

“Good Job, Jack”

A Tribute to Dr. Bushman

John H. Bushman

1940 - 2020



The Introduction

Kevin Kienholz

Emporia State University

Prof. John (Jack) H. Bushman was a genuine difference maker in the lives of young readers and writers across the state of Kansas and well beyond the borders of the Sunflower State for the past sixty years. The same could be said for so many of the students who ended up in his college classrooms and for the colleagues who were fortunate enough to work with him over the years. Jack had a positive influence on numerous people's lives in the areas of reading and writing, and he left an important legacy in the state and beyond because of his important work in literacy and especially young adult literature. The following tributes will highlight some of the many ways in which Prof. Bushman's legacy continues to impact the work and the lives of his former students, colleagues, and peers—and these stories will serve to honor the work that he did both in and outside of the classroom.

Before he became “Prof. Bushman,” Jack taught freshman English language arts at Ottawa High School from 1961 to 1965. He moved from the high school to Ottawa University, where he taught until 1971. It was in 1971 that he earned his PhD from the University of Illinois (having previously earned a bachelor's degree from Ottawa University and a master's degree from the University of Kansas), and it was at that time that he made the move to the faculty of KU, where he ultimately became a member of the Department of Teaching and Leadership in the School of Education. He retired from KU in 2005.

In the midst of Jack's teaching career in the classroom, in 1980 he founded the Writing Conference, Inc., a non-profit organization with the mission of improving the writing and reading skills of young people. For decades under Prof. Bushman's direction, the Conference sponsored important programs such as the Literature Festival, the Heartland Recommendations, and the Writer's Slate. Jack also contributed to the common good by serving as member of the Ottawa Board of Education for twelve years. His outstanding service and contributions to the profession were recognized in numerous ways over the years, including through NCTE's Edwin M. Hopkins *English Journal* Award (honorable mention, 1998) as well as the Ned N. Fleming Trust Award for Outstanding Classroom Teaching (KU, 2000). Again and again, Jack impacted the field in significant and lasting ways throughout his career, in both the classroom and throughout his community.

Of course, Jack did more than just *encourage* others to lead a life filled with books and pages filled with writing—he led by example. According to Jack's son Greg, Prof. Bushman was a voracious reader himself. Greg recalled that publishing companies were always sending Jack books for review, so he was constantly reading something. He literary tastes carried over into the theater, as well, and Prof. Bushman loved to direct plays throughout the 70s, 80s, and 90s. He also wrote and published a great deal, including his work as the co-author of *Using Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom*, among other books.

In leading by example, though, many people were influenced and nudged and swayed and ultimately influenced into the teaching field themselves, and Greg noted that one of the things Prof. Bushman loved seeing was where his former students ended up teaching. Many of Prof. Bushman's former students stayed in contact with him over the years, and he ended up collaborating with them—a turn of events which very much pleased him. It was, of course, another sign of the difference he was making in the paths that the lives of his students were taking.

After an enormously influential career in the field of education in the state of Kansas, Prof. Jack Bushman passed away on December 8, 2020. His legacy continues in the work of his many

former students and colleagues, as well as the many young readers and writers who participated in the writing contests and literature festivals sponsored by the Writing Conference over the past nearly thirty years. It is appropriate to note here that one of Prof. Bushman's favorite poems was Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," a framed copy of which he had hanging on one of his walls. This Frost poem seems like a particularly appropriate selection to consider for this occasion, since it provides readers the opportunity to consider those moments that make important differences in people's lives, and the following tributes will highlight some of the many ways in which the work, the life, and the legacy of Prof. Bushman will continue to make important differences in the lives of Kansas readers, writers, and teachers in the years to come.

The Obituary

Services for John (Jack) H. Bushman, (80), Ottawa will be at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 401 W. 13th, Ottawa Kansas, on Monday December 14, at 1:00 PM. For those unable to attend, services will be livestreamed through the Lamb-Roberts-Price Funeral Home Facebook page. His body was donated to the University of Kansas Medical Center. He died December 8, 2020.

Jack was born June 3, 1940, in Franklin, New Hampshire, to Harry and Gladys Bushman. After graduating high school, he moved to Ottawa, Kansas, to attend Ottawa University.

Jack was a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Teaching and Leadership in the School of Education at KU. He taught at KU from 1971 until his retirement in 2005. He received his bachelor's degree in 1962 from Ottawa University; his master's degree from KU in 1966 and his PhD from the University of Illinois in 1971. He also taught 9th grade English in the Ottawa Public Schools from 1961 to 1965; he was a Professor of English at Ottawa University from 1965 until 1971.

Jack was Director of the Writing Conference, Inc., a non-profit organization which he created in 1980 and was Director until 2018. The organization's mission was to reduce illiteracy by improving writing and reading skills of young people. He was also a member of the USD 290 Ottawa Board of Education for 12 years. He received honorable mention for the Edwin M. Hopkins English Journal Award (NCTE, 1998) and the Ned N. Fleming Trust Award for Outstanding Classroom Teaching (KU, 2000). He was a member of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents National Council of Teachers of English (ALAN).

