

<OBH>Jane Hedges, 1951–2015

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A good editorial hand is invisible, clearing away typos and inelegant or imprecise phrasings, of course, but also helping authors sharpen their thinking and refine their arguments. All that is left on the page is the best work the writer was capable of all along. In this regard, Jane was an unseen but invaluable presence on every page of *Slavic Review*. Her objection to the wording “always-already,” for example, was often accompanied by the wry query “What does that mean, anyway?”—a question many writers often fail to ask themselves before deploying an easy rhetorical shorthand. She honored and bolstered the journal’s legacy and reputation with her meticulous attention to detail and well-tuned ear to language, knowing that the ultimate editorial obligation is to you, the readers, whose understanding, engagement, and respect were and are always kept foremost in mind.

Another oft-unseen part of the journal’s operations, but one central to its production and to Jane’s impact, is its employment of three graduate students as editorial assistants every year. During her seventeen years as managing editor, Jane mentored dozens of assistants, each undertaking the unique challenges of editorial work in addition to their courses, prelim exams, dissertations, job applications, and new families. Many of them have shared their recollections for this tribute, and among the overlapping impressions, the word that recurs most frequently is *warmth*. Offering hot tea from the extensive collection she maintained in the office—a practice we have preserved—and an open smile, as if she had all the time in the world to chat, Jane shared her wisdom about everything from parenting to recalcitrant reviewers, grammar rules and good walking shoes. One alumna recalled sharing her anxiety about giving her very first

ASEEES paper: Jane replied, “‘I’ll come to your panel. You will see at least one smiling face looking at you.’ I suddenly felt that I could do it, that I could talk in public about my work, and one smiling, nonjudgmental face would have been there. After that conference, I always think about Jane before giving a paper.”

She was “infectiously kind,” deeply patient, and generous in the best of ways, sharing her time and her knowledge. Jane demonstrated the kind of equanimity and conscientiousness that raises everyone’s standards of their own work. She “ran a tight ship,” said one former assistant, yet “was the calm in the storm,” noted another. But more than one person has also recalled Jane’s laugh, which was “easy and infectious,” “beautiful, melodious,” and yet, “for a petite person, she had such a hearty (and infectious) laugh!” It complemented “eyes shining with mirth,” making us feel like she was welcoming us all to join in on a wonderfully silly joke. Making Jane laugh was a pleasure in its own right.

As an assistant-turned-friend remarked, she had an inquisitive mind and spirit “turned outward, toward the world and toward us. She listened to our stories and she told us her own. She humbled us and she encouraged us. We are better because of her.”

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