

CAAS honors Lou Bolchazy

The highlight of the 2013 annual fall meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States for the Bolchazy-Carducci family was the CAAS panel presentation, “The World of Classics Textbook Publishing: A Panel in Honor of Lou Bolchazy.” Lou’s wife and business partner, Marie, and his son, Allan, who joined the firm in 2009, along with Allan’s partner Paul Mallatt, arranged their schedules so that they could attend this special tribute.

The panel emerged from a collaborative brainstorming session at the 2012 CAAS fall meeting when president-elect Fred Booth (Seton Hall University), program chair Judith Hallett (University of Maryland), Henry Bender (St. Joseph’s University), and Ronnie Ancona (Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center) shared their sense of loss with Lou’s passing and their desire to honor him in a special way. B-C liaison with CAAS, Don Sprague affirmed that the company and the Bolchazys would be very honored by whatever means CAAS chose. And so, over time, the idea for a panel with speakers discussing Lou’s contribution to the classics community took form. Ronnie Ancona and Henry Bender served as co-chairs of the panel and kept the group of six speakers on task and on time from proposal submission to paper delivery.

Here follows a collation of representative excerpts from each of the presentations.

Sherwin Little, former high school Latin teacher and ACL president, currently on the ACL staff, shared his insights “*Viam inveniam aut faciam*: Lou Bolchazy’s Impact on the Teaching of Classics.” Sherwin praised Lou for recognizing the value of the teacher’s voice and insights and for encouraging teachers to share those insights. “What set Lou apart for me was his strong belief that the everyday classroom teacher had something to say that was important to hear Not only would Lou encourage teachers to take their ideas and techniques and give presentations about them, he would try to convince them to turn that presentation into a publication, whether that became an article or a book. . . . Lou would serve as the guide for neophyte authors through the publication labyrinth.” Sherwin demonstrated how Lou was always in search of materials that would make Latin that much more accessible to students. “Lou always had his eye out for that next great thing. The *Latin for the New Millennium* series is a prime example. Full disclosure—I served as a consultant on this series. As I carefully read the proofs, I was impressed at how authors and editors were able to open the door to how a teacher could use active Latin as a regular part of classroom instruction In addition this series encourages us to look beyond the Golden Age for texts of interest to our students.” Sherwin also encouraged Latin teachers, as would Lou, to engage in pedagogical research, to document the efficacy of various techniques and classroom activities.

Don Sprague, former high school teacher and currently an editor for Bolchazy-Carducci and an adjunct with the City Colleges of Chicago, entitled his remarks “An Honor to Have Been Bolchazy-ed.” Don shared how his high school teaching career and Lou’s career as a classics publisher were intertwined. Having been invited to join B-C as an editor, Don witnessed firsthand Lou’s passion for the company and its books. About his being hired, Don noted “Lou explained how he preferred to hire folks whose classroom expertise he knew about firsthand. He wanted editors who fit the tag ‘For Classicists, by Classicists.’ So, after a characteristically loooooong, several hour visit, I left having agreed to be a freelance editor with my first project

creating copy for a promotional piece for all B-C's Vergil titles. This was a task near and dear to Lou's heart—he loved Vergil, especially the Underworld visit that presents as he was wont to remind me 'the first secular set of ethical pronouncements.' I had again been 'Bolchazy-ed.'” After sharing other examples of Lou's zeal, Don concluded with “Each afternoon at the office, Lou looked forward to having a cup of coffee and maybe a sweet. What made such moments sweetest for him, however, was the opportunity to spend that coffee break with one of his editors. Such breaks allowed him to share his vision, float some new ideas, query about the progress of a new book, or the like. I remember very well the last such coffee break we shared on the Tuesday afternoon of July 3, 2012. Lou wanted to know when I planned to publish his reflections for the new AP curriculum . . . he was bothered that I had not yet published them. I explained that it made sense to put them in the August and September issues of our eNewsletter *eLitterae* when teachers were beginning the school year. He was satisfied and after our coffee bade me good bye. As it turned out, for the last time.”