He is survived by his three children: Greg (56), Ellen (47), Eric (36), one brother, Clayt, Franklin, NH; and two grandchildren, Samantha (16), Kendall (10).

Obituary used with permission of Lamb-Roberts-Price Funeral Home

The Call

Dear _____,

I wonder if you know that Dr. John Bushman, who led the LitFest for many years, passed away in December of 2020. I attach a copy of his obituary in case you have not read it.

I am editing a special section honoring him in *Kansas English*, 2022. My working title is "Good Job, Jack." It is intended to be a collection of eulogistic tributes anecdotally explaining or narrating our relationship with Dr. Bushman as well as his personal, positive influence on us.

I wonder if you might be willing to contribute a few pages to this effort.

If so, then please know that a negotiable deadline is January 2022.

As always, I look forward to reading from you.

John Franklin

The Responders

[Jill Adams](#)

[Susan Alexander](#)

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[Rodman Philbrick](#)

[Robert Sailer](#)

[Barbara Stuber](#)

Their Words

Jill Adams

I have thought a lot about how to honor Dr. Bushman. Perhaps too much. Through these reflections, I realize that I honor Dr. B in my teaching each day.

All I Need to Know about Teaching, I Learned from Dr. Jack Bushman

Know what you're talking about. Be informed—use references to make your point.

Embrace the language arts: Reading, Writing, Thinking, Listening, and Thinking...all together in a unit. Weave it all together.

Use the power of the mini lesson. Fifteen minutes can pack a mighty instructional punch.

Enjoy the magic of young adult literature. Many life lessons can be gained through these treasures.

Know when to open your classroom door and also when to shut it. Open your door to collaboration and to invite others in but also be confident enough to adjust things for your students.

Give your students opportunities to extend their learning. Offer chances to explore and discover on their own.

Get fired up. Let passion guide your decision making.

Do what's best for kids. Above all, this is what it's all about.

So there it is. These are decisions that I make on a daily basis for my students. I have been thinking a lot about how Jack would think this school year is going...I believe he would agree with my ideas about grace. It's been a tough two years...continue to give our students and ourselves grace, everyone.

Thanks for all of the invaluable lessons, Jack. I wouldn't be in year 25 of teaching without them or you.

Dr. Jill Adams,
MSed, University of Kansas 1999
PhD, University of Kansas, 2005

Susan Alexander

In his autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907, Ch. 20), Adams wrote, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” Truer words couldn’t be written about the influence of Jack Bushman. In his undergraduate language arts methods course, he completely changed the way I looked at teaching English Language Arts, and, therefore, the way I taught my secondary English classes. As my advisor and professor for many of my masters’ courses, he again gave me new insights into how to further make literature and writing come alive for students. I felt much honored over the years for him to have sent me twenty-one student teachers. And, finally, I had the privilege of being his last doctoral student and now teach future teachers at the university level. One can only imagine the number of students, teachers, and future teachers he has influenced and how far and long that influence will live on. Well done, Jack.

Dr. Susan L. Alexander
Washburn University

Chris Crutcher

John Bushman

There are few young adult authors writing from the early 1980s through the mid-2010s who aren't familiar with The Writing Conference at the University of Kansas and its godfather Jack Bushman. I met Jack in the mid-1980s when he invited me to present at The Conference. I was a relatively new writer then, always pleasantly surprised when my work was recognized by someone from that alien planet of Academia, as well as a little apprehensive that I might be asked some question about my relationship with "the classics."

My answer would have been short.

But Jack Bushman was a whole different guy from the professorial stereotype floating around in my oft-neglected frontal lobe. He was a champion for books kids would actually *read*. He understood most needed a little push in the right direction, but was plenty intolerant with educators who believed that "kids today" don't want to—or can't—read. His quick comeback to that was, "You're not giving them the right books." At dinner, the night before my first Writer's Conference, he told me he had nothing against the classics, but that most couldn't pull an emotional response from a middle- or high school reader; that they had to be *explained*, and in some cases read out loud by the teacher, which took away any *punch* they might have had back in the day when they were written. Our conversation brought back my high school experiences with Shakespeare and Dickens and whoever the hell wrote *Beowulf*. My English teacher tried to sell those books by saying they had as much sex and violence mystery as any of the more current, popular fare. I didn't have a great editing function between my brain and my mouth, but I *did* manage to keep from saying aloud, "Hey, if it doesn't give me a throbbing chubby, it ain't sexy."

A line like that would have been far too indelicate for Jack to utter, but in short order, I knew we were like-minded in that regard (though I would later learn that if the two of us were to attend a national political convention prior to any given presidential election in the same year, there'd be *no* chance we'd run into each other).

