

5/29/79

To: Zena Sutherland
From: Barbara Moody
Re: N-D Dinner pros and cons

I'll never get this to you if I compose a decent letter, so here are some top-of-the-head ramblings.

No, the dinner part of the NC total picture shouldn't be sacred. But what is it about that particular dinner and awards presentation that has made it so special over the years? I'd say you'd have to use words like conviviality, festivity -- and a little dash of togetherness and exclusiveness. I think you wouldn't get the same spirit at all if you just had the up front people handing out medals and making speeches, and the audience just filing into rows of seats in a big auditorium. The "breaking bread together" intimacy is a truism, whether it's happening at a small business luncheon or a big conference meal; indeed, for the large group, the tables of 10 or 12 make the largeness more intimate and therefore even more important.

I wonder about the expense of it. People do "eat out" at a convention, and I expect spend amounts similar to dinner ticket prices if they think they'll have a good time. Maybe writing a check ahead of time makes them realize that expense more than they do an out of the pocket expense on an occasion. And I wonder about the negotiations with the hotel: would hotel banquet staff give us less good treatment, less elegant rooms, if ~~you~~ we had only a 3 course meal, for instance? Where does the break in the expense come: with the food, or with the personnel costs? Is a 3 course meal less expensive than a 6 course meal (with the dreary fruit cocktail, and all those dishes being slung across in haste?) Gee, I'm really rambling!

What else could be done, somewhere inbetween the full meal and the auditorium meeting set-ups? I doubt if a simple luncheon is it; I remember one year they worried all these same problems thru for the inaugural festivities, and came up with a pallid salad luncheon in an over-airconditioned room -- really bad. I don't suppose you could run our size crowd past a buffet table -- but have the hotels figured out something along this line? Maybe a big smorgasbord table for every four or five seating tables?? How about a "symphony pops" type arrangement, or an adaptation of it: just drinks and nibbles?

I guess after all this, I seem to be leaning toward saying yes, I do think something that makes all that crowd into little clusters of conviviality is a necessary part to the NC dinner if we want to keep a certain spirit.

Does your task force intend to examine alternative ^{solutions} to the work load

placed on the ALSC office? Is that issue an important one? Could that burden be placed ~~se~~ elsewhere? on the local committee? -- tho I see that's listed as a problem too. What items take the local committee's time? is it table decorations or some similar detail that could be abandoned?

I suppose if there weren't a dinner, ~~than/the/way~~ publishers would be saved a lot of time, effort and expense, too. Do you have some comments from some of them? I think one of the distasteful things at NC dinners is to overhear publishing staff not connected with their children's business who have been dragged in to help host the table, complain or act bored. Maybe the space available problem could be solved by the publishing people figuring a way to leave those guys out of it!

I guess this is more than enough from me. And in spite of the tone this has taken, I still wouldn't collapse into a pout if the dinner was abandoned.