was never able to find the lines.” And then you quote two lines, exactly, though twenty-five years have passed since you heard them, and, Oh Yes!, you began Dear *Mr. Schelhaas*, that sweet high school respect lingering though now you are—in your middle forties—almost my contemporary. You ask me to help you find the lines and I am happy to oblige: Section 37 of Sandburg’s *The People, Yes*.

Thank you. Thank you for listening and remembering and bothering to write and ask me the question. Like a cloud the size of a man’s hand, your note drifts through my consciousness reminding me of all those seeds sown that may have grown and blossomed, set fruit that I will never see, and thus affirming in a small way what I did in that classroom, though I will make more of it than I should, bragging to my wife and friends: “Twenty-five years,” I will say, “and he remembers some lines he heard me read just once,” and Thank you for validating in a smaller way poetry which doesn’t need it because young men and women will always be looking at the stuff of the moon on an old pond and make of it a “wide dreaming pansy in the night.”