



the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

Author/Illustrator Profile:

Barney Saltzberg

By Patricia Newman

As a child, Barney Saltzberg longed to fit-in-a theme that pervades his picture books today. He remembers asking his parents for a Sting-Ray bike with a banana seat, but they purchased an Italian folding bike instead. His friends watched the Man from U.N.C.L.E. on TV and sported black shirts, black pants, and black pointy shoes like the characters, Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin. Unfortunately for Saltzberg, his parents were more practical. "My dad owned a shoe store and said round-toed shoe are better for your feet...My mother made me wear a red sweater because it was easy to find me after school. I wanted to wear black like everyone else."

At Sonoma State University, Saltzberg studied art "mostly because John Lennon studied art. I wanted to play the guitar and draw pictures," he says. "My [style] was naïve and primitive but they let me slide by." He first began to appreciate picture books when he happened upon William Steig's *The Amazing Bone* in a gift store that sold wine, cheese, and children's



Photo from Barney's website

books. "The use of language was so delicious, I wanted to be inside the book," Saltzberg says. "There was a pull there."

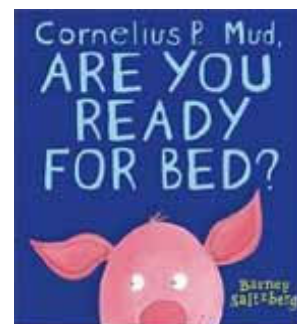
Saltzberg returned to Los Angeles after graduation to play guitar. His primary career ambition was to become a Beatle, but he says, "disco killed my music career." Fortunately for his future readers, he lucked into a children's picture book class at the Otis Art Institute where he wrote his first published book *It Must Have Been the Wind* (Harper & Row, 1981).

Saltzberg is never at a loss for inspiration. "Being on the planet is inspiring," he says, "Waking up every day is a source of inspiration." This is a Great Place for a Hot Dog Stand is based on a line his father always used to say while waiting in line at the bank, or attending a wedding or a funeral. "Wherever there was a crowd of people," says Saltzberg. What to Say to Clara recalls Saltzberg's struggle to overcome his shyness and dazzle the new girl in his class with the right words to make her like him. And the plot of *Crazy Hair Day* actually happened at his son's school and is the only time a story idea came to Saltzberg fully formed from beginning to end.

Cornelius P. Mud, Are You Ready for Bed? was just the opposite. The story started out with a vampire named Count Sheep as the main character. "I developed a whole riff on what that would be," he says. "If it's a kid's book he couldn't suck blood. He's going to have to suck mud." Naturally, Count Sheep had trouble sleeping, and when Saltzberg researched kids' bedtime rituals he shelved Count Sheep in favor of *Cornelius P. Mud*. "I use that as an example with kids on how you have to be willing to make a huge left turn," he says. "You think your story is going one way, but you have to be open to new possibilities."

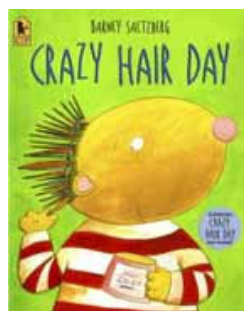
Cornelius is Saltzberg's favorite character. "I like how his brain works," he says. "If you told *Cornelius* to take out the garbage, he'd probably bring it to the movies and buy it some popcorn. He's a literal guy."

Saltzberg works from his Los Angeles home in a studio that used to be the garage. Various stages of the writing process claim his attention during a single day-creating a new manuscript,



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See Saltzberg on page 2

Saltzberg

My Journey Into the World of Publishing

By Rachel Allen Dillion

illustrating manuscripts under contract, publicity, and school visits. He tells elementary school students that after he gives a new story to his editor he'd like the editor to say, "200%, A+, You're a genius!," but he usually receives a gazillion cross-outs and suggestions. "It's like sending your kid to kindergarten and having him come home



in different clothes, with a new hair style, and speaking a new language," he says. "You know your child is in there somewhere but things have changed." Saltzberg describes working with his editor as a dialogue. "There's trust on both sides," he says. Carrying his analogy further, "The hair might be okay, but the pants have to go."