It took me no time to realize that this guy knew his books, and he had a great sense of the chaotic human development frontier that is adolescence. He saw the power of story and he knew *connection* to story was the pathway to creating lifelong readers.

Jack could be serious or funny or both; always a little gruff, and I'm guessing a pretty demanding prof. I told him once that, had I been his student, and *really* busted my butt in his class, I might have pulled a C+. After I said it, I remember thinking, "I'll bet he doesn't give pluses."

I think the measure of a person's value in his or her chosen career can be measured by treasures left behind. Even today, I meet an astonishing number of educators who studied under Jack, or studied under somebody who studied under Jack; or were influenced in one way or another by his take-no-prisoners battle to get kids reading.

Word has it that we all die twice; once when we take our last breath, and again when the last person mentions our name. I've got a feeling Jack Bushman is going to be around for a while.

Sharon M. Draper

My Memories of Jack Bushman

When I first met Jack, I'd never heard of John Bushman, never heard of the Writing Conference, and I'd never been to Kansas! "Come to the heart of the world," he told me one day at one of the many conferences we used to have. And so, one day, I think it might have been 2007, I did! I had been given the honor of the Heartland Award. The name is appropriate because Kansas is in the heart of this country, and Jack, even though he would never admit it, was the heart of the conference.

I had attended several conferences and conventions by that time, but I was still a newbie at travel. Kansas was new for me, but I looked forward to the challenge. At the Literature Conference, I know everyone remembers the bustling crowds of excited teachers and media specialists. The whole event was about books and reading and literature and sharing—I felt so much at home. It was truly awesome.

And then there were the children—oh, those kids! Jack had single-handedly energized a group of young people who, because they were teenagers, cared about very little except for the color of their fingernail polish or the latest music online. But Jack had somehow managed to energize them with his superpower—his love of books and reading literature! Those who had been there before knew what to expect. The new ones learned quickly. In just a short time, he had created a throng of young people *excited about books and authors!* Jack bustled around, chatting with kids and parents, greeting friends and

colleagues, solving issues from anyone who had a question, and managing it all like he was the father of us all—the guy who wanted to make absolutely certain that everything was perfect.

From Jack Bushman, I learned how to organize, prioritize, and strategize. I also learned I never wanted to run a conference! 😊 But Jack breathed it in and out like oxygen, and we all floated on the power of his energy and strength.

So, from that point on, whenever Jack said, “Come to Kansas!” that’s what I did! One year, we did an event called O-Town Reads. Everyone in Ottawa, Kansas, had read one of my books—children in the classrooms, teachers, parents, even grocery store clerks and pharmacists and the serving staff at local restaurants. Because Jack had decided that Ottawa was going to read, that’s what they did. It was a great event—the whole town felt a sense of community because of books, because of sharing, and because of John Bushman.

Jack and I shared meals together, exchanged family stories, and tossed back and forth ideas about books and stories over green beans and corn on the cob. I will always treasure his wisdom, his humor, and his love for all literature.

He was the strength and the guiding light for not just the Literature Conference, but for me personally, a young author who was given the opportunity to share my stories with others.

I will always remember his smile and his laughter.

Thank you, John Bushman, for being a guiding light to the community, the world, and to me.

Steven B. Frank

I never met Jack Bushman, but I walked across the bridge he built. In 2019 I was invited to be a guest author at the Washburn Literature Festival, Jack’s brainchild, a nexus of students & teachers, readers & writers, all united by a passion for books. The festival pulled me out of my classroom (I teach 6th grade) and my closet (the hut where I write) and into the company of fellow teachers, writers, and young readers. Because of Jack, I got to hear Professor John Franklin tell me more about the structure of my middle grade novel *Class Action* than I had ever consciously thought about. Because of Jack, I got to meet Bob Sallier, who graciously invited me to attend. Because of Jack, I got to meet a literary idol of mine, Gary D. Schmidt, with whom I shared the speakers’ stage that day and an inspiring car ride at the Festival’s end. And because of Jack, I was reminded of the real reason I squeeze myself into a small space and try to build a world of words: I got to meet young readers without whom children’s and YA authors write into the void, but with whom we build bridges of our own paved in humor, action, emotion, and ideas. How great that we came together in the center of America, bonded by perhaps the one object that can help a diverse nation to cohere: the book. Thank you, Jack, for your vision. May your Festival and your memory endure.

John Franklin

A Measure of a Man

There are very few people for whom I would undertake an enterprise as daunting as this one. John Bushman is on that list.

I differ from other contributors to this Special Section. Many of them are Jack's students; others are writers. In contrast, I am, rather, a colleague.

I met Jack not in his classroom, not at the YA Literature Festival but at KATE, at our annual conference in Wichita where he steadfastly manned a table for The Writing Conference, Inc. One morning I noticed his professorial uniform—coat, tie, comfortable shoes—and struck up a conversation while perusing his wares.

