

Glorious Reality: Presidential Fretting About the ALAN Workshop

Chris Crowe, ALAN President, 2002

Reality is cruel.

When I was nominated to run for president of ALAN, I was flattered and briefly entertained dreams of grandeur. If I were lucky enough to win, I thought, my friends, family, and colleagues would be so very proud. If I won, I dreamed, I would be lavished with presidential perks and presents. If I became president of ALAN, I imagined, I would get to wallow in the glory of presiding over a glorious ALAN Workshop.

So far, this is what reality has taught me:

Proud? My local friends, family, and colleagues barely even noticed when the election result were announced. "Well," asked my 16 year-old daughter, "does this mean you're going to get paid more?" When I told her no, she said, "So who cares?" "ALAN?" asked one of my colleagues. "What's that?" In an email a friend wrote, "Congratulations on winning that election, I guess . . ."

Presidential perks and presents? As president of ALAN I get the "perk" of completing pages of bureaucratic reports for NCTE and the "present" of attending long meetings about some things I care about and some things I don't. I get to spend hours and hours and hours trying to put together a program worth the time of busy teachers and others on the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving vacation.

Presiding over a glorious workshop? Aw, well, there I'm still keeping my fingers crossed. I'm sure the 'presiding' part will come to pass, but the 'glorious' I'm going to have to wait and see. Putting together a Workshop program is much more difficult than I ever imagined. I've had to review a stack of small-group proposals, decide which ones looked most interesting, and then contact each of the presenters. What I ended up with is twelve interesting and diverse break-out presentations for our program, something for every teacher, librarian, and reader. So far, it looks good, if not even glorious.

Then I got to dream about which authors I'd like to have on the Workshop program. I felt like a weak-willed dieter at the head of a buffet table as I made up my dream list of popular YA authors. It didn't take me long to get to more than 50 names. I compared the names to the previous year's program, and dropped a few off the list to avoid redundancy with Teri Lesesne's terrific 2001 ALAN Workshop. Then I started contacting publishers, asking if they'd be willing to sponsor their authors' appearance in our program. The bad news? J.K. Rowling and Katherine Paterson won't be on the 2002 program.

The good news? Even despite these tough post-9/11 economic times, publishers once again showed incredible generosity by agreeing to sponsor more than 25 authors! 2001 National Book Award recipient, Virginia Euwer Wolff, will speak at our annual ALAN Breakfast on Saturday, November 23. 2000 Margaret A. Edwards Lifetime Achievement Award winner Chris Crutcher will deliver the opening keynote

address at the ALAN Workshop on Monday, November 25.

Here are the other terrific authors who will appear on our two-day program:

Arnold Adoff	David Lubar
M. T. Anderson	Carolyn Meyer
Michael Cadnum	Susan O'Keefe
Orson Scott Card	Louise Plummer
Mark Delaney	Randy Powell
Carl Deuker	Ann Rinaldi
Nancy Farmer	S. L. Rottman
Alex Flinn	Graham Salisbury
Adrian Fogelin	Sonya Sones
E. R. Frank	Vivian Vande Velde
Adele Griffin	Bill Wallace
Kevin Crossley-Holland	Will Weaver
Jeanette Ingold	Rosemary Wells
Robert Jordan	

These good people, successful authors all, make the ALAN program look glorious already. What reader of YA literature wouldn't want to spend two days listening to this line up of writers?

But the authors are only one part of the ALAN program. After months of working with publishers to line up these authors, I faced my next presidential duty: going back to these same publishers and asking them if they'd be willing to donate some books, "only 350 or so," for us to give away to our ALAN Workshop participants. Once again, the publishers stepped up and gave and gave and gave. Their generosity amazed me. Peachtree Publishers, an Atlanta (home of this year's Workshop) company, volunteered to supply book bags for all the books. They also threw in more than 350 YA books. All the other publishers also donated books, hardcover and paperback, brand new and old favorites. If you enroll in the 2002 ALAN Workshop, you'll go home with an armload of free books! Free books, what could be more glorious?

Authors and books are very important parts of the Workshop program, but there's no promise of anything glorious unless we have a good audience there. It's the 300 or so teachers, librarians, bookstore owners, university faculty, and other lovers of YA literature who add the final element to the Workshop, creating the synergy that can make it glorious, or, heaven forbid, inglorious.

This is the one presidential reality I've yet to face, and I'm hoping that you, dear ALAN member, and your friends, will join us in Atlanta in November for what I truly do hope will turn out to be a *glorious* ALAN Workshop.