

Adieu to a director



In late June, 1976, a smiling young woman wearing sandals and a cotton skirt walked into the Teachers & Writers office. She had just arrived in New York City from Mankato, Minnesota, and had shown great initiative in locating us. This was Nancy Larson.

At the time, the T&W office was in a cavernous loft space above Jimmy's Bar on Barrow Street in the West Village. We had no job openings, but I was so impressed with Nancy's qualifications—a combination of teaching, writing grant proposals, administrative acumen, and a love and respect for the arts—that I hired her anyway, certain I could figure out a way to keep her. She'd also been a waitress, which in my experience as an interviewer indicated that a candidate was quick thinking and a self-starter, and able to get along with all kinds of people.

Hiring Nancy was probably the best move I ever made as Director of Teachers & Writers. Less than five years later, I left the organization in her capable hands. Over the next 25 years I had the pleasure of watching her take T&W to the next level, making it a nationally recognized force in the growing writers-in-the-schools movement. Through her tireless efforts and innovative strategems, she increased T&W's size to more than a hundred writers working in schools around the city. She was also responsible for transforming our humble offices into the Center for Imaginative Writing on Union Square, a warm and welcoming magnet for arts activities in New York City.

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Throughout her time at T&W, Nancy's respect for the arts, her belief in their essential value to society, and her 1960s social conscience have remained steadfast, giving T&W a record that is impressive in the current philosophical and economic climate.

Twenty-five years is an extraordinary length of time to shoulder the responsibilities of running a non-profit group, particularly for someone as expansive as Nancy, who wants to make all dreams become reality. She has succeeded in her tenure at T&W beyond anyone's expectations, including, I suspect, my own. On June 22nd, T&W held a tribute to her which was attended by over one hundred of her friends and colleagues. (The event, incidentally, raised over \$20,000 for T&W.) Nancy will be joining the T&W board of directors as co-chairperson, so we can look forward to many more years of her friendship and support.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the new director, Amy Swauger. Most recently the Executive Director of the National Academy of Education and previously the Director of Washington Independent Writers, Amy brings to T&W extensive experience in nonprofit administration, a thorough knowledge of critical issues in education, and a profound love of literature. She has the right combination of drive, dedication, and vision to continue building on the successes of T&W and to lead us to new places.

—*Steve Schrader*