I wasn't interested so much in the books written by his students—though off-and-on through the years I bought a shelf full of their publications for The Writing Center at Pitt State, where once-upon-a-time English Ed majors tutored for course credit.

Instead, I was interested in his book *Using Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom*, which I found refreshing in its unabashed agenda: adolescents will read if you offer them books that attract and maintain their interest. Among his resources, Dr. Bushman provided lists of books with notes and justification for using them in an English classroom. Rock solid adolescent psychology coupled with basic reading theory extended his scholarship, which was wonderfully accessible to English majors.

I taught his book in its various editions for years, and I began to anticipate meeting Jack at KATE each year where I could pick this professor-author's brain. One year he changed my life by inviting me to join a committee he created: The Heartland Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature, at that time a group of readers tasked with the mission of nominating a list of YA titles for students who would vote for their favorite book. Dr. Bushman was quite proud of the Heartland being selected by middle-and-secondary school students. The book's writer was featured as a speaker at the Lit Fest attended by hundreds and hundreds of their book's readers. The event was a fanfest filled with love for young adult literature.

As a reader who helped shorten the list from three dozen-or-so titles to a more manageable ten, I felt that I had joined a club. As a club member who taught YAL to English Ed majors, as a tenure-earning professor who discussed Jack's book and how to teach it with the man himself, I felt downright collegial.

Collegiality expanded exponentially when Dr. Bushman invited me to edit *The Writers' Slate*, a periodical publication of The Writing Conference (an egotistical aside: the logo I designed—fountain pen poised above the pages of an open journal—is based upon the pen with which I write the first draft of this essay—a medium-point, 18k gold-nibbed Parker Duofold. Jack, I believe, deserves no less than to be remembered by words written with gold.). I served as editor for five years, corresponding with student-writers and their teachers around the world.

When Dr. Bushman retired, the Award morphed into The Heartland Committee to Promote Lifelong Reading, over which he presided, it seemed, forever.

But, forever doesn't last forever.

When a plan of succession was eventually proposed and effected by his students, I decided to pitch the idea of a *festschrift* in his honor.

Sadly, he passed before I could launch the project, which has evolved into the *Kansas English* Special Section that you are reading (here I spotlight Katie Cramer—Editor

extraordinaire—herself an English Ed professor who is undoubtedly a nascent Bushman—who supported the project from the get-go.)

I did not intend to edit this homage.

I thought that honor should go to one of his students.

However, while proffering the opportunity to Heartland Committee members, what I discovered is that as a teacher, Dr. Bushman’s relationship with his students is so powerful, so emotional, that grief-stricken as they are by his death, they simply could not do it.

The pain of our loss was so greatly heartfelt by so many that I can summarize their collective response to my offer in four words, followed by my parenthetical sympathy: “I can’t do this. (It hurts too much).”

His students’ response leads me to conclude:

If pain be a measure of loss, then Dr. Bushman’s passing is beyond measure.

If influence be a measure of success, then Dr. Bushman’s legacy is beyond measure.

If a measure of a man be respect, then our respect for Dr. Bushman is beyond measure.

You did a good job, Jack.

F. Todd Goodson

I Guess That’s One Way to Do It

It was always hard to explain The Writing Conference, Inc.

In November of 1995 Ted Fabiano and I spent most of the NCTE conference standing in the exhibit hall, helping Jack market his various products to the profession at large. I recall several colleagues and acquaintances coming by the booth, and the interaction followed a certain pattern.

First it was, “Jack! What are you doing here?”

Then Ted and I watched as our guests looked at the various products on display—from the spiral bound publications, through the student journal, to the special events. One-by-one, we watched as the visitors attempted to make The Writing Conference, Inc. fit into their existing structures for publishing and staff development. We counted four ways in which colleagues sought to fit our entity into their prior knowledge.

One, we know all about funded programs. The National Writing Project was a vital force in those days, and the English education community understood staff development and outreach programs funded by grant dollars.

No. The Writing Conference, Inc. was not a funded program.

Two, we all know about conferences and activities sponsored by professional organizations, and I watched a couple of visitors who tried, as hard as they could, to make The Writing Conference, Inc. into a state or regional professional association.

Sorry. No members. No dues.

Three, we all have experience with special events sponsored by our universities, and several visitors to the booth made the assumption this was a University of Kansas initiative. It's hard to blame them. Jack was a KU icon. Why wouldn't The Writing Conference, Inc. be a corporate product from the office of non-credit special programs?

Except no. Not only was The Writing Conference, Inc. not connected to the university, there was a solid red line between the two.

Finally, the next assumption was that it was about consulting. We all know of higher education faculty who do quite well consulting with K-12 systems, so that must be what is happening here. Jack is selling his wares on the in-service circuit.

