
Zena Sutherland: Reviewer, Teacher, and Author

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ABSTRACT

ZENA SUTHERLAND IS A WOMAN HIGHLY REGARDED in the field of children's literature. She was associated with the University of Chicago Graduate Library School throughout her career. Sutherland was the editor and sole reviewer of the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* from 1958 to 1985; wrote monthly columns for the *Saturday Review* from 1966 to 1972; and has been the author of several editions of *Children and Books* since 1969. The Zena Sutherland Lecture, established in 1983, is just one recognition of her contributions to the profession. This is a professional biography of Sutherland, containing her recollections of men and women in children's book publishing and assessing her impact on the field.

INTRODUCTION

A strong and influential voice in diverse aspects of the field of literature for children, Zena Sutherland is a woman who has professionally influenced others through the quality of her writing, astute and discerning critical ability, and her genuine love of, and respect for, the tradition of children's literature. In her lifetime, Sutherland has exhibited a unique independence in what she was willing to take on and has not failed to accept challenge as an opportunity.

In the words of Sophie Silberberg, a luminary in children's publishing, Zena Sutherland is "one of America's most respected reviewers of books for children, an admired teacher of children's literature, a prominent anthologist, and a leader of considerable influence within the many professions concerned with children and their reading" (Hearne & Kay, 1981, p. ix).

Born in Winthrop, Massachusetts, a small town across the bay from Boston, Sutherland describes her childhood:

I had a lot of problems as an only child, a child whose parents were divorced at a time when divorce was very rare, and this made me a particular oddity. I was five when my parents separated, and probably a year later the divorce came through. My mother decided to leave Boston, which was her home, and probably for very good reasons, went to another city. She chose Chicago because she had a friend here, a former Bostonian, who was able to put us up until my mother found an apartment and got a job. So I was a latchkey child; that was also very rare, of course, in those days. Because in those days every time you moved and signed a lease for twelve months, you got one month free, plus free decorating, and my mother liked to be in cheerful newly painted places, and to get a free month, we moved a great deal. I went to fourteen different elementary schools. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, March 18, 1995)

Sutherland's mother had remarried by the time Zena was in high school, which offered her some rest after all the moving around as well as a very gentle and loving stepfather. Even though she had a kind and caring father, he was living in Boston. The family lived on the north side of Chicago near Lake Michigan at Sunnyside Avenue within walking distance of the old Edgewater Beach Hotel. Zena went to Carl Schurz High School.

Referring to herself as having been "an industrious sort of drone in high school," Sutherland nonetheless remembers it as a pleasant, albeit lonely, time. She excelled academically and particularly enjoyed English, mathematics, French, and German courses. By the time she graduated in June 1933, she was offered several college scholarships and, attracted by Robert Hutchins's reputation, decided to attend the University of Chicago that Fall. She began a pre-med course of study with the intention of becoming a physician. However, the Depression forced Sutherland's father, who was paying for the college expenses that were not covered by the scholarship, to realize that he could not afford four years of medical school. Both of them were disappointed: "He was really very, very unhappy because he wanted me to become a doctor," says Sutherland.

The University of Chicago was an exciting place to be in the 1930s. Almost all of the courses for the underclassmen were very large lecture courses given by the "stars" of the university. Sutherland recalls:

Arthur Holly Compton, I can't remember how many awards he won nationally and internationally. Louis Wirth, who was a great sociologist. There was one who became Hutchins's sidekick, Mortimer Adler, called for no reason that I know, Mert—probably somebody said it to be funny once and other people picked it up. Anton Carlson gave a biology course. He was wonderful. He was articulate, warm, and funny. He looked sort of bumbly, but he sounded very sharp, and the whole class fell in love with him, I'm quite sure. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, March 18, 1995)

When Sutherland's interest turned to English literature, she took courses from Robert Morss Lovett and James Thurber, among many other distinguished teachers. In addition to a stimulating academic life, she

learned to play bridge. As an only child, she had been very isolated. Living in Beecher Hall dormitory was a joy to her, and she made many friends. Another of her extracurricular activities was singing in the Rockefeller Chapel Choir, which she continued for many years after graduating.

In 1937, she married Roland Bailey and had three children: Stephen, who is now a history professor at Knox College; Thomas, a classroom teacher in Denmark; and Katherine, an English professor at Oberlin College. She became a part of the University of Chicago's Hyde Park community, being involved in choir, play reading groups, and her children's PTAs and other school-related activities.

As her children grew and became less dependent, Sutherland decided to return to the University of Chicago for an advanced degree. A lover of books, she decided upon library school with the intention of becoming a medical librarian. She began coursework in 1956 with no thought whatsoever of working with children's books. As her studies in medical librarianship progressed, she decided to take a children's literature course simply because she loved children's books.