Aspiring writers frequently ask Saltzberg for advice on becoming an author or illustrator. "Become a doctor," he jokes. After

the laughter dies down he advises newcomers to the business to leave their egos at home and become familiar with their chosen genre by reading extensively. "Find your voice and create a character we care about," says the creator of well-loved characters like Cornelius P. Mud, Stanley, and Hip and Hop. Other tips? "I always keep my sense of humor intact at all times," he says. "And I never give up." ☺

I didn't sit down to write and illustrate a children's book. It just seemed to happen. While I was working full-time in marketing, I drove my daughter to and from daycare, and wrote on scraps of paper at stoplights as poems came into my head. I combined the poems and some of the paintings of endangered animals I did, and a book was born.

My passion for endangered animals began in my teens. I spent hours at the Henry Vilas Zoo, in Madison, WI., studying and photographing their vanishing wildlife. My painting style was inspired during a trip to Australia in 1992, when I was introduced to Aboriginal Acrylic Dot painting. I loved the colors, textures and patterns, and just had to try the method out. Seventeen years later, my style has evolved, but the technique is fundamentally the same. In 1994, I earned a Bachelor of Science, in Art and Graphic Design from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

I decided to try to get my book published, so I spent a weekend on the couch going through the Children's Writers and Illustrators Market guide. I picked the "perfect" publisher and was absolutely sure they would want my book. When the rejection came, I was so disappointed I didn't submit to other publishers for six months. The next time, I sent my manuscript and illustrations to three publishers. Lo and behold, Stemmer House chose my book. The editor, Craig Thorn, told me he had received around 1,500 unsolicited manuscripts in the year 2002, and working for a small publisher, only chose three titles to publish.

I received my contract in 2004 and started work on completing the artwork for the book of nine endangered species. Once the book was submitted, Craig responded enthusiastically, and decided we should more than double the book's pages by adding eleven more species. Another year passed, before completing the rest of the book. Then, I learned that Craig was battling cancer at the age of 47. We worked very hard to complete the book, knowing it would be Craig's last project. His passion never faltered, not even near the end of his life. In 2006, Craig passed away. When I found out, I cried in my cubical at work. Craig had been had been a mentor, a friend as well as my editor. Later, I learned that Craig's mentor in college was Mr. Theodore Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. However, when a new editor came on board, the company dropped my project. It was a painful lesson on the world of publishing.

In spring of 2007, I started shopping for a new publisher again. I submitted to 14 publishers and sat back to see what would happen. Rejection after rejection came in the mail. Soon, I started letting go of any hope that my book would be published.

Eleven months after submitting my manuscript, Windward Publishing of Finney Company, in Minnesota, contacted me.

They sent a contract and within one year my dream was realized: on February 2, 2009, my book *Through Endangered Eyes - a poetic journey into the wild*, was published. See Journey on page 3

HOW TO CONTACT BARNEY SALTZBERG

Website: www.barneysaltzberg.com

(Watch Barney Saltzberg read some of his stories on his website.)

BARNEY SALTZBERG LIBRARY

- Stanley and the Class Pet, Candlewick, 2008.
- Cornelius P. Mud, Are You Ready for School?, Candlewick, 2007.
- Star of the Week, Candlewick, 2006.
- I Love Cats, Candlewick, 2005.
- Cornelius P. Mud, Are You Ready for Bed?, Candlewick, 2005.
- I Love Dogs, Candlewick, 2005.
- Crazy Hair Day, Candlewick, 2003.
- The Soccer Mom From Outer Space, Crown, 2000.
- Animal Kisses, Harcourt, 2000.
- Peekaboo Kisses, Harcourt, 2002.
- Mrs. Morgan's Lawn, Hyperion, 1993.

Upcoming

- Good Egg, Workman, 2009.
- Cornelius P. Mud, Are You Ready for Baby?, Candlewick, Spring 2009.
- All Around the Seasons, Candlewick, 2010.

Patricia Newman is the author of *Jingle the Brass* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Her newest book, *Nugget on the Flight Deck* will be available from Walker & Company in the fall of 2009. Visit her website at www.patriciamnewman.com.

ACORN SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The Acorn is a triyearly publication. Issues will be posted on the SCBWI NorCa website

<http://www.scbwinorca.org/news/newsletter.htm>

hopefully around the middle of January, May, and September of each year.

