

Other Than Editing

by Tanya Nading

Nancy Wachter: Serving Through Words and Music

Sing to the Lord a Jubilant Song, *This Little Light of Mine*, and *Let Us Serve Him* are just some of the songs heard on Sunday mornings from the choir of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Parkton, Maryland, church home of Nancy Wachter. When not directing her choir, Nancy, a senior manuscript editor for Johns Hopkins University Press and member of the Council of Science Editors Education Committee, is volunteering her time to help others.

Nancy has been a member of the Redeemer Lutheran Church for nearly 10 years. Initially, she was asked to help with a couple of Sunday anthems. When the former choir director was about to step down, he approached Nancy, knowing that she had long experience with choirs, and asked her to volunteer for the position. She turned him down because she had little conducting experience. The director told her that there would be no choral music at the church if she didn't volunteer, so she did, Nancy says.

Music was always a part of Nancy's life when she was growing up. She began her musical career with piano lessons as a child. She has sung in church choirs since the third grade and took voice lessons at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, where she earned a bachelor's degree in English. While at Gettysburg College, Nancy sang with the Chapel Choir, and when home from school she would sing along with her father, who was a freelance professional organist and the organist at the Chapel of the Holy Comforter in Lutherville, Maryland. Nancy participated briefly with the Ridgely Consort, a choral group formed of singers from the Baltimore area, in which she sang Fauré's *Requiem*, one of her favorite pieces. Nancy has sung alto, second soprano, and first soprano over the years and currently sings soprano.

After graduating from Gettysburg College in 1966, Nancy worked for Hutzler's Department Store for about a year as an executive trainee. In 1967, she began working for Waverly Press (since bought by Cadmus Professional Communications) as a redactor on the *Journal of Biological Chemistry (JBC)* and on *Bergey's Manual of Bacteriology*. She married in 1968, and

she and her husband, John, had three sons, born in 1970, 1973, and 1978. After their first child was born, Nancy spent 12 years working from home for Waverly, copyediting *JBC* articles. She took a 5-year break in which she spent more time with her children, helping out at their elementary school. She also taught aerobics, freelanced, and worked briefly for a few small publishers and an accounting firm.

Because she enjoyed copyediting scientific material so much, Nancy returned to Cadmus in 1987 and worked on *JBC* and then *Pediatrics*. While working full-time, Nancy attended the College of Notre Dame; she graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration in 1989. She received a master's degree in finance from Johns Hopkins University in 1993. Waverly paid 75% of her tuition for her second bachelor's and her master's degree.

Nancy has a certification as an editor in the life sciences from the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences and is a certified first responder. She has worked for more than 35 years in scientific, technical, and medical-journal publishing. She is now a senior manuscript editor for the Johns Hopkins University Press, where she copyedits book manuscripts on clinical, scientific, and technical topics. She has also worked for Cadmus, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Sheridan Press, and Waverly Press. And she does freelance copyediting of journals and books for several customers.

From 2000 to 2004, Nancy was an organizer and faculty member of the CSE short course on electronic publishing solutions. Nancy says she volunteered to organize and facilitate the course when the original organizer became unable to continue. Nancy asked experts in each field to present, reminded presenters of deadlines, planned and hosted the faculty dinner, and facilitated the course. She decided to end her job as facilitator in 2004. "It was time to have someone else do it, to bring in new ideas and experiences", Nancy says. She has been a member of the Education Committee for about 6 years. For the 2005 annual meeting held in May, Nancy helped to evaluate the applications for scholar-



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Nancy Wachter and her choir

ships to attend the meeting.

Nancy began volunteering as the church's choir director nearly 3 years ago. As choir director, she has a variety of weekly responsibilities. One is to choose and obtain the music to be sung on Sunday morning. She sets the calendar and maps out which songs will be sung each Sunday morning. Practicing hard, having the song come out better than expected, and "touching" the congregation are some of the things that Nancy enjoys most about directing. "Although our numbers are small, usually around eight or so, we seem to have the power", Nancy says. "We've been told we sound like a much larger choir."

One of the biggest challenges for Nancy is keeping positive when choir members don't show up for choir rehearsal or for the Sunday service. Another challenge is that some members do not read music, but Nancy says that they work very hard to practice and learn the material. "It seems that even when we have a difficult rehearsal, their voices blend on Sunday and everything just comes together."

Nancy says that dealing with choir members as a director can be a lot like dealing with an author as an editor. "It is necessary to have patience and to be positive, encouraging, but persistent when it matters for quality and consistency", Nancy says. "Songs have to be appropriate to the

Sunday, season, or other occasion, just as articles must be appropriate to the theme or intent of an issue."

Of all her responsibilities as choir director, choosing songs that best complement all the choir voices is one of her favorites. One way Nancy finds the perfect song is to think about how the song will affect listeners both emotionally and spiritually. Nancy says that the ability to

focus on the spiritual and emotional needs of the church members is similar to skills she developed while volunteering for Stella Maris, a hospice center in Maryland.

Nancy began volunteering at Stella Maris in 1999, after her mother received excellent care from the workers there. Her mother died of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 5 days after being accepted into the hospice. "She got spiritual, emotional, and medical support there. They gave my sister and me great emotional and spiritual support as well. So a year later, I started volunteering there, just to give back to help others. I have found that, through music, you can [also] provide emotional and spiritual support."

Nancy volunteered at Stella Maris for 2 years, stopping when she became choir director because she couldn't do both. Nancy says she misses hospice work and has started volunteering at a health-care center for a retirement community a few miles from her home. She works for a few hours each Sunday, visiting people who can no longer live in assisted living and can no longer walk. "I have started singing favorite old hymns to individual patients who can't make it to a service", she says. "[It's] very rewarding."

TANYA NADING *wrote this article while an intern for Science Editor.*