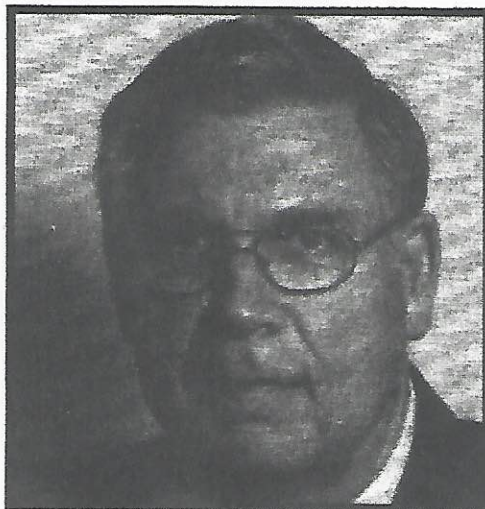


# IN MEMORIAM



**Alan E. Farstrup**

Most LRA members probably associate Alan Farstrup's participation in LRA/NRC with his more official role (Executive Director of IRA from 1992-2009 and before that Director of Research from 1984-1992) as a liaison to another professional literacy organization. And he dispatched that role with remarkable diplomacy and a generous disposition—going out of his way to welcome a newcomer, greet an old friend, or compliment the quality of a presentation by a nervous graduate student making his or her first presentation at a national conference.

But my recollections of Alan at NRC go back much farther—to the 1970s, when he was a newcomer—a graduate student (and my teaching assistant!!) from the University of Minnesota, then a brand new professor at the brand new University of Texas at San Antonio, or to the early 1980s when he was a mid-career scholar from the University of Rhode Island. Granted, Alan was always the soft-spoken respectful soul who was sensitive to the needs of the newcomer, but he was enough of a jokester to win one of those infamous awards given for outrageous behavior in that era of NRC. When it came to a professional ribbing, he could give as good as he could get. And that deep-seated collegiality was an important part of what made him so special, so vulnerable, so warm, and so supportive as a colleague.

It is often said of Alan that more than any other leader of IRA (now ILA), he was the one who was most responsible for putting the I in IRA. Alan not only supported the international thrust of IRA, he embodied it—being bilingual in Danish and English and tolerably competent in Swedish and German. Our friends from such far flung locales as Europe, Asia, the South Pacific and Africa have, in reflecting on Alan's contributions, uniformly praised his sensitivity to the international responsibility of IRA.

Less obvious but equally important are his contributions to research. It was not so much that Alan did original research (although a perusal of his vita in the 1970s and early 1980s documents those contributions) as it was that he supported and nurtured the research of the profession. Both during his tenure as IRA's director of research for 7 years from 1985 to 1992 and in the following 17 years as Executive Director of IRA, he was a champion of research-based practice as a basic and consistent policy position of IRA and the literacy research community writ broad, including LRA. He walked the talk of research-based practice in the three volumes of "What Research Says about Reading Instruction" that he co-edited with Jay Samuels for IRA. They remain seminal contributions to this day.

Those of us who knew him well will also cherish his legacy as a father, husband, and friend. He was loyal to a fault (he forgave me all too many professional sins), he and Susan shared a special and unique commitment to one another for almost 50 years, and no one loved his child more nor was prouder to be a parent of their son Adam than Alan. A proud memory for me is the annual sharing of pictures and stories of the numerous exploits of offspring.

We have lost but will long remember Alan as a committed colleague and valiant friend. That we knew him and learned from him makes us better members of our profession.

*P. David Pearson, University of California, Berkeley*