While she was raising her children, books were an important part of life. Sutherland's daughter, Kathy Linehan, remembers that, "reading was the big occupation of the house" with weekly visits to the public library to return and check out armloads of books (K. B. Linehan, personal communication, September 24, 1995). As a child, Sutherland was a voracious reader, and her mother claimed that young Zena taught herself to read when very young. Sutherland recalls:

I certainly can remember being able to read as a small child, and like any small child who can read, I loved reading signs, cereal boxes, anything. When I was small, if there were books for children, my mother didn't know about it, and actually, as I look back now on it with knowledge, there were not many—The First World War certainly put a crimp in publishing. I did what obviously one would do if you are a voracious reader—I read anything I could lay my hands on. What I could lay my hands on were often totally inappropriate adult books—*Sons and Lovers*, *Growth of the Soil*....My mother was a voracious reader and I often read the books I found in the apartment. *Kristin Lavransdatter*, I loved *Kristin Lavransdatter*, three volumes.

When I was in third grade, I had a note sent home by my teacher, Miss Yardley, saying that, if I ever brought Boccaccio's *Decameron* to school again, she was going to suspend me. My mother did think the whole thing was funny, and years later when she told me this story I went back and re-read the book. It brought back a vague memory of the original reading, but I realized only then how sophisticated it was. And this has always, I'm sure, contributed to my feeling that people who are censorious are often unaware of the fact that children get from a book what they can at their level of development. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, August 29, 1995)

The first children's book Sutherland owned was *Little Women*, a present for her eleventh birthday. She remembers the joy she felt upon reading

a book that was written for children. She had a library card as a young child, but up until then she had always gone to the adult section with a note of permission from her mother. Once she discovered that there were children's books, she read whatever she could get her hands on in the children's section of the public library.

With her coursework in medical librarianship for her masters' degree¹ nearly completed, Sutherland had a chance to take a class outside of her field. Her enjoyment of children's books as a child and as a parent brought her into Sally Fenwick's classroom in the Graduate Library School in 1957. Very soon after she completed the course, Mary K. Eakin, editor of the *Bulletin of the Children's Book Center*, broke her contract and took a position at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls. At that point, the Graduate Library School needed to fill the position quickly, and Sally Fenwick showed Lester Asheim, the dean of GLS, book cards Zena had written for the class. Sutherland says:

They agreed that I could probably muddle through if I accepted the job. When I was offered it, I wasn't sure I wanted to accept. But I agreed, and I took the job on the basis that if I was not happy there, I would stay for six months, and if the dean was not happy with me at the end of six months, I would stay for only six months. I knew after about two months that I had found exactly what I wanted, and I loved what I was doing. I had no experience, but a lot of inclination. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, April 27, 1995)

In the February 1958 issue of the *Bulletin*, Zena Bailey is listed as Editorial Assistant under Sara I. Fenwick, who is listed as Acting Supervising Editor.

BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

At the time, the *Bulletin* had been in existence for a little more than a decade. The eminent Frances Henne is credited for providing the "initial inspiration" (Eakin, 1962, p. v) for the reviewing journal. Sutherland recalls that, "in the late 1940s, Frances Henne felt that there was a need for unbiased but critical reviewing." Henne, who had no organization and no funding, began by setting up a newsletter for the members of the Education faculty and the teachers of the Laboratory Schools at the University of Chicago. She felt the teachers should know something about children's books. In December 1947, the first issue of the *Service Bulletin* of the Center for Instructional Materials of the University of Chicago Library appeared. It was initially circulated to those teaching in the Laboratory Schools and the Department of Education; later a mailing system was set up. Sutherland recollects that, "it was all very rudimentary. The pages were hectographed. The purple ink came off on everything."

Since the Instructional Materials Center was under the direction of the University of Chicago Library, the latter was the sponsor of the *Bulletin* when it was first published. Alice Brooks McGuire, known to her friends as Sally, was the *Bulletin's* first editor from 1947 to 1949 until she moved to Texas to become the librarian for the Casis School in Austin.

Mary K. Eakin succeeded her as editor. In her introduction to *Good Books for Children: A Selection of Outstanding Children's Books Published 1948-57*, Eakin states that the *Bulletin* played a major role in the changes that took place in the reviewing of children's books between 1947 and 1957, especially the emergence of critical, as opposed to merely descriptive, reviewing. By the time Zena Bailey, who was then forty-three years old, took over as editor in 1958, the *Bulletin* had a very good reputation, cost \$2.50 for a year's subscription, and had a circulation of about 2,000. Its name changed from the *Bulletin of the Children's Book Center* (itself changed from *Service Bulletin* in 1949) to the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*. Its sponsorship, too, had shifted from the University of Chicago Library to the Graduate Library School.

