

You Are with Us in the Wind

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You Are with Us in the Wind

David Rothenberg

I knew Alan Drengson for more than thirty years – he was one of the first proponents of deep ecology that I corresponded with after going to Norway to work with Arne Naess in my mid-twenties, just after graduating college. His journal *the Trumpeter* was unique, printed in an old-fashioned way, promising new perspectives that seemed authentic, ancient, and at the same time up-to-date.

Arne and I visited Alan in Victoria sometime in the late eighties, and we had a fabulous time with the whole Drengson clan. I remember we needed to catch a flight to Bellingham and we were waiting around the airport past the departure time and someone from the airline came and asked, “Do you care how small the plane is?” and we said, “No, anything that gets up in the air will be fine.” Soon after, a pilot resembling Biggles from WWI walks by and says, “Passengers? Where are my passengers?” and he looks at the manifest and says, “Arne Naess? *The Arne Naess*. It is a pleasure, sir, to carry you on my aircraft. I once studied philosophy at the University of Copenhagen.”

Wandering the world with Arne Naess was often like that, and Alan was a close part of the journey. At some point he needed to take a break from editing *the Trumpeter* and asked if I might do it. I jumped at the chance. I learned a bit of desktop publishing layout, changed the font to Baskerville, and did it for about a year, with a lot of help from Jennifer Sahn, who later became editor of *Orion*, *Pacific Standard*, and now *High Country News*. I went on to found *Terra Nova*, the environmental literary journal, then the book series, and now a press of its own, all these incarnations distributed by MIT Press.

Too much about me, I know. But it was Alan who showed me that it could be done. He was always kind, gracious, interested in so much about how humans might better relate to the natural world. He was one of the few philosophers I have known who showed how one could get deep into these tough, impossible conceptual conundra of the struggle between our species and the wider world, and *still* manage to be a good person, true to his family and his community, being kind, gentle, and perceptive to all.

I wish I stayed more in touch with him over these last decades, and now that he is no longer with us, his absence weighs strong.

Sitting on a balcony in Estonia writing these words, today feels as the first day where the skies are gray and the winds have returned, signaling that autumn is on the near horizon. Alan’s fine work explaining and promoting deep ecology to the world has enhanced my understanding of

such moments at the edge of nature, as it has for so many people around the world.

In one of his last writings for *the Trumpeter*, on “Wild Foresters,” Alan had these wise words to say: “Love is a universal, transformative energy that we can activate in our own ways. Our spiritual challenge is to become whole, complete persons by loving and living in harmony and community with the tame and wild worlds. The world is always changing and so we change with it.”¹

We all miss him.

David Rothenberg

Tallinn, Estonia

August 24, 2022

¹ Alan Drengson and Duncan Taylor, “Wild Foresters: Practicing Nature’s Wisdom,” *the Trumpeter* 29, no. 1 (2013): 23.