The deadline for submissions is one month prior to each publication date.

Please contact Linda Boyden about submission due dates or for more information.



The 30-Minute Rule

I remember the exact moment I changed my life: I was 27, standing in the kitchen of my two bedroom apartment. The sink contained a mountain of crustified dishes; toys littered the floor; my three year old screamed because she had poured a cup of milk over her head (she had demanded chocolate; I said no, thus the drama); the baby needed changing and just as importantly, so did my life.

How did I go from being a skillful primary teacher, managing 40 first graders in my public school classroom to the Queen of Chaos in my own home? Maybe being postpartum played a part, but at that moment a plan crystallized that would please today's SuperNanny: I needed to remember lessons from primary education.

As a primary teacher, I planned most of the instructional day around my young learners' attention spans, i.e. no more than half hour increments. Hmm, food for thought.

After getting the baby down for his nap (bless his heart) and my daughter cleaned and busy with her beloved clay (bless hers, too), I had some time...what could I accomplish? The dishes were what I dreaded the most, so that's where I started. I set the oven timer for 30 minutes and hopped to it. When it dinged, I wasn't 100%

finished, but what a dent I had made! After a child check, I set it again and again what I accomplished in that short period of time amazed me. My confidence sparkled as much as my kitchen counters!

Thus began my 30 Minute Rule, the way I managed chores back then and how I balance work, housework, grandchild care and my writing life now. I start by discriminating between Wants and Needs. Sure I WANT to write the next Newbery, but right now I NEED to edit the book under contract, etc., etc. After I have my priorities down, I devote 30 Minutes to each project/chore. Using an oven timer helped me develop my rhythm, but now I don't need one. The timing is second nature. That reminds me— I just looked at the clock. Time to plan next week's school visit!

To E-Read or Not to E-Read?

Everyone who knows me knows I have come to technology not by dragging my heels, but by actually kicking and screaming in my two-year old granddaughter's voice, "No like! No, like!" That said, an article, "E-Readers Wow at Fair, Face Tough Competition" by Sarah Marsh and Georgina Prodhan, posted Oct. 19, 2008 on www.reuters.com offers an interesting view of the topic of e-books as reported at last year's Frankfurt (Germany) Book Fair.

On one hand, books weigh you down, especially if you are a student. They consume paper, take up space, and are subject to wear, tear and mildew. E-books fit in a purse or briefcase, are not backlit, so use little energy and have amazing storage capability.

On the other hand, the authors report that e-books are expensive, costing between \$300-\$400 for the initial investment, something that may not fly in today's economy. However, plans are brewing to bring books to cell phones, which would be a cheap, convenient and handy solution.

My opinion echoes the article, albeit more extreme: books appeal to the senses and nothing can replace them in my world. How about you? Anyone own an e-book?

Anyone eager to try? How would this affect your writing/illustrating life? Let's get a thread going!

Class Notes

Tim Meyers Offers A Storytelling Skills' Course:

Please note: This class is not sponsored or approved by the SCBWI, but is being taught by long-time SCBWI member, Tim Meyers.

As Tim Meyers says, "Thirty-two years of teaching in the States and overseas, as well as countless author visits to schools, have taught me a great truth—that oral storytelling has tremendous power to motivate and teach young people."

His new course, EDUC x421 "Storytelling in the Classroom from a Teacher/Author/Storyteller's Perspective," offered at Santa Clara University on Thursdays from 5pm - 8pm, from April 2 through June 4, 2009 is open to anyone working with young people. Its main objective is the telling and listening to stories and the development of a personal storytelling style. For more information and to register, visit the Santa Clara University Center for Professional development at www.scu.edu/cpd or call 408.551.1981.

Tim Meyers is a writer, songwriter and professional storyteller who also teaches at Santa Clara University. Recipient of numerous awards and prizes, Tim has ten children's books out or in press. ☺

Journey

published by the amazing team at Windward Publishing and in stock on Amazon.com!