From January 1958 until her retirement in September 1985, Sutherland typically read and reviewed almost one hundred books each month. She estimates that in the twenty-seven years as its editor, she produced around 30,000 reviews for the *Bulletin*. When asked how she was able to accomplish such a Herculean task, she answered:

It probably is at least a tri-part answer. One of which is that I'm a fast reader; that's not a joke. I read fast. I did read every book I reviewed cover to cover, except for cookbooks. I read those looking for clarity of explanation and inclusion of safety measures, etc., and occasionally I would test a recipe. Another part of it was that, like anything else, if you do a lot of something, you tend to get faster at it. Maybe not better, but faster. When I first started I would think, now what do I want to say? how shall I say it? would this be better or that be better? As time went by, I had written a lot of reviews and nobody had swooned with dismay at my use of language. I became more comfortable with reading a book and knowing by the time I finished it what I wanted to say; I didn't have to stop and think about it. So there was less lag time between book and review, and the actual writing of the review was faster. And the third thing—this may sound smarmy, but it's true—I really love reviewing. I love reading and I love reviewing. I have been in situations both at the office and at home when I was just flooded with books, but opening every single package was like Christmas. Sometimes, there's nothing that makes you say, "Oh boy, I can't wait," but often there is. I have been known to stop in the middle of unpacking a load of books and sit down with one because it was a new one by a favorite author, or was a new author, or was unusual nonfiction. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, April 27, 1995)

Sutherland recalls her predecessor's reviews had a tendency to offend people: "[T]hey were often quite acid." Once she discovered this and realized that some publishers were not sending her books to review, she decided to make an effort "to say what I had to say honestly, but not to use pejorative adjectives when I could say it nicely." She adds: "My feeling then and my feeling now is that, with some exceptions, authors and illustrators do their best; they work very hard; their editors work very hard with them. As long as you are honest with your readers, there's no reason to hurt anybody's feelings. You're going to hurt somebody's feelings just by not liking the book. Say it in as kind a way as you can."

However, Sutherland feels that most children's book reviewing in the late 1950s "was just plain sugary." She quickly learned not to read a review of a book that she had not yet reviewed: "I got very tired of reading, 'I really like this book,' or 'this is a charming book,' or 'the illustrations are beautiful.'" As a parent who encouraged her children to read, she had wanted to know something more about a book. Was it sophisticated writing? Was it simple writing, like Caroline Haywood? Her children liked Caroline Haywood when they were small, partly because she was so very simple and unaffected. As they moved on to writers like Eleanor Estes, there was still the same kind of simplicity, but there was humor, too. That is what Sutherland wanted to know about a book, and that is what she has tried to tell people in her reviews.

During the twenty-seven years Zena Sutherland was editor of the *Bulletin*, she was its only reviewer.² An important event in her personal life is reflected in the September 1964 issue of the *Bulletin*, the first to list her as Mrs. Zena B. Sutherland. She and Roland Bailey divorced in 1961, and, in July 1964, she married Alec Sutherland, a tall dignified Scotsman who had worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation. At the time of their marriage, Alec Sutherland was the director of broadcasting at the University of Chicago and head of the Center for Continuing Education. They had a wonderfully happy marriage with shared enthusiasm for chamber music, travel, theater, and play reading groups until Alec's death in December 1990.

A change that affected the *Bulletin* happened with the rise of children's book publishing. Sutherland's career has coincided with a period with significant social and cultural changes, and children's books reflected those changes. When Sutherland was asked how she approached the so-called problem novel of the 1960s, she said that if the book was well done, she thought, "well, it's high time." Hazel Rochman, a former student of Sutherland's and member of the *Bulletin's* Advisory Committee, who is currently Assistant Editor in the Books for Youth section of *Booklist*, describes Sutherland's pioneering influence:

If you listen to people like Sendak or Macaulay, they say that if someone like Zena hadn't been around, events could've been very different. She had a great personal influence in opening up that world at a time when other people were saying, "This isn't for children, this is too scary, this is too shocking." Zena was aware that this was great writing, and made it in the most matter of fact, and yet enthusiastic, way a part of the canon. I think that that was where she was just so crucial, in celebrating the canon in this opening way....She had a literary sense, and a sense of childhood. (H. Rochman, personal communication, May 22, 1995)

Roger Sutton, current editor of the *Bulletin*, echoes Rochman's belief: "Zena is famous for her incredible discernment of talent and an ability to really recognize new trends, and welcome them. When all the new realism popped in in the late 1960s, she simply accepted this stuff if it was good." He recalls a conversation he had with Maurice Sendak about Sutherland:

I remember Maurice Sendak telling me what a force she was when he first knew her as the editor of the *Bulletin* in the early 1960s. What people in publishing loved about Zena was she was very sophisticated and witty. She treated children's books very intelligently, but if you look at her writing, it's very fresh, it's very witty, sophisticated, none of this heavy droning reviewing that the field was used to. Maurice said, "We all thought she was smart, but part of it was she was this sociable and witty blonde bombshell, and we New Yorkers couldn't believe she came from Chicago." (R. Sutton, personal communication, June 2, 1995)

As a reviewer, Sutherland is candid, serious, and to the point. She provides a matter-of-fact evaluation in an understandable style throughout. During her career at the *Bulletin*, Sutherland referred to herself as a reviewer and not a critic. Fellow reviewer Rochman says that she believes, "Zena basically gave herself over to the world of the book, and then spoke to you about it as an equal. First of all, there's no ego. Secondly, there's an optimism and enthusiasm. There's that relaxed, non-pretentious style, in a speaking voice, without jargon—you can use wit, you can use style—but she was talking to other people who loved children and books."

