

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the first time in seventeen years that Steve Drasner hasn't reviewed submissions for *The Northern Virginia Review*. His absence has been keenly felt at this year's Editorial Board meetings, and I'm sure I speak for everyone on the Board who knew Steve when I say that his spirit is still with us. He especially enjoyed reviewing art submissions, and we can still hear him saying, "That piece would make a terrific cover!" or, fascinated, "Oh . . . that's supposed to be a tree? I didn't see that. Did you see that?" On matters great and small, I find myself wondering what Steve would say, listening for his voice.

Whatever he said was underpinned by his love for *TNVR*. Steve never missed a Board meeting, and I can't count the number of times, when we were planning an event or contemplating a new direction, that he would say, "Wait, there's something we're forgetting." Steve kept our editorial feet on the ground. There have been many NOVA editors and board members whose dedication and hard work have sustained and grown the journal. Steve is high up on that list. To grow, a journal needs both vision and a staff that provides consistent, watchful shepherding, and as *TNVR's* Managing Editor, Steve was a good shepherd.

On a personal level, as much as anyone, Steve Drasner taught me what unguarded, unadorned, open-hearted expression sounds like. I can think of no better example than what Steve said during a guided tour of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, where in 1963 four young girls were killed by a Ku Klux Klan bomb.

Tours must be booked in advance, and Steve was the first one to arrive for the time he had reserved. He was waiting outside the church as an African-American group that had booked the preceding tour was going in. It was so hot that the docent motioned to Steve to join their group. After showing a documentary about the bombing, the docent took questions, and an adolescent boy began talking about how much he hated white people. The others, painfully aware of Steve's presence, tried to shush him. Then Steve called out, "He's fine. Let him talk. He's got a right to say whatever he wants. I'm here to learn."

There, where hatred and ignorance caused so much suffering, where for decades people have come to pray for peace and understanding, I will forever hear Steve's spontaneous defense of this young man's right to be heard.

We all want to be heard; we all want to be truthful about who we are and how we became who we are. What greater gift than to know that others want to hear us. Art, whether written or visual, invites us to listen, and listen not with fear but with an open heart. Whether within these covers or elsewhere in your lives, I wish for you the wonder that I can yet hear in Steve's voice when he would say, "That's interesting, I didn't know that. Thank you for telling me."

Thank you, Steve.

Ruth Stewart  
Editor-in-Chief