The day the book arrived at my home there were tears. The following day, almost six years after starting the book, my daughter carried the book proudly to her first grade teacher as a gift. It was a beautiful, unforgettable moment. I thought about how many kids would learn about species they had never known about. And then my mind wandered to starting the next book of endangered species, maybe this time, desert animals. ☺

Good News:

By Genny Heikka

ARA SCBWI North Central California

Joy Allen's book *Baby Signs* is now a Oprah Reading list pick. Fun fabric from Joy's new collection called "Hello Baby" has been created from the Baby Signs board book. In addition, Joy's newest book, *Princess Party*, which debuts in August, is a lead book for Putnam Children's Books. It also will have a new fabric coming out in April.

Genny Heikka's articles, "A Man Named Ted" and "Creating Quality Time by Ignoring the Clock", were published at HybridMom.com. In addition, one of Genny's works is scheduled to appear in an anthology called *Kirtsy Takes a Bow, A Celebration of Women's Voices Online*, published by Bright Sky Press.

Just in Case by Yuyi Morales, a Neal Porter Book published by Roaring Brook Press, a division of Holtzbrinck Publishing Holdings Limited Partnership, won a Belpré Illustrator Award and was also named a Belpré Author Honor Book.

Linda Joy Singleton's *Magician's Muse*, the sixth and final book in the *Seer* series, and *Grave Opening*, the first book in a new *Seer* spinoff series featuring a goth girl who is a psychic sleuth, to Brian Farrey at Flux, for publication in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011, by Jennifer Laughran at Andrea Brown Literary Agency ☺

Networking, Marketing and Promotion, Oh My!

By Bill Kirk

Let's face it. The technology of networking, marketing and promotion has overtaken the old-fashioned writing industry like a tidal wave in the last few years. In fact, I've just gone through somewhat of an "awakening" process myself during the last couple months in anticipation of the January, 2009 release of my first children's picture book, *There's A Spider In My Sink!*

Whew! I thought to myself. I'm finally done, right? WRONG! Now it's time for the real work--the promotional game--to begin! I

started out last November barely knowing how to spell "blog". I knew it was short for "web log" but I just didn't get the concept. Neither did I have a functioning web site up, nor a press release. There was a lot of talk in my publishing family about Authors Den, Jacketflap, Blogger.com, pinging blogs, tracking web page stats with Google Analytics, tag lines and Meta tags. Let's not forget MP3 voice recordings of book pages to make book trailers and DVDs, doing coloring pages, bookmarks, postcards, yard signs to advertise, interviews, book signings, book readings, book tours, Facebook friends lists, LinkedIn groups, library and school visits, press releases, soliciting book reviews and networking, networking, networking... And that was just on Monday.

Immediately, my eyes glazed over, mostly because for some reason I am still of the mind that cell phones are, you know, phones. And I am still mostly using my computer for typing--although that's changing a bit lately. I thought to myself, what happened to the writing part and how am I ever going to get through all the marketing and promotional steps that seem to be basically time hogs. Oh, and there's the part about not having a clue how to do them?

Believe it or not, with the long suffering guidance and sympathy of a high school friend, my computer unsavvy self has managed to create a web site (working line by line at the code level), learn about font codes, color codes, <div aligns>, image sources, <a hrefs>... and Meta tags. In a daze, I have signed up for Facebook, Authors Den, Jacketflap, LinkedIn, created a Blogspot.com blog, written a press release, entered new blog posts and repeatedly pinged my blog. Oh yeah, you gotta ping your blogs--I didn't have a clue about it either until another kind soul shared their experience. Check out www.pingmyblog.com and soon you, too, will be spreading the word farther and wider after each of your new blog posts than you would ever have the time to do on your own.

OK. So, even after doing all that, I am still challenged by such things as MP3 files and voice-over recordings and finding time to keep up with all the networking. However, things are beginning to feel not quite so overwhelming. Taking some liberties with the words of the bard, you can get it done with a little help from your writing friends, including the many organizations that are sponsoring conferences on all things "writing."

Given the importance of and the speed with which the cyber world is changing, groups and organizations are answering the call to help both

the uninitiated and veterans with managing the demands of promotion, marketing and networking. Such sessions are becoming "de rigueur" at almost every writing conference for the foreseeable future.