Rochman points to Sutherland's review of *William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow as an example:

She's able to enthuse without gushing because she uses exact words. And she doesn't overdo the sort of breakthrough that it was. "The warmth and humor of the illustrations, the clean look of the pages, and the simplicity and restraint of the writing style are in perfect agreement in a book that is as endearing for its tenderness as for the message it conveys: there is nothing, but nothing wrong with boys who play with dolls.

...[William's grandmother] understands exactly why William wants a doll and should have one—so that when he grows up he will have a chance to practice being a father, a chance to love and cuddle and care for the doll that represents the baby for whom he'll someday share responsibility." Zena understands exactly why William wants a doll and should have one. Every word is almost monosyllabic, and that's the hardest thing in the world to do; to write serious reviews simply, no show-off words. (H. Rochman, personal communication, May 22, 1995)

Over the years, Sutherland became one of the best known and loved children's book reviewers. Sophie Silberberg acknowledges her great impact when she writes: "As a reviewer, Zena Sutherland can always be counted on to delve into the very heart of the book before her and to articulate her opinions about it in a straightforward and lucid style. The accessibility of her reviews has nurtured the publication and readership of works of literary and artistic merit, as well as supported a wide range of important, useful works of fiction and nonfiction" (Hearne & Kaye, 1981, pp. x-xi).

To her credit, however, Sutherland's deep feelings toward editors, authors, and illustrators have not interfered with her objectivity as a reviewer. In fact, her directness and clarity have served to strengthen her

capacity to motivate, to bolster, and to challenge. Virginia Hamilton expresses her appreciation:

It is through educators such as Zena Sutherland that we writers are able to face our weaknesses....We trust best the objective, cool hand. At least I do. I recall the last line of Zena's *Bulletin* review of *Arilla Sun Down* in November 1976. She thought that what was outstanding about the book was the characterization and "the dramatic impact of some of the episodes." Now, if the author has any sense, she will key in on the word *some*. She will march right back through the book and ferret out the *other* that may not have had dramatic impact. *Some* does imply *other*. Thank you, Zena, for all that you have taught me over the years. (Hearne, 1993, pp. 75-76)

Beginning with the 1973 publication of *The Best in Children's Books*, Sutherland selected approximately 5,000 reviews of books, both fiction and nonfiction, that she initially wrote for the *Bulletin* and compiled them into four volumes covering the years 1966-1972, 1973-1978, 1979-1984, and 1985-1990.³ One reviewer stated that the compilation was "a highly pedigreed list" (Ettliger & Spirt, 1982, p. 171). Another, elated at the publication of the second volume, writes: "For those who have worn thin the pages of the first Sutherland work, *The Best in Children's Books 1966-1972*, take heart, the continuation has arrived. It was worth the wait" (Krauss, 1981, p. 455). Through these compilations, Sutherland turned the monthly reviews from the *Bulletin* into well-organized buying guides and reference books for librarians, teachers, parents, and students of children's literature.

SATURDAY REVIEW, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, AND "READ ME A STORY"

Sutherland also began reviewing for the *Saturday Review* in 1966. When asked how she became the writer of the monthly "Books for Young People" column, she answers:

I don't know how I got the position. I was in a hotel room in New York City waiting for my husband, when I received a phone call from Rochelle Girson, who was the book review editor. She introduced herself on the phone, and she said she'd been looking at some of my work and she liked it very much, and I said, "Thank you." I thought she was going to ask me to write an article. Rochelle said, "We would like you to be the new editor for children's books." I was sitting on the edge of a twin bed, slid off the bed, and was on the floor. I was so thrilled because I had great respect for that magazine. It was a magazine for people who loved literature. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, May 3, 1995)

Given free reign by Girson, Sutherland could write whatever she wanted in her column. A typical issue contained one to two dozen reviews of books that Sutherland believed were important. Her style was very different from the style she employed for the *Bulletin*. Sutherland explains the contrast: "I certainly didn't want to say the same thing. Even though I had exactly the same opinion of the book, I was writing for a different audience, and for a different type of publication." Her book

reviews in the *Saturday Review* were more informal but never offhand or chatty. They were for educated adults who wanted to know about children's books. Her review (1970) of Tana Hoban's *Shapes and Things* (Macmillan, 1970) is a good example:

