



the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

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Contributors:

Vicki Arkoff, Stephanie Brown

Linda Goossens

Patricia Newman



An Author Profile Ann Turner

By Patricia Newman

When Ann Turner is asked which of her books is her favorite, she's torn like a mother choosing her favorite child. "I don't have a favorite, but I do have special feelings about some of my books. *Grass Songs* (Harcourt, 1993), poems about women traveling west in the 19th century, is one of the most beautiful books I've written. *Rosemary's Witch* (Harper, 1991) appeals a lot to kids because it's funny and spooky. *Nettie's Trip South* (Macmillan, 1987) is one of the more powerful books I've written."

Ideas come to Turner from a variety of places: her own experiences as a child, her own emotional history, her losses as a child, God, the air, the beach, sometimes her own two children, and sometimes family history. "Living in the country and having an artist for a mother gave me a certain way of seeing, an eye for beauty and interest in what others might think ugly or dull: dead weeds, old men and women, fat ladies at the beach, ancient and venerable crows, and vultures." Turner's first break into publishing



was a nonfiction book entitled *Vultures* (Harper, 1976), which was illustrated by her mother, Marion Warren.



Photo © Ellen Augarten

Two upcoming books came from an on-going discussion between Turner and her editor about great leaders of our country. They asked, "What qualities make for leadership and how do those early years shape them?" Turner chose to study Thomas Jefferson in *What Did I Know of Freedom* (HarperCollins, Fall 2003) because she's always been interested in him. According to Turner, "After the September 11 attacks the book has a whole new relevance because it is about how freedom calls to us and what risks we are will-

ing to take to obtain it." In *Sitting Bull Remembers* (HarperCollins, TBA), Turner recalls the last of the great Sioux chiefs forced to surrender and live out their lives on reservations.

Turner remembers wanting to be a writer since the age of eight. Her favorite author, even (See "Ann Turner" on page 3)

Regional Advisor's Corner



Greetings from North Central California,

Once again, we're getting ready for our Davis, March 29, 2003 conference. I'm looking forward to visiting with SCBWI illustrators and writers.

This newsletter will be posted on the *new* website after the conference. However, conference news and pictures will be in the next edition. If you are attending the

conference, please record a sentence or two, a gem of wisdom, from one of the speakers that could influence your writing or illustrating. Send the information to one of our editors. We'll select some of them for the next Acorn.

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The Acorn can be downloaded from the website without charge. If you want to have a mailed copy, there is a \$6 charge to cover printing and postage for three issues. Remember, if you wish to continue receiving mailed copies, renew your subscription after receiving three newsletters. Send \$6 to North Central SCBWI, P.O. Box 307, Davis, CA 95617.

Remember, there is no charge this year for joining our lists. You may post your speaking information on the website without the \$10 fee. There will be a new design and new provider for our website, and for our writers' and illustrators' list. *There are no changes scheduled for the illustrators' list.*

Thanks to our advisories, volunteer group for 2003:

Sara Kahn, from the San Francisco South region of the SCBWI, will be managing the website she has designed for Northern California. Many thanks Sara for taking over for Verla Kay, who is moving north. **Connie Goldsmith** is the Assistant Regional Advisor and critique group coordinator. **Ginger Triplett** is the Acorn's Managing Editor. You may contact her about submitting articles. She and her family worked on the mailers for the March conference, then copied, labeled, and sent them out in record time. **Julie Donahoo** is the Acorn's Contributing Editor, she will be accepting your good news as well as articles. **Nancy Barnet** is the Illustrator Coordinator. She has set-up a list for Northern California illustrators. She designs the Acorn and coordinates the program for our illustrators.

Best wishes,
Tekla White
SCBWI Regional Advisor for North Central California

Newsworthy shorts

North/East Bay Region conference, May

The SCBWI East/North Bay Region will be presenting its annual Spring conference: *A Something-for-Everyone Extravaganza*, May 31, 2003 at Napa Valley Language Academy, Napa, CA (not in Walnut Creek this time!). Flyers went out in mid-March — if you missed yours, contact North/East Bay Regional Advisor, Susan Hart Lindquist at Ebnorcara@aol.com or the Conference Coordinator, Hillary Homzie, at HBHOMZIE@aol.com

Fresno conference, October

Our next major event will be in Fresno on October 18, 2003. Tekla is working with Angelica Carpenter, the curator for the Arne Nixon Children's Literature Center at Fresno State University, to set up this conference. There will be a tour of the Center and a reception Friday evening on October 17. Speakers for the conference on the 18th are Patricia McKissack, Stephen Mooser, Alexis O'Neill, and Deborah Nourse Lattimore.


Librarians, teachers, and media specialists will be invited to the

conference along with the SCBWI members. Members may set out their cards, brochures, and information for school visits for the visitors. More information about the conference and opportunities for writers and illustrators will be posted on the website.