The one conversation from my exhibit hall experience that I recall vividly was when my own undergraduate advisor, Ben Nelms, stopped by. Ben clicked down the possibilities I've outlined above, and when Jack finally explained in detail how The Writing Conference, Inc. was formally chartered as a non-profit corporation, unconnected with institutions or organizations, I watched Ben thinking through the possibilities. He stood silently for a bit, looked at me with a puzzled expression, and finally said, "I guess that's one way to do it."

I'll make two points here. The first is that every higher education colleague who came by that day, every other English education faculty member from around the country, left with something to think about. I have not a doubt in the world that people left that day thinking about the viability of Jack's model.

How much would that cost?

What kind of impact could it have?

What kinds of conflicts could it cause?

What's the payoff?

Could I do something like this?

My second point is that to my knowledge, no one has been able to replicate what Jack did with The Writing Conference, Inc.

What Jack did was bold and it was provocative. He was faced with systems that didn't do what he thought should be happening, so he created his own system. The tribute to Jack I would like to offer here is admiration for his unflinching dedication to the possibilities of secondary English and his unwillingness to compromise.

I left KU almost 30 years ago, but I'm indebted to Jack for most of my professional journey since that time. Mostly, he taught me to be devoted to what is right, that which isn't but should be, and work relentlessly toward those goals.

I will also confess to investing hours in thinking and planning and puzzling about how the structure of The Writing Conference, Inc. might be adapted. Just like all the curious people who visited the booth in 1995, I haven't been able to fit the non-profit concept into my own professional identity.

Nevertheless, Jack's accomplishment deserves at least a moment of admiration and probably a good deal more. When something is so far out of the box of professional practice, it is easy to shake our heads, say something like "I guess that's one way to do it" and move on without further consideration.

The Writing Conference, Inc. deserves further consideration. I don't think it's necessarily a good idea for every education professor to be running non-profit corporations out of renovated patio space in private homes the way Jack did, but I also don't think we have learned everything we can from his experience. He attempted to be a publisher of educational materials and texts and a student journal. He ran one of the more successful professional conferences of his day, and his literature festivals were epic. He even ran a student writing camp. And he did it all under the banner of his own governance structure that was borrowed from the way universities and professional organizations, and funding agencies work but in the end was something uniquely (and legally) his own.

I doubt if we will ever see something like The Writing Conference, Inc. again.

That is a shame.

It was indeed one way to do it.

April Hawkins

One of the most notable things about Dr. Bushman was the way that he brought communities of educators together to share, learn, and promote his mission of advancing literacy for young adults and creating lifelong readers. He believed that using current young adult literature was the key to achieving this goal. He accomplished this through his work with the nonprofit organization he created and dedicated much of his life to directing: The Writing Conference, Inc.

I still have the letter he sent to me in 1996 asking me to serve on a new committee he was forming called The Heartland Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature. Through my participation in this committee, I was able to meet incredible authors who were leaders in young adult literature such as Robert Cormier, Sharon Draper, Will Hobbs, Gary Schmidt, and Cynthia Leitich Smith. I was able to collaborate with other educators who inspired me to constantly improve my own teaching.

I have seen first-hand the indelible impact that Dr. Bushman has made on many lives. One of the best language arts teachers whom I currently work with attended the Literature Festival as a high school student. She was impressed by reading *Thirteen Reasons Why* and then being able to meet author Jay Asher. This event helped lead her on her path to become a language arts teacher. Another impressive young teacher shared with me that she won a fiction writing contest sponsored by The Writing Conference, Inc., and it made such an impact on her life that she too became a middle school English teacher.

When I think of the lives and careers positively impacted by Jack, I am reminded of this quote by Neal Shusterman from his book, *Dread Locks*: “When you drop a pebble into a pond, ripples spread out, changing all the water in the pool. The ripples hit the shore and rebound, bumping into one another, breaking each other apart. In some small way, the pond is never the same again.”

Dr. Bushman did not drop a pebble into the pool.

He dropped a boulder.

And the rippling effect of his efforts to promote lifelong literacy has sent tsunamis throughout educational communities.

Thank you, Dr. Bushman.

Lisa Hazlett

John H. Bushman

In 1985 I arrived soaking wet to meet my doctoral advisor, Jack Bushman, having misjudged the distance from student parking to Bailey Hall along with presuming the light rain would continue. Jack greeted me by laughing at my appearance and continued laughing throughout our appointment. We immediately clicked with his desk sign saying *Illiterate? Write now for free help!* still making me snicker. Eric was in a stroller then, and after graduating in spring of 1989, I headed north to the University of South Dakota, planning to stay a few years.

It's 2021 and I'm still at USD, once the youngest (age 29) and least-experienced professor to senior faculty member, with this my 32nd year, shocking to realize. Jack taught his students to be academicians by being a superb one himself and throwing out perceptive Jack-ism's whenever eyes would narrow. He had a swell sense of humor, knew his stuff *completely*, expected excellence, and was never, ever satisfied, always pushing us toward the next goal a second after earning the first.

