

# VOICES OF ALSC

## The ALSC Oral History Project

**DR. BARBARA IMMROTH** interviews **WILLIAM C. MORRIS**

**This interview for the ALSC Oral History Project was conducted on April 4, 1995, at the Dallas Public Library, in the office of Jan Moltzan, former Executive Director of the Texas Center for the Book.**

**BARBARA IMMROTH** It's the beginning of the Texas Library Association conference, and this is Barbara Immroth interviewing William C. Morris, who is Vice President and Director of Library Promotion and Advertising at HarperCollins Children's Books. He was awarded the first Association for Library Service to Children's Distinguished Service Award in 1992. Bill, you began at Harper in 1955. How did you become interested in children's book publishing?

**WILLIAM C. MORRIS** Well, it was an indirect interest. After I'd been in the Army for two years in Virginia, I went to New York to try to get into book publishing. I got as far as a Doubleday bookstore, where one of my jobs was to sell children's books to people. I knew nothing about them and didn't care much about them at all.

**BI** And you had already graduated from college and gotten your master's degree at Duke.



**WILLIAM C. MORRIS** was Vice President and Director of Library Promotion at HarperCollins Children's Books and an influential advocate for children's librarians and literature. During his remarkable career of nearly five decades, Morris had an immeasurable impact on how books for youth are marketed. The first recipient of the ALSC Distinguished Service Award, he was a longtime ALSC member and friend, and he remembered ALA in his will. The ALSC William C. Morris Endowment was activated in 2003, upon his death, and it currently funds "The Bill Morris Seminar: Children's Book Evaluation Training," held biennially during the ALA Midwinter Meeting, and a "Breakfast for Bill" program, held biennially at the ALSC National Institute.

A professor in the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin, **DR. BARBARA IMMROTH** has contributed decades of service to ALA, as well as many other professional associations. Immroth was President of ALSC from 1989–1990, and she has also been a member of numerous ALSC committees, including the 1999 Caldecott Committee. Immroth has also served as a member of ALA's Council, and she is the coauthor and editor of several professional books. In 2009, she was the first recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Texas Library Association (TLA).

**WCM** Right. I remember being "sentenced," if I didn't dust properly, to the children's book section. Since this was a Doubleday bookstore, we got commissions if we sold Doubleday books, so I'd sell those—for the commission.

When I left Doubleday and went to Harper as a temporary worker, I still wasn't particularly interested in children's books, but I was, for a while, in the children's book department. In fact, I think I was the first male actually to work

in the children's book department under Ursula Nordstrom. It was a part-time job, and I sent back rejected manuscripts to authors.

But then I became the sales representative for Harper in the New York area and sold all the books that Harper published. And I began to get more and more interested in children's books because of the great enthusiasm that women—important women in the children's books field—showed.