EDITOR’S NOTE

It’s been a year since Bob Bausch spoke at the celebration launching Volume 32 of *The Northern Virginia* *Review.* Before reading from his latest book, he read his favorite passages from the new journal. After reading the concluding paragraph of one story, he asked the audience, “How many of you have ever read a story by Sherwood Anderson called “Death in the Woods”? I could put that paragraph in Anderson’s story where the woman is freezing to death and it would *improve* Sherwood Anderson’s work. That’s not an exaggeration.” And Bob meant it.

Bob Bausch was a great friend of *TNVR.* In its early years, he contributed stories. More recently, he worked with contributors, helping them revise and polish their submissions. And he was unstinting in his praise for the journal. “Every year it comes out, I read it cover to cover. I think it’s an extraordinary publication.”

I wish to God that Bob were here to read this year’s journal. I want to know which pieces he would marvel over. Would it be the one about the bone-deep pain of a decades-old small town rivalry? The one about Seminary Ridge, and the giggling boys fighting there with foam pool noodles where men had once tried to obliterate each other? Or the one about how we fall again and again into the habit of running toward some imagined perfection of happiness?

At the end of his address last year, Bob talked about gifts, about the doors we open as teachers and writers and artists. He told about being blindsided with joy when, as a young high school teacher, he broke through the shell of an extremely withdrawn student. That entire year she uttered not one word. Then, without her knowledge, Bob had two of her poems published in George Mason University’s literary journal *Phoebe.* That worked. On the last day of class, she finally broke her silence. “Thank you” she said. “Thank you for all this year.”

“I gave her poetry,” Bob said, his voice cracking.

He didn’t mean simply helping her discover the genre of poetry. He meant showing her the way, through the written word, to the unguarded soul. “That’s a great gift. If we can do that . . . I’m trying to do it everywhere. And that’s what you guys are doing.”

And you’re still doing it, Bob.

Ruth Stewart, Editor