This has no words, tells no story; yet it is a book through which a small child may wish to browse, alone or with a friend to share the pleasure of recognizing simple things by their shapes. The technique used is the photogram, in which an object is placed directly on photographic paper under specified conditions and then processed. The objects, white on black, are almost wholly in silhouette, although there are hints of shadow. Some of the pages are almost blunt: a single apple. Some are arranged in patterns on a theme: tools, sewing things, kitchen utensils. Very attractive, useful for discussion, good for stirring perceptual acuteness. Ages 2-5. (p. 34)

In each issue, the reviews were prefaced by a brief article. Some were on a theme, such as science fiction writers and books, sex education books, best books of the year, or Christmas books. One theme Sutherland believes she may have started is the baseball special, entirely devoted to new baseball books. If it was not a theme, the article focused on some aspect of children's books or publishing. For instance, the April 19, 1969 article looked at the National Book Award Committee and its addition of a children's book award (not surprisingly, Sutherland, along with the poet John Ciardi and Virginia Haviland, was a judge for the first award). Another example is the July 25, 1970 issue that reported on the advent of children's book stores in England which Sutherland lamented that the United States lacked.

Sutherland's column continued for six years until 1972. When Norman Cousins sold the *Saturday Review*, however, drastic changes occurred, and the children's book reviews were dropped. Following the *Saturday Review*, she assumed a similar position for the *Chicago Tribune* as children's book editor from 1972 to 1984.

In addition to writing reviews, Sutherland got involved in television in 1966. On WMAQ, an NBC affiliate in Chicago, viewers could tune in to *Read Me a Story* every Sunday morning. The half-hour show was set in a children's bookstore, where the proprietor read books to a small audience of children. Ray Lubway, a University of Chicago Laboratory School teacher, was usually the book reader, and the children were students of the Laboratory School. Sutherland, who donated her time to the show, selected the books that were read. The show was a public service program supported in part by the University of Chicago's Broadcasting Department and had a sizable audience in the Chicago area. It ended in 1971 when priorities at the university's Broadcasting Department changed.

CHILDREN AND BOOKS

When Zena Sutherland succeeded May Hill Arbuthnot in 1972 as the author of the fourth edition of *Children and Books*, "she became the mentor of teachers and librarians who work to bring books and children together" (Hearne & Kaye, 1981, p. xi). The first edition, published in

the general citizen, about these things through women's writing about children and reading?

Fourth, how did these women function as intermediaries? Did they communicate knowledge about children, about literature, about educational theory? Did these intermediaries have an influential nature? What, essentially, is the nature of influence? Did the women writing these articles influence parents or the larger society and how? What are the markers of influence? How can one decide whether or not those who knew about children and literature influenced parents (specifically mothers) regarding these issues?

Surely one can see that there are a number of questions here and a plethora yet unexamined. The objectives of this article are to provide an initial investigation into these issues and to provide a heuristic for further research.

METHODOLOGY

A number of factors contributed to the chosen methodological approach for this article. First, the objective, as stated earlier, is to begin to uncover territory yet unexamined regarding serious questions about scholarly women in this field. In doing so, the first method was to uncover and gather the writings of women about children's literature in its application to children, reading, and learning. This meant disregarding the work of men from the same time period about the same topics. Few men did any writing of this kind, however, so it would be interesting to examine questions relative to this phenomenon at a later time. The decision to isolate women and examine their writing alone reflects a portion of a larger research design in which there might be comparisons of the kinds of things men wrote with those written by women.

The time period investigated also reflects the fact that this study is only a small part of a larger picture. The decision to limit this discussion is due to the limitations in length of the journal format. Later, it might be interesting to examine the second half of the twentieth century and compare the number and kinds of things written. For this article, works by women about children's reading and literature, written between 1900 and 1950, are included. It is important to examine this time period because it includes the "birth" of children's literature as a unique genre. The creation of the first children's book imprint at a major American publishing house occurred in 1919 when Louise Seaman Bechtel took editorship of a separate children's department at Macmillan.

Women from a variety of professions are included in this article. They are not solely librarians, because there were a variety of women writing and all of their voices are significant. This means that educators, publishers, and

incorporated into the strengths of the earlier editions. The fourth edition is indispensable" (Herman, 1973, p. 55).

