

REMARKS

Curtis Armstrong, BSI

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It's common for young people to feel unmoored and disconnected in the world as they approach the age of awareness. If they're lucky they have a parent or grandparent or older sibling to introduce them to the fundamentals of life and—sometimes just as important--those extra joys that make that life worth living. The kind of mentor that goes the extra mile. One who doesn't just advise and instruct but one who recognizes the unrealized essence within a burgeoning character.

Those mentors are rare—blue carbuncle rare—But Susan Rice was one of them.

Many of you knew Susan either personally or by reputation. A teacher to many, she was also a friend and presiding genius to hundreds of Sherlockians, young and not so young, going back to the late sixties. Susan was the very best sort of gatekeeper: one who was generous with her time and free with the keys She not only knew how to unlock doors, she could break them down, if need be, and leave them open for everyone who came after her. She had been doing both forever.

Everyone who met her had stories about Susan: Of letters or books received, lunches or dinners shared. Of the collegial encouragement of intellectual curiosity and progressive thought, the joy of community and spirited conversation, the lifting up of the uncertain and awkward and the inclusion of all in everything we do. Those aspects of Susan's calling continue. It's now the job of those of us who are richer for having known her to continue her work.

This afternoon we are happy to announce the creation of The Susan Rice Mentorship Award.

The Purpose of the award is to recognize the activities of a member of the Sherlock Holmes community who has been a mentor to others, in the spirit of Susan Rice. The award will be judged on the mentor's commitment to bringing aspiring Sherlockians into the cause and encouraging them to find ways to keep green the memory of Sherlock Holmes. While those activities could be in the traditional realm of trifling monographs and playing The Game, we would also recognize that the effort could take place in other media and activities. To sum up who we are looking for in a few words: Someone who is generous, welcoming, and who offers encouragement.

A small group of Irregulars worked out a selection process and nominated this year's winner. We want to thank Michael Kean for supporting this effort. Information on how you can nominate someone for this award will be shared with you soon.

In addition to introducing the award, it is also my great pleasure to introduce its first recipient. The winner of the 2022 Susan Rice Mentorship Award is Peter Blau.

The qualities of openness and welcoming that were so much a part of Susan's character have been seen in Peter over and over again. His energy, enthusiasm and generosity within the Sherlockian world is well known. In Andy Fusco's words, Peter served "...as a long-time sparking plug of nascent scion societies and as a mentor of eager, youthful Sherlockians and has fostered and encouraged later generations who now predominate our ranks."

His progressive credentials should also be noted. It was Peter who resurrected the then-dormant Red Circle in Washington D.C. as one of the BSI's co-educational scions. Peter is the last remaining male Sherlockian of his generation who actively supported The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes. Evy Herzog, one of that intrepid band of feminist Sherlockians said of Peter, "Not only had he mentored the original group and introduced us in subsequent years to other Sherlockian women who helped us recreate the Adventuresses, but he supported and encouraged the new ASH with his advice, his presence and his contributions...In the years that followed, there were many ASH dinner meetings for members only—which often meant that the room was filled with dozens of women...and Peter Blau." Finally, while justly famous for his book collection, Beverly Wolov, who knows whereof she speaks, says, "Here's the key to Peter: he collects more than books. He collects experiences. He collects memories. He collects friends."

This room is full of them. Peter Blau.