

Paul Zindel, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (1970) and over 30 books for adolescents, including the always-popular *The Pigman* (1968), *Pardon Me, You're Stepping on my Eyeball!* (1976) and *Harry and Hortense at Hormone High* (1984) died of cancer on March 27, 2003. Following are personal tributes from ALAN members; their words help us understand the impact Paul Zindel had — and has — on young adult literature.

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Tribute to Paul Zindel

M. Jerry Weiss

What words come to mind when one mentions the name Paul Zindel? Dramatic! Realistic! Tragic! Humorous! Intriguing! Innovative! Horrifying! Paul was all of these. As a pioneer in the field of young adult literature, for which he was honored by ALAN and the American Library Association, and a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, he knew how to captivate his audiences. He showed great sensitivity, recognizing that teens have feelings, and all of us are imperfect in making decisions. Paul's classic, *The Pigman*, shows what a couple of bored teenagers do just for the fun of it. Then they must face the consequences. Paul was sure that one day every teen would meet his pigman.

When Paul spoke before groups, he told how, in describing and developing his characters, he drew on both his experiences growing up in an unstable home and his years as a chemistry teacher on Staten Island. In his autobiography, *The Pigman and Me*, he begins by saying: "Eight hundred and fifty-three horrifying things had happened to me by the time I was a teenager." (Bantam Books, 1993). Explaining where he got his idea for his short story, "Rachel's Vampire," he writes:

My years in high school were ones I've drawn upon often as inspiration throughout my writing career. There were so many phantasmagoric and exciting and frightening corners of my heart in which all kinds of secrets and dreams were able to hide. More than anything, I remember high school as a time of yearning. There was much I wanted to say, so many classmates I wanted to tell my secret feelings to—but I was too shy or cowardly in high school. I met the life models (my inspiration homunculi) that often have populated my fiction, my dozens of plays and novels and movies. But there were

many others, fascinating kids who were the smaller canvasses, supernumeraries for whom I have yet to find a place. . . (Weiss and Weiss, ed., *Lost and Found*, Tor Books: 2001, p.195)

Paul was a genuine friend of teachers, librarians and students. He enjoyed listening to what others had to say. He liked the questions people asked of him. He was thoughtful, generous, practical, and creative when it came to making suggestions on writing. He'd pop a popper and say, "You have to start with a bang!" For example, in his terrifying novel, *Rats*, he grabs the reader within the first few paragraphs and never lets go. I couldn't believe what I was reading, but Paul knew that *Rats* had its genesis in something that really did happen and pointed that out to many audiences.

At his eulogy, Beverly Horowitz, his editor at Random House Children's books, told of the joy she had in working with Paul. When the suggestion of a book, *The Pigwoman*, had come up, Paul smiled and said, "Do you really think so?" They agreed it would be a good idea. At this point there is an unfinished manuscript. It is not known how many more notes are available to complete the book. Perhaps. . . .

For those who have heard Paul speak or talk about his books, movies, TV shows, and plays, there have been laughter and sighs and great respect. So many have appreciated his multitude of talents. His sense of timing and skill as a dramatist, his fast moving action, his frequent surprises reveal his superb craftsmanship. For those we are thankful.

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