In her review of the fourth edition, Rosemary Weber (1973) states that the new edition, "while retaining May Hill Arbuthnot's name and much of her writing, has been thoroughly revised and greatly improved" (p. 170). Sutherland explains why the authors of the book were listed as Arbuthnot and Sutherland:

That was my choice. The first time the publisher wanted the carry-over. After that they said that it should now be Sutherland. I said no, it's her book, it was her idea, there are a lot of her ideas in it, and I feel I should pay tribute to her as long as the book comes out. She was very popular at Scott Foresman, personally popular, and so everybody understood when I said I wanted to keep May's name. The ninth edition will not have her name in it because the people at HarperCollins, which bought Scott Foresman, don't feel that way. They didn't know May. They took over the eighth edition after most of the work had been done. They have made it clear this time that they don't want her name, and I said I would agree to that only if there could be a tribute to her in the book. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, April 27, 1995)

Children and Books' impact in the field of children's literature has been formidable. According to Rochman, "It's elemental. It's so well written. You look up any book in the index, you get it succinctly described. You don't just get a list of titles, you don't get some vague reference. It's set in context with other books. It's that sweep of what's happening" (H. Rochman, personal communication, May 22, 1995). It is indeed "that sweep" which makes the textbook fundamental, and very few people, then or now, have been in the position to know the sweep as Sutherland does. As editor of the *Bulletin*, she saw practically every children's book that was published during any given year. In the textbook, she was able to include the books that matter, each treated with the appropriate amount of attention and connected to other books. She has that knowledge of all children's books that gives her the confidence to judge. Sutherland is currently working on the ninth edition of *Children and Books* to be published in 1996.

TEACHING AT THE GRADUATE LIBRARY SCHOOL

The year Sutherland's first edition of *Children and Books* (4th ed.) appeared, she also began teaching children's literature at the University of Chicago Graduate Library School. She was a superb teacher who influenced scores of children's librarians throughout the country. Before 1972, she simply worked at the university as the editor of the *Bulletin*. In 1972, she began teaching children's literature courses to replace Sally Fenwick who had retired; Sutherland was named a lecturer. She was promoted to associate professor in 1977 and full professor in 1983. She retired in September 1985 when the law then required compulsory retirement at 70. She then became professor emerita. At her retirement party, scores of former students came from around the country to recognize her exceptional teaching and pay tribute.

ALA AND COMMITTEE WORK

Sutherland has been professionally active and has served as a member of several prestigious award committees honoring books for children. She joined the American Library Association in 1958 and started going to the conferences because she felt it was important for the *Bulletin*. She recalls her first ALA conference:

My first memory is walking in the front door of the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., which has a very wide lobby right in front of the door, with steps down, so that you get a great panoramic view of people. What I saw were men and women rushing up to each other, and saying "darling," and "how are you?" and "I didn't know you were going to be here." I looked at this with disapproval, and thought, I'll never behave like that. This is now mostly what I go to ALA for. I do go to meetings, but it's the friends I've made that I go—with joy—to see. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, May 3, 1995)

Since that first ALA conference in 1959, Sutherland has served on many Newbery and Caldecott Award committees (chair in 1975), Notable Book Award committees, Batchelder Award committees (chair in 1981), Distinguished Service Award Committees (chair in 1994), and the Board of Directors of the Association of Library Services for Children from 1977 to 1980. Outside of ALA she has served on book award juries for the National Book Award, the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the Children's Spring Book Festival, the Jane Addams Award, the Clara Ingram Judson Award, the International Reading Association Children Book Award (chair in 1980), the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, and the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, of which she is permanent chair.

The circumstances of the Scott O'Dell Award provide insight into the respect that writers have for Sutherland's judgment and the respect that Sutherland has for book awards. O'Dell began a friendship with Sutherland in 1960 after the publication of his *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. When O'Dell established the award in 1981, he initially wanted her to judge it. Sutherland, however, did not want to do it alone and suggested that she and the Advisory Committee of the *Bulletin* be the judges. The two worked out a compromise so that Sutherland and the Advisory Committee would be the judges with Sutherland as permanent chair. After the *Bulletin* left the University of Chicago, she asked Bob Strang and Hazel Rochman, both members of the Advisory Committee, to stay on. *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth George Speare received the first award in 1984. Subsequent winners include *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan, *Morning Girl* by Michael Dorris, and *Bull Run* by Paul Fleischman.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ZENA SUTHERLAND LECTURES

In January 1980, Marilyn Kaye, a former doctoral student of Sutherland's, proposed a Festschrift in her honor. Some of Sutherland's good friends, John Donovan of the Children's Book Council; Marilyn Kaye and Betsy Hearne, former doctoral students of Sutherland; and Sophie Silberberg, Bob Verrone, and Dorothy Briley, highly regarded

people in children's book publishing, drew up a list of twenty-two writers, artists, and critics and asked them to contribute essays to the project. It is a great tribute to Sutherland that not one of the twenty-two turned down the request. The result was *Celebrating Children's Books* (1981), a collection of thoughtful essays by Ursula Nordstrom, Arnold Lobel, Jean Fritz, Paula Fox, John Rowe Townsend, Mary Orvig, and others. Maurice Sendak did the cover illustration. The royalties from the Festschrift were used to establish the Sutherland Lectureship Fund.