With all the amazing stuff going on out there, it would be easy to throw in the towel and not even try. If you are perched on that fence, I can truthfully say, if I can do it, don't despair. Listen to the authors and artists who have blazed the trail before you. In their words, "You can do it. Just take it one step at a time." ☺

SHHHHHHh

WANT TO HELP THE ACORN
STAFF PLAN A SECRET
SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE
SPECIAL?

SEND AN EMAIL TO
JEFF JACKSON:

GIMME.A.MOCHA@GMAIL.COM

OR LINDA BOYBEN:

LBOYDEN@CHARTER.NET
OR LOOK FOR JEFF AT THE
SPRING CONFERENCE IN
DAVIS FOR MORE INFO.

REMEMBER,
IT'S A SECRET...

Inside the Writer's Cranium: The Writing Seer, Lynda Joy Singleton

By Linda Boyden

With plots centering on the paranormal and magical, from cheerleaders and clones to psychics and ghosts, Linda Joy Singleton has published over 30 Middle Grade and Young Adult books series since 1988. No surprise as she grew up devouring such classic series as Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton. Like most authors, the publishing road has had its bumps and smooth stretches, but Linda persevered, diversified, and wrote, wrote, wrote. She feels a great responsibility writing for young readers. "I love seeing the world through the heart of a child, where the magic is real..." She enjoys hearing from readers and her website, www.LindaJoySingleton.com offers interesting information and ongoing contests. Here now is Linda Joy Singleton in her own words:

1. What's your favorite word?

I can't decide - it's between "book," "cat," and "chocolate." Combine all three and I'm a happy girl.

2. What's your least favorite word?

Not sure about just one word but I really cringe whenever I heard the slang "My bad." Still that didn't stop me from having a character say this once because that's what that fit this character's personality.

3. Describe your style of writing:

BIC: Butt In Chair. I plot on paper and in my head for a week or so before starting a book, then spend years (well more like a few weeks) rewriting the opening chapter then keep going forward, adding a few pages regularly, until the book is finally done.

4. Describe your work ethic in regards to writing:

A mix of discipline plus procrastination. I waste lots of time playing online but I also get serious when I have a book deadline to meet. It usually takes 5-6 months to finish one book.

5. What is your main writing fault/ flaw?

Impatience. I want everything done now and tend to rush projects, which means more rewriting later.

6. Any tips on how to flesh out a character?

I just feel my characters. I realized recently that I'm not like a normal writer because when I write, I don't visualize my characters, but instead I see through their eyes and emotions, seeing where they are and feeling what they're feeling. So my books don't have a lot of physical descriptions.

7. Any tips on developing plot?

Read a lot of mysteries.

Mysteries are all about plot; setting the scene, weaving in clues, revealing the suspects and then the suspense of the final reveal of the villain. I grew up on mysteries like Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton and still love these books plus many other mystery novels.

8. Who are your favorite prose authors?

I have so many favorite authors that it would take a page to list them all. Some of these favorites are Eva Ibbotson, J.K. Rowling, Angie Sage, Charles de Lint, Brent Hartinger, Dorothy Gilman, Marcia Muller, Peter Abrahams, Cornelia Funke, Ingrid Law, Sarah Phineas, Jeanne Du Prau, Suzanne Collins, Margaret Peterson Haddix and many more!

9. Who are your favorite poets?

I read some poetic YA novels, and my favorite authors of these are Ellen Hopkins, Alma Fullerton and Katherine Applegate.

10. Who are your favorite heroes/heroines in fiction?

My favorite heroine is Judy Bolton from the 1932-1967 mystery series by Margaret Sutton. I also love Harry Potter - I can read those books over and over again. For adult novels, I love Dorothy Gilman's Mrs. Pollifax mysteries.

11. Who are your real life heroes?

On a personal level, my husband for being my "art patron" and the strongest most unselfish person I know. Also, my parents for supporting my writing since I was 8 years old-my dad even took a writing class at a college when I was 14 so he could help me learn about submitting my work. And Mom continues to listen to me read aloud my work when I need advice.

12. What intrigues you?

I love mysteries of life and the after life. I am

intrigued to hear of supernatural experiences people have, especially since I've never had any of my own, yet that's the topic I write about. So if you have a near death experience, ghost story or any sort of other worldly encounter, I'd love to hear your story.

