

A Labor of Love: Coediting *The ALAN Review*

TAR Coeditor (with Robert Small) 1992–1998

When Leila Christenbury, Bob Small's coeditor of *TAR*, was selected as editor of *English Journal*, thus cutting short her term with *TAR*, Bob asked me to apply with him for another term, and we were fortunate to be selected. Our work over the next five years (volumes 21–25) was convenient because Bob and I were both at Virginia Tech with offices down the hall from each other. However, the process of putting the journal together during those years was still laborious. The journal continued to be published at Virginia Tech, where the print shop had switched to a computer publishing program, which meant we could do layout in a new way. We divided the duties: I did the layout and handled all the advertising; Bob communicated with authors; we both edited and proofread all copy. Articles were almost always submitted in hard copy for review and, once accepted, had to be input into a computer program. Then began the long hours of editing and proofing copy through every iteration. We even handled the mailing, with NCTE sending the labels to the Virginia Tech mail room for distribution. Our editorship covered five volumes from Fall 1993 to Spring 1998. In those 15 issues, we edited 714 printed pages.

The book reviews are a major section of each issue, and no *TAR* editor could do the job without someone to handle the many tasks involved with the book reviews. We were fortunate to have the services of two excellent editors during our term, Virginia Monseau and Gary Salvner. We could not have asked for two better people to assist us. And in order to focus on certain specific issues involving YA literature, Bob and I designated various column editors through-

out the five years, some with columns appearing in every issue, such as The Membership Connection, edited first by Kay Parks Bushman and later by Chris Crowe. Other columns were The Publisher Connection, with M. Jerry Weiss serving as editor; The Library Connection with Betty Carter; The Research Connection with Sissi Carroll; The Censorship Connection with Nancy McCracken; and The Diversity Connection with Ronn Hopkins.

For fun and to challenge our readers, Kay Parks Bushman wrote a YA Trivia column that appeared in most issues; Jim Brewbaker became editor of that column for the Spring 1996 issue and continued through our last two volumes. I always looked forward to what they were going to submit so that I could test my knowledge of YA literature, but I sometimes found myself lacking.

Every issue contained one or two articles by authors of YA literature in which they provided insights about the development of selected pieces, the influences on their work, or sometimes even an original work. For instance, our first issue (Vol. 21, No. 1) featured a short story about teaching by Sandy Asher; then, in a later issue, Sandy gave us a play about sadness and escape (Vol. 22, No. 3). In that same first issue, an article by Patricia Lee Gauch explored the writing of historical fiction. In the next issue (Vol. 21, No. 2), Paul Zindel told a story of his boyhood and the original Pigman, Will Hobbs described the story behind *The Big Wander*, and Graham Salisbury reflected on his own youth as a way of looking at how fiction fits the needs of boys. In succeeding issues, the authors who wrote for us were Marie G. Lee, Naomi

Shihab Nye, Sue Ellen Bridgers, Joan Bauer, Rodman Philbrick, Marc Talbert, Richard Peck, Shelley Stoehr, Theodore Taylor, Donna Jo Napoli, Erica Bauermeister, Richard Wallace, A. C. LeMieux, and Bette Greene.

The two-day ALAN Workshop at the NCTE Conventions continued to grow bigger year after year

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and provided us with access to many writers who would later contribute to *TAR*. During our tenure, workshops were held in Orlando (1994), San Diego (1995), Chicago (1996), Detroit (1997), and Nashville (1998), and the presidents who put them together were Virginia Monseau, Diana Mitchell, Charlie Reed, Gary Salvner, and Lois Stover.

During those years, Bob received the ALAN Award, as did Chris Crutcher, Walter Dean Myers, Bill Morris, and Mildred Taylor.

During those years, people worried that a YA literature canon was developing, and they fretted that perhaps newer writers and edgier themes might not get attention in the classroom. But with Chris Crutcher leading the way for older readers and Gary Paulsen for younger readers, the YA scene as it is today began to emerge. We published articles on gay and lesbian experiences, multicultural themes, young adult problems (abortion, cutting, eating disorders, dating violence). The romance novels that so many of us feared would lead a generation of girls to become adult readers of nothing but romance gave way to YA literature that represented the lived-in world as teens knew it. Shelley Stoehr, Joan Bauer, Norma Mazer, and others dealt openly with problems facing many girls. It was a perceptible shift that influenced what has followed.

A major contribution of our editorship was having the journal become part of the e-journal initiative at Virginia Tech, which participates with other universities to develop and sustain a digital preservation network that securely stores copies of unique library

collections at dispersed sites around the world. *The ALAN Review* archive begins with the Winter 1994 issue and provides a way for researchers to access articles from *TAR* on an approximately two-year delayed basis. The archive is not intended to take the place of subscription and membership, but is a historical depository (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/>).

When our tenure ended, Bob and I submitted a proposal to NCTE to publish *Two Decades of the ALAN Review* (NCTE, 1999), a retrospective that would feature selections from *TAR* as it grew from a newsletter to a full-fledged journal. We knew there were excellent articles in those early years of the journal that were lost to scholars, and we wanted to make them accessible again. We read every article of every issue, made our selections independently, then discussed them, and decided on a cohesive arrangement. By design, the majority of the articles in the book came from the early years under the editorships of W. Guy Ellis and Arthea (Charlie) Reed. We asked Ted Hipple, Executive Secretary of ALAN, to write a brief history of ALAN. Former editors—Alleen Pace Nilsen, Guy Ellis, Charlie Reed, and Leila Christenbury—wrote about their years as editors of *TAR*.

I was Bob Small's doctoral student who "grew up" to become his colleague and friend. The years we spent editing not only *TAR* but also *Virginia English Bulletin* often found us doing our work during holidays because that was when we had time. One Christmas Eve, we worked until late into the night finishing a stack of articles that were in various stages of the review and editorial processes. I remember feeling happy to be working with someone on a task we both enjoyed. Neither of us had anywhere else we would rather be. Editing *The ALAN Review* was truly a labor of love for both of us.

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