Grants and Awards

For information on SCBWI grants and awards, go to www.scbwi.org. Be advised, your application will be rejected if it is not filled out completely and the rules for each grant and award followed. The dates and applications request times are listed for each award and grant. Many grants are for members who have not published or illustrated a book.

New York

The news from the New York conference and art exhibit will be posted on the SCBWI website, www.scbwi.org. Be sure to visit and learn what the editors had to say. The art exhibit, with more than 250 entries, was outstanding! Winning pictures were auctioned on Saturday evening. 

Ann Turner

(Continued from page 1)

now, is Laura Ingalls Wilder. “Absolutely bar none. I grew up on her.” Turner describes Wilder’s books as her own “heart books. They are woven into the fabric of my life. I admire and love Wilder’s stories about a bygone world. . .how tough she and her family were.” According to Turner, Wilder shows children they can survive some terrible times “mostly intact.”

Turner’s own characters are as tough and deep as Wilder’s; Nettie, who journeys south in 1859 and gets a first-hand glimpse of the cruelties of slavery; Sarah Nita, a young Navajo in *The Girl Who Chased Away Sorrow* (Scholastic, 1999), who survives the Long Walk to Fort Sumner in 1864; the woman from *Dakota Dugout* (Macmillan, 1985) who recalls the hardships of settling the West in the late 1800’s; and Turner herself as she recalls an incident in her life in *Learning to Swim* (Scholastic, 2000). Turner reflects, “Perhaps because I was small and skinny with frizzy hair and an unusual family, I grew up thinking a lot about survival.”

Turner describes creating a character like an “out of body experience. You go into this person’s head and her life and then you come up for air a couple of hours later wondering where you are and who you are.” *The Girl Who Chased Away Sorrow* was a three year project. Turner mapped out Sarah Nita’s journey, learned several Navajo words, and posted the Navajo seasons, months, and a cosmology chart in her office for constant reference. She also contacted a ranger at Fort Sumner who sent her copies of actual letters, lists of food, items traded, and other material from which she wrote the story. “I was physically exhausted after I spent the day with Sarah Nita. . .When a character is going through a lot of struggle trying to get places, it’s exhausting.”

Turner lives in western Massachusetts with her husband, Rick, and their two children, Ben and Charlotte. Her writing schedule depends on children and chores so she is “not an all day writer. I can’t sit still that long,” quips Turner. “Generally I try to write about four hours per day in the mornings. I get foggy in the afternoon.”

Turner tries to impress upon her readers that she works hard and never stops trying. For children who struggle with editing and revising school work she says, “Even after a book is printed, I still find things I’d like to change.” Turner compares her books to children. “They’re not perfect, but I have to let them go out into the world.” ☞

Contact Ann Turner at www.annturnerbooks.com

Titles by Ann Turner

In the Heart, HarperCollins, 2001. *Abe Lincoln Remembers*, HarperCollins, 2001. *Learning to Swim*, Scholastic, 2000. *Secrets from the Dollhouse*, HarperCollins, 2000. *Red Flower Goes West*, Hyperion, 1999. *A Lion’s Hunger: Poems of First Love*, Marshall Cavendish, 1999. *The Girl Who Chased Away Sorrow*, Scholastic, 1999. *Drummer Boy: Marching to the Civil War*, HarperCollins, 1998. *Mississippi Mud*, HarperCollins, 1997. *Finding Walter*, Harcourt Brace, 1997. *Dust for Dinner*, HarperCollins, 1995. *Katie’s Trunk*, Macmillan, 1992. *Grasshopper Summer*, Macmillan, 1989. *Nettie’s Trip South*, Macmillan, 1987. **Upcoming:** *Love Thy Neighbor*, Scholastic, Spring 2003. *What Did I Know of Freedom?*, HarperCollins, Fall 2003. *Pumpkin Cat*, Hyperion, Spring 2004.

SCBWI member **Patricia Newman** writes *Who Wrote That? The Creators of Your Child’s Favorite Books*, a monthly column which profiles the talented authors and illustrators who bring children’s books to life. Ms. Newman can be contacted at PMNewman@msn.com. Column reprinted with permission.

The Acorn 2003

August

Article deadline July 8th

December

Article deadline Nov. 7th

Acorn submission guidelines

The *Acorn* would love submissions of articles of interest to children’s book writers and illustrators, and photos of N. CA SCBWI events.

For articles, please query Ginger Triplett at gemsbok@earthlink.net or Julie Donahoo at juliedonahoo1@yahoo.com. Articles of 500 words or less are best, but longer pieces will be considered as space permits.

Send photos to Nancy Barnet at nancy@nancybarnet.com. Photos should be sent in JPG format as close to 150 dpi as possible (but if you have prints you can mail, that’s okay too — enclose a SASE and they’ll be returned to you). We’ll need the usual who, what and where for the caption, and the photographer’s name for the credit line. Contact Nancy if you have questions.