In his talk entitled “Lou Bolchazy: Tradition and Innovation,” Henry Bender shared reflections on both the friendship and the professional relationship that he and Lou had developed. “My friendship with him began when John Traupman introduced me to him at an APA meeting many decades ago in Philadelphia. . . . Instantly as John abandoned me, Lou engaged in discussion with me, asking what I was teaching, what books I was using, what did I think of them, how could they be improved, had I seen this or that, what about this what about that and the conversation spun on and on, punctuated by other friends of his coming up to share greetings and updates.” Subsequent encounters with Lou assured Henry that “that he (Lou) really did care about what your instructional needs might be, (it) set him apart.” Henry was honored when Lou asked him to collate his class materials and coauthor a Catullus text. “As he stipulated, ‘Henry, all teachers want their students to stand free of vocabulary prompts, not to memorize a translation, but to understand what they translate.’ He stressed how good texts on the secondary level should whet the student's appetite for classical literature, ‘to get the message,’ as he sometimes termed it.” Henry appreciatively delineated Lou's encouragement of the text *Poet and Artist: Imagining the Aeneid* as a testament to Lou's embracing the innovative. “Lou loved the essay questions that we designed to prompt students to perceive the artists' awareness of the Latin text and vocabulary as they produced their various illustrations.”

Ronnie Ancona entitled her reflection on almost twenty years of collaboration with Lou “Opportunities Afforded by Lou Bolchazy: Reflections on Textbook Writing, Editing, and Consulting.” Ronnie provided a very engaging look at those three aspects of publishing based on her firsthand experience working as author, editor, and consultant at Bolchazy-Carducci. About constructing a textbook, she writes “The exhilaration comes from being involved in shaping how they will read; the challenges comes from finding ways to make the authors exciting and accessible without imposing your own particular interpretation. For me, this took the form of attempting to open up possible readings rather than arguing for a particular one, which is more the place of one's own separate scholarship. One tries to figure out what the student needs and how one can supply help without translating or dictating a particular viewpoint. I must say that one gets to know the Latin text very intimately through this process of questioning what the student (and teacher) may need. One reads as oneself, but also simultaneously as one's ideal reader.”

When B-C sought to meet college professors' expressed need for new textbooks that both *expand* the curriculum and *vary* it, Ronnie was invited to serve as series editor for what became the BC Latin Readers. Ronnie explains, "When asked to edit the series, with Laurie (Haight Keenan), who has been a tremendous influence on my professional life as a model of editorial professionalism, as in-house editor, I couldn't resist. Lou and company allowed me to be sole series editor, which was my preference, and I embarked solo upon the task of seeking out the best scholars available who were also interested in the idea of writing a textbook, something only some of them had done before." Ronnie was given total freedom to pursue potential authors she thought best suited for the task. The series editor experience showed Ronnie how "editors can encourage authors and help them to shape the best books they can."

Ronnie served as a consultant for *Latin for the New Millennium*, Level 2. In that capacity, she provided feedback on chunks of the book in progress, imagining "how the book might work with students . . ." In discussing the kind of company Lou developed, Ronnie calls it the "Bolchazy-Carducci family." "Lou created a classics publishing company by and for classicists, but he employed others doing production, finances, publicity, and so forth, so the 'family' was actually larger. In addition, the company often treated its authors like family, inviting them out to dinner at APA or ACL." In concluding her remarks, Ronnie cited a visit to the company's former headquarters when the APA last met in Chicago. She was very touched that Lou and Marie made sure to show her the warehouse and the cartons containing copies of her text *Writing Passion: A Catullus Reader*. "To be honest, I had never thought about the warehousing of books, but they had realized that this image was something I would truly enjoy. It complemented that very cerebral process of textbook writing to see the boxes ready to be opened in order to fulfill those orders from readers you, as author, have been imagining all along."