Before one's first class he hammered about comprehensive exams, then finishing coursework, proposals, and dissertations. After my defense he was flying to a conference; he ran from the room yelling, “Congratulations! Now get a job!” on the way to his car, never stopping.

When signing contracts, he immediately brought up P&T, and after receiving tenure letters he wanted the date we planned to go up for full professor. After full, he said we now had to reinvent ourselves, as there is no fuller and fullest professor, other than weight. Many of his Jack-ism's weren't fully understood at the time, and it wasn't until I was a professor myself that I realized they were **all** solid gold. Throughout my USD years I've continually heard Jack's voice and taught my students as he'd mentored me, marveling at how wonderfully effective he was as most Jackism's were during casual conversations. There are too many to count, but these particularly resonated:

1. While preparing for his 1990 writing conference, he gave me pencils to sharpen for folders. I did, thankful for an electric sharpener but also thinking an undergraduate work-study a better choice. Jack surely saw this on my too-expressive face, casually remarking that *each task is important, and all must be completed with excellence*. Point taken.
2. Best time saver ever: *fully copy a citation and its complete source, then double-check before returning the book or journal (Internet didn't exist then), as it takes three times longer to relocate—if still there*. True yet today.
3. When leaving for SD, he gave me the holy grail of recordkeeping:
 - *Save Everything with Your Name on It,*
 - *Keep A Record of Everything You Do, Regardless of How Minor,*
 - *Do Your Homework,* and
 - *Get a Planner and Use It*. Still works.
4. He also knew failures were held by most of us far longer than successes, but his *Made a Mistake? Offer no Excuses; Say I'm Sorry, State How the Problem Will Be Solved, Do It, and Move On* remains professional and elegant.
5. He had no time for anyone complaining about routine job tasks; I was whining about my grading, and he snapped, "*You assigned it; you grade it—it's your JOB.*" Understood.
6. Hands down, my favorite is *Only the Little People Attend [Conference] Sessions*, i.e., professors should hold NCTE offices, serve on committees and be speakers, and it still makes me laugh every single time I'm at a conference.
 - Service is a job requirement, so naturally he gathered his advisees, found the reddest of red-eye plane tickets (*We need to leave at 3:30 a.m.!*) and off we went to NCTE. At the time, having us present at NCTE (and make contacts before graduation) was largely unprecedented, but Jack led instead of following.

There were so many more, of course, and after graduating multiple other invitations were continually offered as we went from students to colleagues. Jack wanted us to succeed, was proud of our accomplishments, and kept in touch with his advisees, all extended family.

I also smiled at his Christmas cards, always featuring cardinals and the first received, every year. I won't be opening one this December and can't say how much this hurts. I had always wondered if, or when, he would mention death in one of his pushes, but I suppose he showed us instead, a role model to the end. Still, when I enter professor-heaven (surely, it's an ivory tower) he'll be there, pointing to the next step (*Wings! You need to earn wings!*).

Jack believed in each of us before we did and when we didn't, and never, ever presumed failure was an option. He and his voice guided me throughout my career which is now, incredibly, ending. He was cherished and oh, so missed.

Lisa A. Hazlett
Professor of Secondary Education, University of South Dakota

Kimberly Willis Holt

Thank you for wanting to include me in your special eulogistic tribute to Dr. John Bushman. I think it's wonderful that you are doing this to honor him. Dr. Bushman is an example of the many unsung heroes of children's and young adult literature who keep books and their authors alive by introducing them to educators and young people. I am grateful for him and the other children's literature champions who have helped me have a career in this book world. Thanks, again, for thinking of me and for the role you play in young adult literature.

Kevin Kienholz

Tribute: Prof. Jack Bushman

My favorite day on the academic calendar, every single year, happens to be the Literature Festival because it brings together young readers, young adult authors, and educators who support young adult literature—an annual gathering of dedicated and enthusiastic young and not-so-young readers who assemble for a day to celebrate books, reading, and the power of the written word in the lives of young people. I participate each fall in the Literature Festival on the campus of Washburn University, and each year I leave the event with renewed energy and enthusiasm, encouraged by the sheer tonnage of passion and excitement that the participants bring to the festival and that the authors share with the young readers that they meet. And every year, as the festival draws to a close, I remain mindful of the efforts of Prof. Jack Bushman, whose groundwork laid the foundation to make the whole thing a reality and whose continued energy and guidance made it an annual reality for over 25 years.