The fund was designed to support an annual lecture to be presented by a distinguished figure in the children's book field. The first ten lectures, presented in May during the years 1983 to 1992, were given by Maurice Sendak, Lloyd Alexander, Katherine Paterson, Virginia Hamilton, Robert Cormier, Paula Fox, David Macaulay, Jean Fritz, Trina Schart Hyman, and Betsy Byars. These were published in 1993 as *The Zena Sutherland Lectures: 1983-1992*, edited and with introductions by Betsy Hearne and with a splendid cover illustration by David Macaulay.⁵

OTHER HONORS

In recognition of her contributions to the profession, Sutherland has been honored by the ALA with the Grolier Award in 1983 and chosen as the Arbuthnot Honor Lecturer for 1996. Patricia J. Cianciolo, chair of the Arbuthnot Lecture Committee, made the Arbuthnot announcement at the 1995 Midwinter ALA meeting: "Through her writing, lecturing on children's literature and library materials, and service for children and their reading, Zena Sutherland has influenced considerably the knowledge and attitude of scholars, librarians, and teachers about reviewing, selecting, and using children's literature" ("Announcements," 1995, pp. 311-12). Sutherland will present the lecture in Dallas in April 1996.

THE ORCHARD BOOK OF NURSERY RHYMES

Zena Sutherland has produced one book for children, a nursery rhyme collection for Orchard Books. She was asked by Judith Elliott, the British editor of Orchard Books in London, if she would compile a Mother Goose book to be illustrated by the popular British artist Faith Jaques. Elliott felt that the partnership between a British illustrator and an American compiler would enable the book to reach audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. Sutherland thought Elliott ought to look for a name better known to adults who would be buying the book for their children and grandchildren, and suggested five American authors. Elliott phoned her, and as Sutherland recalls: "Orchard was started by Bob Verrone and Dick Jackson together, and Bob Verrone had been an especially close friend. He had died by the time Judith called, and she pulled the one string that would tug at my heart. She said, 'Wouldn't Bob Verrone be pleased that you were doing a book for Orchard?' So I said I would do it" (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, August 29, 1995).

Sutherland peppered her collection with some little known nursery rhymes while leaning toward those that would be a good showcase for

Faith Jaques. She also wrote a brief essay of the history of rhymes. Published in 1990, *The Orchard Book of Nursery Rhymes* received critical acclaim. A unique review in verse by the poet Eve Merriam (1990) appeared in the *New York Times*:

Zena Sutherland's choices are splendid,
 a plenty one wishes could never be ended.
 ...
 Notes at the end seem exactly right,
 citing sources, not too recondite.
 With pictures and writing so clearly inviting,
 ...
 by river's hook, by shepherd's crook,
 an instant classic look of a book. (p. 31)

RECOLLECTIONS OF IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN CHILDREN'S BOOK PUBLISHING

Sutherland's long and close ties with people in the children's publishing world and her immense knowledge about children's book publishing give her a rather rare vantage point, making her recollections particularly valuable.

When Sutherland reflects upon the important figures in children's book publishing, she acknowledges Ursula Nordstrom at Harper without a moment's hesitation as one of the greats. Nordstrom was admirable because she was courageous about what she published and very discerning about how her authors wrote or illustrators drew.

Sutherland believes that Nordstrom had a love/hate relationship with many of her authors and illustrators; she in turn supported and intimidated them. She gave them a great deal of leeway, but her standards were high. Nordstrom let them be innovative but not cute. Personally, she is known to have had a crisp, wonderfully irreverent sense of humor. Nordstrom was also important because she trained many others who subsequently became notable editors. Sutherland recalls:

Susan Hirschman, the Greenwillow editor, worked for Ursula. Dick Jackson has worked for Susan—the baton has passed along. People like Dick Jackson, who I consider one of the contemporary greats, have it in them. Nobody's going to bring it out if it's not there, but I don't think it hurts even if you have it in you to learn from somebody who is already a fine editor. And I think Ursula was. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, March 16, 1995)

Margaret McElderry, now of Simon and Schuster, is another important figure. She was interested in the international book scene and was a leader in buying rights to outstanding British fiction even before the Bologna book fair. During her tenure at Harcourt Brace, they became the American publisher for many of the truly great books by British writers. Sutherland praises McElderry for having a keen eye for what would win a prize but never publishing inferior books.

Velma Varner, the Viking editor whom Sutherland characterizes as "coolly sophisticated but a very warm human being," did wonderful picture books. Even though there have been other editors of superb picture books, Varner was particularly good at guiding her illustrators. Reflecting on people she has known in publishing, Sutherland comments warmly:

Some of the people that I think are important are important because of the role they've played in the children's book world. Some of them are important to me because they have become my friends, some of them are important for both reasons. When I first began reviewing, it was in an era when there were, this is a slight exaggeration, towering figures as editors. Almost all the editors at that time were women, which is no longer true....Some of the people that I knew as young beginning editors have now become major figures—Susan Hirschman is one and Dick Jackson is another.

There are also people who have become dear friends who work in publicity or promotion, people like Suzanne Glaser, Mimi Kayden, Sophie Silberberg, Bill Morris.

