

VOICES OF ALSC

The ALSC Oral History Project

PEGGY SULLIVAN interviews **ZENA SUTHERLAND**

This interview for the ALSC Oral History Project was conducted on February 11, 1998, in the Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago.

PEGGY SULLIVAN This is Peggy Sullivan starting an interview with Zena Sutherland. I'm going to be talking with Zena about her relationship with the Association for Library Service to Children, formerly the Children's Services Division, and changing the subject as we move along. So, Zena, what do you think of your relationship with ALSC/CSD, over the years?

ZENA SUTHERLAND I think I've gotten several kinds of benefits. One is the many friendships, which are not the chief purpose of the organization or my purpose in joining. But there is camaraderie among the members of the division. And I have gained, I think, a broader viewpoint on almost every aspect of librarianship, children's literature, and organizational structure — truly the democratic process in action. I have served on the board, but I think [the democratic process] comes even more from being on award committees. It's often very difficult to give up your belief in a book as the best of the year when you find that you are in the minority, and



Internationally recognized as one of the most influential critics and scholars of children's literature, **ZENA SUTHERLAND** was a Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago and the editor of *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* for nearly 30 years. With May Hill Arbuthnot, she coauthored early editions of the textbook *Children and Books*, which she went on to revise in subsequent editions that have been benchmark resources for library science students around the world. As an active member of ALSC/CSD, Sutherland served on numerous committees throughout her career. Among her many honors, she received the ALSC Distinguished Service Award for her immeasurable contributions to the field. Sutherland died in 2002 in Chicago.

Photo of Zena Sutherland courtesy of University of Chicago Magazine.



During **PEGGY SULLIVAN's** remarkably distinguished career in librarianship, she has served as President of ALA's Children's Services Division (now the Association for Library Service to Children), ALA President, and ALA Executive Director. She was also dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Rosary College (now Dominican University), and dean of the College of Professional Studies at Northern Illinois University. In 2008, Sullivan was named Honorary Member of the American Library Association, the association's highest honor, for her dedicated service to the field. Sullivan is currently a library advocate and consultant based in Chicago, Illinois.

there is very little chance that your book is going to win the award. So you have to see it more broadly.

PS Do you have any idea how many times you've been on Newbery or Caldecott or both? There was a time when if you were on one you were on the other.

ZS Yes, there was a time when there weren't two committees; there was one

committee, and it was 23 people. And also, shortly after I became a member of the Children's Services Division, I was asked to serve on the Notable Books Committee. The Notable Books Committee at that time consisted of only five people, and one of them was always the liaison person for Newbery. So, I think I have served on the Newbery Caldecott Committee four times and on the Newbery Committee once.