Prof. Bushman brought numerous essential qualities to the Literature Festival that made it both a possibility and a reality: deep connections with authors and publishers in young adult literature; broad links with educators across the state of Kansas and the region; and profound knowledge, of course, in the field of YAL. But I want to highlight the fact that he also had an ability to bring people together who were interested in advocating for YAL and working on behalf of young readers, and for that I'm tremendously grateful. Because of the connections Prof. Bushman helped me forge through Literature Festival, I have developed and enjoyed professional friendships with high school teachers, librarians, and college professors from around Kansas—connections that I would never have made had it not been for the efforts of Prof. Bushman. His ability to *bring us together*, based on our mutual appreciation of YAL and our shared belief in the power of literacy in the lives of young readers, has made a real and lasting impact on my life as an educator here in the state of Kansas, and for that I owe a massive debt of gratitude to Prof. Bushman.

Because educators spend so much time in our classrooms and libraries, the profession can become, unfortunately, isolating in many ways. Through his efforts in establishing and supporting the Literature Festival, Prof. Bushman helped create an occasion for classroom teachers and authors and librarians and college professors to bridge those distances that can

separate us and, instead, stand together on the common ground that we share—our love of great books and good stories. This annual occasion to establish connections and renew friendships, occurring now for over a quarter of a century, continues to nurture and sustain an appreciation for reading and a love of books among readers both young and old here in Kansas, and I look forward to this continuing into the next quarter century as an important tribute to the excellent vision and work initiated by Jack Bushman.

Steve Loe

Yes, I was a Bushmanite. I was a believer. I was a believer that great literature—great young adult literature—could inspire students. More importantly, as a Bushmanite, I was a believer that great teachers made the difference. Yes, knowledge and passion for the content was important, but Dr. Bushman showed us that teachers teach people. Relationships first. And he walked the walk. He inspired.

Obviously as my professor, Dr. Bushman influenced my teaching career. As an ELA educator his training was essential. I look back now and wished I would have soaked up more of his knowledge and insights. But I had learned enough to know the power of really getting to know your students, meeting those students where they're at, and hooking them with relevant, engaging content to get them thinking. It's a powerful moment when a student who confesses to hating English and bragging about not reading, walks up to you and tells you, "Hey, Loe, that's the first novel I've ever finished," and then goes on to tell you how it impacted his life. I was far from a great teacher, but thanks to Dr. Bushman and his training, I did find moments where what was going on in my classroom was truly impacting students.

Dr. Bushman influenced me on a personal level too. I've always had a passion for creative writing, and when Dr. Bushman gave me my first real introduction to the power of YAL, I was driven to write a novel. I wanted to create a story that would have that lasting impact on a student. I wanted to write something that would make an English hater read his first novel. Dr. Bushman was right there to support me. He took his own time to read over early drafts. He connected me to other authors who shared their expertise. And once my first novel was published, Dr. Bushman invited me to share it with students at the annual Literature Festival.

My first novel was far from a best seller, but Dr. Bushman was unselfishly right there to help me realize a personal dream. Thank you, Dr. Bushman, for being our Mr. Keating¹.
Steve Loe

¹ Mr. Keating is the beloved English teacher/hero of *Dead Poets Society*.

Suzanne Myers

Sometimes it's hard to recall the particulars of a person. After a while, we tend to forget a person's laugh, the tone and cadence of their voice, nuances of their personality, previously predictable responses to news and conversation.

Dr. Bushman, on the other hand, is tough to forget.

In reflecting on this, I've come to think it is in part due to his absolute focus and commitment to basically two things: kids and literacy. His voice—typically the loudest and clearest in the room—was often calling out some recent injustice to student thinking, reading, or writing. He wasted little time worrying about whether his perspective was unpopular, outdated, or lacked the diplomatic tone often present in bureaucratic conversations about education policies and practices. If not speaking out against injustice, he was speaking out in advocacy for better books, better writing experiences, and better instruction for kids.

He was always on the side of kids. Even if he did not fully grasp all the complexities of a situation, even if he did not know all the details, even if he did not have the power or ability to improve something himself ... I will remember him as a person who was always reliably, enthusiastically, unapologetically, and unflinchingly on the side of kids.

What a lesson for us all.

Dr. Suzanne Myers

Assistant Research Professor, University of Kansas

Rodman Philbrick

Jack Bushman, An Appreciation

If you happen to grow up in a small town in a small, rural state, books are a portal to the rest of the world. Stories take you to places you've never even imagined. As an example, picture two boys from New Hampshire. One seeks an education in Ottawa, Kansas, and makes a life in that part of the world, teaching teachers how to teach English. The other boy never leaves home, not really, except in his imagination. Two paths diverge, you might say, but what diverges one day converges, at a festival of literature brought to life by the first boy.

And that's how I met Jack Bushman, a native of Franklin, New Hampshire, who took it on the road, and made an exemplary life in the world of books, stories, and literature for young people. Four years of teaching English to ninth graders

convinced him that forcing students to read “classics” was a bad idea. Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* was more likely to appeal to young readers than Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

It was Jack's strong belief that teachers have a mission to keep kids reading. Indeed, he co-authored a textbook on doing just that. But he wasn't done yet, not by a long shot. Next up, a non-profit organization he founded, The Writing Conference. The mission, and he chose to accept it, was to provide services to children, young adults, and teachers for the improvement of writing and reading skills.