13. What annoys you?

Hypocrites. Intolerance. Prejudice. Cruelty. War. Onions.

14. What profession other than writing would you like to learn?

Photography might be fun. Sometime when I look at the beautiful hills and fields where I live, I frame the scene in my mind and think how beautiful it would make as a painting or picture.

15. What profession could you never handle?

An astronaut. I'm afraid of heights and mildly claustrophobic.

16. What natural talent/s have you been gifted with?

An endless imagination. I can come up with a writing idea instantly. I've come up with several this week and have added them to my idea file. Just today I had another idea.

17. Assuming there will be an afterlife, whom would you like to meet?

My grandmothers.

18. What is your favorite writing motto/mantra?

You only fail if you fail to try. ☺

Regional Advisor's Corner

From Tekla White

SCBWI Regional Advisor North Central California

Happy 2009!

I just returned from New York and the winter SCBWI conference. It was exciting to hear so many talented speakers, observe the techniques they used to inspire the audience, and visit with writers and illustrators from all over the United States and the world.

Many speakers reported that children's book publishing was faring better than publishing for the adult market. It was noted, however, that there were cost-cutting reductions in all divisions.

The breakout sessions with editors who discussed their manuscript preferences were very helpful. Tim Travaglini from G. P. Putnam's Sons, who came to the Davis conference two years ago, was one of the featured editors. A panel of agents discussed how to sell your work in challenging economic times. Perseverance was the key word.

Jack Gantos and Jay Asher gave inspiring keynote addresses from the author's viewpoint.

The multi-talented Bruce Hale, author of the "Chet Gecko Mysteries" series, serenaded more than 1,000 attendees with song before presenting his check list for a successful manuscript. He reminded the audience that perfect people are annoying. Therefore, we should make sure that our main character is flawed as well as challenged.

Right now, I'm putting the finishing touches on North/Central California's May 2, 2009 Davis conference. I know I'm going to be inspired by the speakers and seeing so many writers and illustrators. It's an opportunity to greet friends and get to know newcomers. We will be sending out the registration forms in a few days. I hope to see all of you at the conference. Information is posted on our website. If you don't receive an email registration notice before the end of February, send an email to twrites@cal.net and I'll see that you receive one.

I'm sending a hearty round of applause to our key volunteers for 2008. We couldn't manage without their help. Jeff Jackson, gimme.a.mocha@gmail.com, is the graphics designer who gives The Acorn its special look. Be sure to send him illustrations for the newsletter. Linda Boyden, lboyden@charter.net, serves as the resourceful and talented Acorn editor, bringing us the news. Send her articles all the months of the year. Pam Wilkinson, pmwmarigrace@comcast.net, our always helpful critique group coordinator, keeps us connected. Genny Heikka, genny.heikka@gmail.com, our energetic and resourceful assistant regional advisor, works on all our activities and conferences with good humor and keeps the regional advisor smiling. Sara Kahn, scwinorthca@yahoo.com, professionally maintains and designs our website and keeps us up-to-date with SCBWI happenings.

Nancy Barnet, nancy@nancybarnet.com, monitors and patiently adds and subtracts the names of Northern California SCBWI members to our two email lists, norca-illustrators@yahoogroups.com and SCBWI_norca@yahoogroups.com.

In August, after serving ten years as the SCBWI regional advisor for North/Central California, I will add the title, emeritus, to regional advisor and step down. A replacement will be selected this spring. I know the next advisor will enjoy working with Northern California's talented writers and illustrators just as I have. It has been a great honor to know you and be a part of your writing and illustrating lives. I want to thank all of you for sharing your work, time, and talent. Remember to keep in touch and send me news about your creative lives.

May you enjoy good health and be surrounded by publishing opportunities,
Tekla White

SCBWI Regional Advisor
North/Central California

SCBWI
North/Central
California Region

Spring Spirit V
Conference

MAY 2, 2009

Veterans Memorial
Center
Davis, California

SPEAKERS

Joy Allen
Nathan Bransford
Terry Fertig
Kendra Levin
Diane Muldrow
Linda Joy Singleton
Marijka Kostiw
Ruth Sanderson
Sara Kahn

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