The panel cochairs demonstrated a special insight with the invitation of Jessica Anderson and Kathleen Durkin, who are the founding Latin teachers for Maspeth High School in New York City. The dynamic duo presented "Lou Bolchazy's Impact on the Next Generation" together. Both Kathleen and Jessica had first met Lou at an ACL Institute, in 2008 and 2011 respectively. Kathleen notes, "Once I had heard his name for the first time, and met the man whose legacy cannot be put into words eloquent enough, the name of Bolchazy and Bolchazy-Carducci publishing stayed with me, soon becoming my go-to for classics textbooks." Jessica shares, "Within moments, Lou was telling jokes and had convinced me to buy not just the books that I was holding, but an additional two that he recommended. He was funny and affable, and his passion for sharing classics was immediately apparent. I was so excited to put a face to the name that lines my bookshelves." Both teachers discussed the various B-C titles they had used in their own undergraduate and graduate studies, and for Jessica, in her AP class. At Maspeth, these two young, enthusiastic Latinists have been given the opportunity of a lifetime. As Kathleen relates, "Jessica and I were hired together to build a Latin program from scratch at a budding public high school in Queens, known as Maspeth High School. . . . During our first year, we realized that we needed a textbook that would provide more opportunities for differentiation with our students. We wanted something that would provide all learners from all backgrounds with a central theme around which we could scaffold our lessons differently, while keeping on pace with the program. After a thorough review of some of the major textbooks and methodologies available, Jessica and I were sold on using Bolchazy's pride and joy, *Latin for the New Millennium*."

Jessica's concluding remarks served as a fitting conclusion to the panel: "It is clear from today's panel that Lou's influence in the classics community was great. It was vast enough to reach our students in Maspeth, Queens, and it will be everlasting as new generations of young learners, like our students, discover a passion for the classics, a discovery that will be possible through Lou's legacy – Bolchazy-Carducci publishing."

Following the panel presentation, the audience asked some questions and shared some remarks. As Marie Bolchazy was in attendance, she was invited to share some reflections which are printed below.

Thanks to the panelists who presented talks about Lou. It was wonderful to hear these reflections about him and I appreciate the time and thought the panelists gave to this panel.

Lou was born in Slovakia near the Ukrainian border in 1937 and never knew a time before Nazi domination of his homeland. Actually, the Germans treated the Slovak people not so badly as long as they weren't Jewish or hadn't conspired against them. As a small boy, Lou knew nothing about the mistreatment the Nazis had committed elsewhere and he would actually ride on the tanks of the soldiers and trade bread with them. When the Slovaks were "liberated" by the Russians, they were treated far worse. His father was an American citizen who married a Slovak woman and lived in Slovakia from the age of nine on. After the war, he was desperate to get his family out of Slovakia but had no money. A Slovak-American woman learned of his plight and gave him the money to come to the US. His father came to the US in 1948 and, after earning enough money, arranged for his family to come over too. Lou was eleven years old at the time.

Lou had a hard time getting a tenured university position and would always say "*felix culpa*, oh happy fault" to me and talked about blessings in disguise. I told him I wanted undisguised blessings. Nearly forty years ago, he talked to me about starting his own publishing company and I was all for it. He always believed in Latin and when other publishers were abandoning Latin publications, Lou had faith. When he started Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, any money the company received went back into the company. We were living on my salary, about \$8,000 (worth more then but still not much), for several years. We just didn't travel much. Even at the very end of his life, when he was in hospice, Lou talked not about his illness and impending death, but about his books—to the doctors, nurses, visitors, anyone really.

Besides the classics, Lou was also devoted to his mother country—Slovakia. He formed the Slovak-American International Cultural foundation, which published English translations of important Slovak works and also promoted the work of Slovak artists. For many years, he maintained a website to promote the scholarship of classicists from countries formerly dominated by the Soviet Union.