They are very knowledgeable about children's books, and they care as much as the editors do. The thing that's been gratifying to me is that they have high standards, and they are all honest about the fact that every book their company puts out isn't the gem of the year. They're tactful and honest both. Bob Verrone was another one who was a dear, dear friend. So was John Donovan from the Children's Book Council. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, March 16, 1995)

CONCLUSION

Pervading Sutherland's reviewing, writing, and teaching is a commitment to high standards of evaluation, a commonsense attitude about readers, and a firm respect for the child. Rochman believes Sutherland's image of childhood is the basis of it all. "It's an essential part of reviewing, that you don't hover around the child thinking you've got to explain everything. You can leave the child some independence and some privacy and Zena knew that. She had an image of childhood that was respectful and without any sentimentality. She knew story, she knew children, and she wanted these two to come together" (H. Rochman, personal communication, May 22, 1995).

Sutherland's comments on Rochman's observations tend to confirm them:

I wouldn't put it quite that way...I have my idea of what children are like, and what they ought to have and what they deserve as children, and as people, and of what their needs are. I feel that the children who are the ultimate readers of the books which I review for adult readers are the same as the children that I know in real life, and that I appreciate them as people. I've never said to myself when I sat down to review a book, "Now children must be respected. I guess I respect them, period." (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, August 29, 1995)

Sutherland's impact on the field of children's literature is undeniably profound. Roger Sutton of the *Bulletin* assesses her influence:

Primarily through the *Bulletin*, and then through *Children and Books*, her impact has to do with the way she welcomed change in children's literature in the 1960s, and the fact that she was in a position to give that change some force, both through what she wrote about in the textbook and what she reviewed in the *Bulletin*. She has a real commitment to intellectual freedom in books for children, so she never got bent out of shape by sex or violence or four letter words in a book. Another important thing she's done for children's books is that she's really slapped the sentimentality out of it, both in sentimentality in books for children, and sentimentality about books for children. Zena has no patience for that.

She helped people's perceptions of children's books grow up. Of course, other people were taking children's books seriously at the same time, but there was a certain stuffiness that Zena never had. Even though she was taking children's books seriously, she wasn't trying to say, "Not since *Finnegan's Wake*," which I think other reviewing journals did. They kept trying to prove children's books were real literature, where Zena simply accepted them as real literature, and that has helped other people. She was an arbiter of taste. (R. Sutton, personal communication, June 2, 1995)

From the very beginning, Sutherland has seen children as real people and children's literature as real literature. Moreover, she has never wavered from her professional mission, that is, of bringing children and the best books together. She recently recalled:

Children's literature today has as many good books as it ever had. It also has a great deal of inferior material. And there are many differences of opinion, and there are problems of censorship, but basically, it's still a healthy industry. Kids are still reading, and amongst the reading children, there are children who read avidly. There are occasional experiences that are heart-lifting. For example, about a year ago, I went to visit a book discussion group of fourth grade girls. It was so entertaining and exciting because these children were very intelligent about what they cared about. Not all of them were equally articulate or equally voluble, but everybody participated. They had all read the same book. They were doing this voluntarily, reading because they love to read. (Z. B. Sutherland, personal communication, March 18, 1995)

NOTES

- ¹ The master's degree required a thesis or a presentation of a paper at a major conference. Sutherland received her MA in Library Science in 1966 after presenting a paper titled "Current Reviewing of Children's Books" at the Thirty-first Annual Conference of the Graduate Library School, August 1-6, 1966. An article based on the speech can be found in *Library Quarterly* (Sutherland, 1967a) and in *A Critical Approach to Children's Literature*, edited by Sally Fenwick.
- ² The June 1984 issue is the one exception. When Sutherland was very sick with cancer, Hazel Rochman and Roger Sutton, who both served as members of the *Bulletin's* Advisory Committee, wrote reviews.
- ³ In September 1985, Betsy Hearne, editor of children's books at *Booklist* who did her doctoral research under Sutherland, became editor of the *Bulletin* and Sutherland became

associate editor. In March 1988, Roger Sutton joined Sutherland as associate editor. Sutherland continued to write reviews for the *Bulletin* until September 1992 when it moved to the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science after the University of Chicago Graduate Library School closed. As a result, the fourth volume includes reviews by Hearne and Sutton as well as by Sutherland.

- 4 By 1968, *Children and Books* was cited as the "one source of information about children's literature...considered 'basic' by more than 50 per cent (356) of the [573] respondents" in a survey given by the National Council of Teachers of English (Herman, 1973, p. 54).
- 5 Macaulay's illustration is of a white mouse, standing on a lectern, looking at a group of faces, some animal and some human, with eleven sheets of paper at various stages of falling to the floor. On each sheet is the name of a contributor. The eleventh sheet has "For Alec" on it, a dedication to Alec Sutherland who died the previous year. One face among the audience is thought by some to be a caricature of Macaulay's editor, Walter Lorraine.

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