



Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE

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## ALAN Online News:

Remembering Jerry Weiss, Call for TAR Editors and ALAN Membership Committee Chair, Check out SYNC: Free AudioBooks for Teens!, Submit to the New ALAN Picks!

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## Remembering an ALAN Great: A Tribute to Jerry Weiss

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On Friday, March 12, 2021, the world lost a great advocate for young readers, Professor Morton Jerome “Jerry” Weiss. Jerry was preceded in passing by his wife, Helen, in 2014, and leaves four children Sharon Weiss, Frann Gersh, Eileen Weiss, and Michael Weiss, and two grandchildren, Elizabeth Pollio and Max Gersh.

A famous anecdote about Jerry involves the legendary author, Paula Danziger, a student of his in the early 1970s. When a fellow student said kids should not read books with gay characters, Paula launched her book bag at him. In response, Jerry instructed Danziger to take a vacation from class and write the book she thought kids needed. Three weeks later, back in class, the first manuscript of *The Cat Ate My Gym Suit* accompanied Paula to Jerry’s, and Paula Danziger was on her way to YA history. Such was the nature of Professor Weiss’ influence on the world of YAL.

From chairing the International Reading Association Committee on Adolescent Literature to presiding as president of the College Reading Association, Jerry’s was a tireless warrior for youth literacy. He was one of the founders of the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE, serving as its president in 1974, and receiving the ALAN Ted Hipple Service Award in 2003. He continued to write *The ALAN Review* Publications Connection column into his late seventies at the editors’ request, and he continued to attend the ALAN Workshop into his eighties because he loved learning about new authors.

In addition to having awards named after him, such as the New Jersey Reading Association M. Jerry Weiss Award, Jerry received every award under the sun, and each was well-deserved. From the College Reading Association’s Distinguished Service Award, to the Elliott Landau Award, and many more although he was not particularly interested in awards; in fact, he was much more interested in whoever was standing in front of him, what they were up to, what was going on in their part of the country, what he could do to help, what author or publisher that person might need to be connected with, or what his institutional memory could provide.

Jerry’s journal articles are too numerous to list, in the hundreds, and his books are refreshingly diverse in topic. As an author, editor, coauthor or co-editor, he published on drama, reading, paperbacks, humor, teaching methods of all kinds, high school guidance, contemporary literature, and more. In addition, he and Helen co-edited eight young adult anthologies. He was one of the first to protest learning by rote, inauthentic learning and

assessment tasks, and reading only what Ted Hipple would eventually classify as DOWMs (Dead, Old, White Men) literature. Jerry was surely “a man for all seasons,” although he preferred William Sleator to William Shakespeare.

A native of North Carolina, Jerry left high school early to join the U.S. Navy and served in the Pacific during WWII. Upon returning home, he attended Hershey Junior College (Hershey, PA) and the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill, NC), on the GI Bill. He met the love of his life, Helen, in Greensboro, North Carolina, where she was attending college, and they were married in 1950. Jerry first taught at the high school level in a small, rural school, where he found the curriculum and the literary offerings not to his liking. He was not at all pleased with the ancient textbooks and the (once again—Dead, Old, White, Men) curricular and library offerings in literature. He set about teaching English language arts in a new way. He took students to live plays at the university, and he taught them from contemporary books and recommended modern fiction through independent, self-selected reading opportunities. Unsurprisingly, in the 1950s, this did not meet with unanimous school board approval.

Some of these books had curse words! Some of these books made brief inroads into the birds and the bees! Jerry got his walking papers for using books that had not been pre-approved by the school board. This parting of ways, however, resulted in Jerry earning an M.A. in 1951 and an Ed.D. in 1952 from Teachers College at Columbia. From there, Dr. Weiss went many places. He worked for the New York Board of Education and Rhodes Preparatory School in New York City before his first tenure-track position, which was at Defiance College, in Defiance, Ohio, where he became an associate professor of English and director of reading improvement. He was then at Pennsylvania State University, University Park, in the secondary education program and eventually arrived at Jersey City State College, Jersey City, New Jersey, where he first served in the English department in reading and language arts, education, before becoming the Distinguished Service Professor of Communication in 1968. He also served as a consultant for many publishing companies, as well as board members for various libraries.

In 2006, Jersey City State College opened the M. Jerry Weiss Center for Children’s and Young Adult Literature. Tens of thousands of books for young readers are available and public and famous authors vie to be featured speakers there. The college describes the purpose of the center as to: promote the use of quality, authentic literature in the home and classroom, and to serve as a resource for teachers, media specialists, students, and parents seeking innovative ways to encourage children and young adults to explore quality literature.

These goals surely align with and honor Jerry’s life. As he, himself, once said: “We need teachers who enjoy reading and are capable of getting their own enthusiasm across to their students. A teacher is an actor, a life force. Words make impressions. Often words lead to actions.”