One of the main events was a literature festival, and that's where I come into the picture. I'd been writing adult crime novels for 15 years, and had stumbled on an idea for a middle school story about how making a friend can change a life. Jack read my book and used it in his classes, thus helping a little-known author find a place in classrooms across the country. Then he invited me to speak at one of his yearly festivals. After toiling for years in relative obscurity, another boy from New Hampshire offered me the honor of his respect. I can't tell you how much that meant to me, because the consequences are still ongoing, all these years later.

Thanks, John “Jack” Bushman, educator extraordinaire! You threw a stone into the pond and the ripples are still expanding.

Lois Ruby

Jack surprised me. My first impression when he invited me to present at one of his writing conferences celebrating the Heartland Award, was that he was a soft-spoken, lugubrious guy who happened to be totally entranced by young adult books as literature. *Literature!* He believed what we were doing had merit, even changed lives. I stood in amazement as students and teachers and parents swarmed into the KU conference center, eager to listen to authors and—what's this?—buy books! And then I met his retinue of acolytes—KU students and recent alums, for whom Dr. Bushman was their spirit guide as they graduated and taught in schools across Kansas, inflamed with Jack's zeal.

Thus, a long friendship and professional collaboration began. Here are some random memories of those years ...

- Jack and I traveled to Garden City. He treated me to dinner and, always the gentleman, he walked me safely back to my room, nurtured and nourished, to rest up for the onslaught of eager young readers in the morning. Who else but Dr. John Bushman could stir up such enthusiasm for teen books?

- Another conference in Lawrence: there'd been a lot of rain, and streets were flooded. Those authors who arrived before the deluge gathered for the dinner Jack planned, but the host's seat was empty. He was hopelessly stuck trying to get back from the airport with the last straggling author, and so we ate heartily on his dime (oysters, as I recall), but so much of the conversation centered on stories about how key Jack was in our career development. He was, for some of us, almost a kingmaker. Without him, our books would have sunk into the bog.
- One summer, Jack planned a writing camp for teens at Rock Springs 4-H camp near Junction City. A handful of authors spent a delightful week teaching, writing, critiquing, listening, and nourishing young people filled with passion for the written word. There was one catch. The river crested, and the humble dorms were flooded. Industrial fans cranked and blasted, trying to dry up the worst of the soaked carpeting, but each step in the room was deep squish. I figured I'd persevere – until I found three frogs swimming in the shower. For years afterwards, Jack boasted about the great accommodations, and how one of his writing camp teachers slept in her car rather than entertain frogs in her room.
- More recently, at perhaps the last of the Writing Conferences in Lawrence, Jack got into an auto accident on his way to the event. He and his car came out of it pretty battered, but he had a trunk full of our books to deliver before kids arrived. He was obviously in pain trudging into the gym with a carton of books. For him, the books were always primary. When the remainders were reloaded into his car at the end of the day, Jack went directly to the emergency room. Talk about dedication!

What Jack did for his grad students who marched into classrooms of their own with a zest for young adult literature, and what he did for those of us addicted to writing it, can never be measured. As for me, he generously gave me exactly what I needed to stick it out in a field often fraught with rejection and frustration. In his own unflashy, sweetly stumbling way, he inspired generations of readers, teachers, and writers. He believed in us all.

Good job, Jack, and thank you from the bottom of my heart for your ardent support and friendship. We all miss you so.

Love,
LOIS RUBY

Robert Sailer

Here is an anecdote about Dr. Bushman I just remembered after seeing Venn diagrams.

I remember one simple lecture Dr Bushman gave in a young adult literature class that sums up his philosophy succinctly about teaching literature to secondary students. He drew two circles. He labeled one "Things you teach in your class." The other he titled, "Things that need to be taught in your English class." I discovered the area where the two circles intersected for my classroom was not as large as I'd want. I scrapped my next day's lesson on gerunds and pulled out a "borrowed poem" lesson I'd fleeced off a retired colleague. You talk about two roads diverging. The grammar books ended up in the trash dumpster at the end of the year.

Bob Sailer
Co-director, The Writing Conference, Inc.

Barbara Stuber

Thank you for sending me John Bushman's obituary. Although I did not know him very well, or for very long, I connected to his deep reverence for literature and his dedication to lighting thousands of creative sparks in the minds of his students. I am very honored to be among that group. I remember him as a high energy, broad minded, and dynamic man. Someone following a mission of the heart.

Section Editor's Note

My intent was to display the individuality of responders by retaining the font and format with which they responded to The Call. In some cases, I increased font size to 12 point to enhance readability. For headings I used Century Schoolbook: somehow the word "school" in the name of the font seemed to me to reflect an essential characteristic of Dr. Bushman's influence. Otherwise, I edited for propriety and space.

I am, of course, responsible for errors. – John Franklin