

For Immediate Release

Novelist, Teacher, “Dangerous Writing,” founder Tom Spanbauer, ‘The Godfather of Portland’s Writing Scene,’ dies at 78

Author Tom Spanbauer, best known for his cult classic *The Man Who Fell In Love With The Moon*, his award-winning final novel *I Loved You More*, and his long-running Dangerous Writing workshop, died Sept. 21, in Portland, Oregon, following a long battle with Parkinson’s.

Spanbauer's novels are lauded for their narrative lyricism - a poetry all his own - and for his unflinching exploration of what it is to be human, all of the messy beauty. Or as Tom would often say: “Oh, the humanity.”

“It has been the battle of my life to speak what is in my heart openly and with a clear voice,” he once wrote.

Tom was born in a trunk in the Princess Theater in Pocatello, Idaho. Not really. The Princess Theater wasn’t there anymore by the time he came on the scene.

Here’s the truth: Tom really was born in Pocatello, in 1946, to be exact. He grew up on a farm 12 miles outside of town and he lived as big and beautiful a life as any man born in a trunk in the Princess Theater ever could have.

His novels included *Faraway Places*, *The Man Who Fell In Love With The Moon*, *In The City of Shy Hunters*, *Now is the Hour*, and *I Loved You More*.

His impact in the literary world reached far beyond the pages of his books, producing a lineage of writers and students who continue to publish, teach and pass on his philosophy and language.

In 1991, shortly after the publication of *Man Who Fell In Love With The Moon*, Tom moved from the Lower East Side of New York to Portland, Oregon, where he began teaching Dangerous Writing at his kitchen table. The workshop continued for more than three decades in his home and around the world.

In that time, he met his spouse/partner of 22 years, Michael Sage Ricci, with whom he lived until the end the of the life.

His workshops produced hundreds of writers who consider what they learned to be “basement table MFAs.” More than 50 of Tom’s students went on to publish novels and memoirs, most

famously Chuck Palanuik, who wrote *Fight Club* and *Invisible Monsters* during his five years in Tom's workshop.

Tom's great gift as a teacher and writer was a profound intuition and compassion that led characters and students softly into the dark of their own beating hearts. That was the 'danger' in Dangerous Writing.

"It is a terrifying thing to bring your inner life out of the closet and read it aloud to a group," Spanbauer wrote about teaching the workshops. "I must listen for the heartbreak, the rage, the shame, the fear that is hidden within the words. Then I must respect where each individual student is in relation to his or her broken heart and act accordingly."

Tom lived the way he wrote and taught, with a generosity and authenticity that continues to ripple out.

He attended St. Joseph's Catholic School and Highland High School, in Pocatello. In 1969, he received his BA in English literature from Idaho State University. Tom served two years in the Peace Corps in Kenya. He returned to Idaho until 1978, when he decided he needed to get out. He moved to New Hampshire, then Vermont, then Key West, Florida.

Tom earned his MFA at Columbia University in 1988, where he studied with minimalist editor Gordon Lish, while waiting tables at Cafe Un Deux Trois and Odeon and working as the super of five buildings on East Fifth Street.

In 2015, Tom won the 27th annual Lambda Literary Award, Winner of Gay General Fiction for *I Loved You More*. The same year, he won The Stewart H. Holbrook Literary Legacy Award, from Literary Arts in Oregon. He was also the winner of the 1992 Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award for best fiction.

Tom was predeceased by his mother Marie, father John, and brother John. He is survived by sister Barbara Hart, niece Jamie Hart-Millen, grand-niece Lily Hart, nephews Nick and Cody Spanbauer, all of Idaho, his adopted Indian Brother, Clyde Hall of Fort Hall, Idaho, his lifelong best friend Mendy Graves of Seattle, and his beloved spouse/partner of 22 years Michael Sage Ricci, with whom he shared a home with in Portland Oregon.

There will be no formal funeral service at Tom's request.