Here’s to Jerry Weiss: a life force, an actor, a teacher, and a man of action. He will be missed.

James Blasingame, Ph.D.  
Arizona State University

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## ***The ALAN Review is Seeking Two New Co-Editors***

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*The ALAN Review* (TAR) is seeking two new co-editors to join their editorial team. Two of our current co-editors, Mary Cate LeBeouf and Suzanne Sherman, are stepping down to make space for two new editors to serve for the duration of our term (Term ends Nov. 2023, with the last issue published Summer 2024).

As the current editors of *The ALAN Review* (TAR), we take up 2020 President Ricki Ginsberg’s call to “commit ourselves to anti-racist action.” We denounce racism, bias, and

discrimination at all stages in the TAR publication process. We understand that journal editorship and peer review are not politically neutral practices. We know that journal editors and reviewers draw on their own personal experiences, understandings, and unconscious biases when making publication decisions and we see the value of an editorial team that draws from a wide and diverse array of experiences. We recognize that representation on our editorial teams and our editorial review board lacks racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. We value all members of our ALAN community and their diverse contributions to the field of young adult literature. We welcome all scholars and currently practicing teachers and librarians to apply for the editor position, and we especially encourage Black, Indigenous and educators of color to apply.

The new editors will share a [stipend](#) (\$2,000 annually across the entire team, \$400 each).

To view the complete job description, click [here](#).

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## Congratulations to Sarah Chan: ALAN's New Webmaster!

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## ALAN is Accepting Applications for the New ALAN Membership Committee Chair

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### ALAN Membership Committee Chair Created March 2021

The membership committee chair will direct the ALAN state representative volunteers, work with the ALAN booth committee, create announcements and programming to promote ALAN, and overall work to boost membership.

The compensation for this position will be a yearly complimentary registration for the ALAN workshop along with a complimentary membership to ALAN. The position will be a 3-year term.

To apply, please complete the following:

A statement of approximately, but not limited to, 500 words describing your ideas for the position:

A positionality statement explaining your professional expertise and your identities [e.g. ability, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.]? What potential biases, assumptions, and values might inform your approach to this position?

Responses due at midnight, April 2nd, 2021 unless emailed for an extension. Email to: Mark Letcher, ALAN Executive Director: [markletcher@gmail.com](mailto:markletcher@gmail.com)  
Sarah Ressler Wright, 2021 ALAN President: [sarahressler@gmail.com](mailto:sarahressler@gmail.com)

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## Check Out Sync: A Free Summer Audiobooks for Teens Program!

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**Sync**

FREE  
AUDIOBOOKS FOR TEENS



SYNC returns April 29, 2021



**FREE audiobook titles per week starting April 29, 2021.** Teens, librarians, club leaders, and educators must register for SYNC and download OverDrive's Sora app to their device of choice.

Authors presented in this year's collection include Tim Wynne-Jones, Kimberly Drew, and Monica Hesse. Narrators who provide their skills for teen listeners this season include Bahni Turpin, Michael Crouch, and Emily Woo Zeller, among the 28 FREE available titles.

Titles are accessible in [Sora, the student reading app from OverDrive](#), and are Mac and Windows compatible.

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## Submit to the New ALAN Picks

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The new ALAN Picks is seeking articles that analyze teaching strategies designed to increase student engagement with YA texts in middle, secondary and university classroom and library communities. On this page, you'll find information on manuscript guidelines, upcoming calls for manuscripts, and author guidelines.

Check out more information on the New ALAN Picks Website [here](#) including calls for manuscripts.

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## STAY CURRENT WITH ALAN

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Don't miss a single issue of The ALAN Review or any ALAN communications. Keep us updated with your most current (and preferred) email and mailing addresses. Please let Suzanne Metcalfe ([alanya.membership@gmail.com](mailto:alanya.membership@gmail.com)) know as soon as possible if you prefer a different address or for any changes or questions.

NEED TO JOIN OR RENEW? You can do this online at <http://www.alan-ya.org/join/>. You'll find your expiration date on your mailing label right above your name.

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## Supporting ALAN

There are so many ways to support ALAN...coming to the workshop, voting, running for the Board, volunteering...and donating. Please support ALAN's Grant Projects by donating. Just click the button!

[Donate Here](#)

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## Join ALAN Today

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Get three issues of *The ALAN Review* and bimonthly emailed newsletters that provide resources, insights, and information about young adult literature in the classroom and beyond.

### Membership Rates

Individual (\$40/year\*)  
Institutional (\$50/year\*)  
Student (\$10/year\*)

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See what's happening on our social sites:



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[hstrickland@andersonuniversity.edu](mailto:hstrickland@andersonuniversity.edu)

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