Payment for one-time rights (or reprint rights) is not extravagant. In addition to a byline or credit line and the heartfelt gratitude of your peers, the *Acorn* can offer you a gift from the SCBWI collection of logo items. ☞

Hitting the information jackpot

by Linda Goossens

Need another reason to be thankful you live in California? With an internet connection and a public library card you can access thousands of full-text articles, reference sources, primary documents, photographs, and more via your library's subscription databases — for free!

Looking for inspiration? Read about your favorite authors in Gale's **Biography Resource Center**. Planning to submit your work to *Highlights*? Learn about the market by reviewing full-text back issues in **InfoTrac** or **EBSCOhost**. Want to gain insight into

genetic engineering and genetically engineered food? Study the latest information in **Opposing Viewpoints**.

The table below provides a sample of the databases available through California's public libraries. Don't be discouraged if your local library doesn't offer subscription databases — many of the state's largest public libraries provide library cards to residents with proof of a current California address.

With remote access, thousands of excellent resources, and 24/7 availability, California's public library subscription databases are a writer's dream!

Resources available by county and library system	Butte County *	Calaveras County *	El Dorado County *	Fresno County *	Humboldt County *	Nevada County *	Stockton/San Joaquin County *	Yolo County *	Los Angeles Public **	Sacramento Public **	San Diego Public **	San Francisco Public **	San Jose Public **
Biography Resource Center (Gale) Biographical information on more than 150,000 individuals							◆		◆	◆	◆		
Dictionary of Art (Grove) Visual arts resource from prehistory to the 1990's									◆	◆	◆		◆
Dictionary of Music & Musicians (Grove) 30,000 articles on musicians, composers, and more									◆		◆	◆	
EBSCOhost (EBSCO) Full-text coverage of over 1,900 periodicals		◆	◆	◆								◆	◆
Ethnic NewsWatch Full-text ethnic, minority and native press periodicals										◆	◆	◆	◆
General Reference Center Gold (Gale) Articles from magazines, newspapers and reference books					◆		◆			◆			
Health & Wellness Resource Center (Gale) Full-text encyclopedias, journals, and more							◆		◆	◆	◆		◆
History Resource Center (Gale) U.S. history; includes primary documents, articles and more									◆				◆
Informe! (Gale) Full-text collection of Hispanic magazines				◆					◆		◆		◆
InfoTrac (Gale) Over 5,000 periodicals on a wide range of topics	◆			◆			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Literature Resource Center (Gale) Covers more than 90,000 novelists, poets and other writers									◆	◆	◆		
NovelList (EBSCO) A guide to fiction; includes reviews, articles and more	◆			◆			◆			◆	◆		
Opposing Viewpoints (Gale) Covers social issues; includes overviews, articles and more												◆	◆
ProQuest Full-text and abstracts of academic and popular publications						◆			◆		◆	◆	
* North/Central Region Libraries													
** Offers library cards to all CA residents													

My Friend Eric Rohmann:

Q&A with the 2003 Caldecott Medal Winner for Illustration

By Vicki Arkoff
and Stephanie Gwyn Brown

Eric Rohmann is this year's recipient of the prestigious Caldecott Medal for illustration for his book *My Friend Rabbit* (Roaring Brook Press).

A painter, printmaker, and fine bookmaker, Eric Rohmann holds degrees in fine arts from Arizona State University and Illinois State University, is a former teacher, and has exhibited his artwork at numerous galleries and museums. He generously took time to share his experiences with *SCBWI Kite Tales* just days after he received the exciting news of his big win.

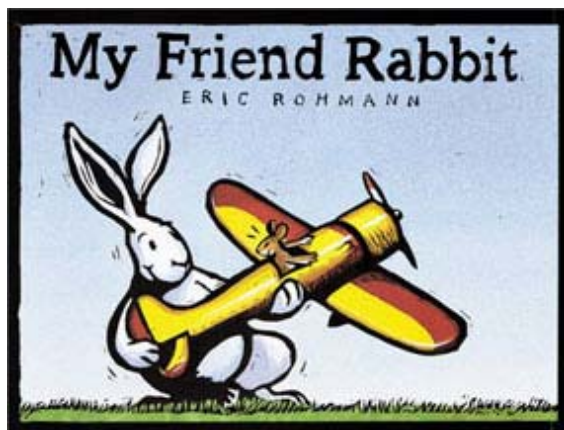
How do you decide your approach to a picture book?

It all begins with what you want the book to say. What is the tone of the story, the mood, and the desired audience response? The choice of art media, book dimensions, composition, pacing, text placement, etc. must be decided by what best serves the story. I try hard to find the ideal pairing of images, text and book form. They shouldn't say the same thing, but should compliment and strengthen one another.

For *My Friend Rabbit* I took a few weeks to experiment and tried just about every medium I could think of. Finally, I decided on the relief prints because the bright watercolor and chunky, active relief-cut line made most sense with the story.

Illustrators are often advised to stick to one style as it helps with marketing or branding their work, but your work defies that logic. What is your opinion?

I use the style/media/technique that works best with the story. *My Friend Rabbit* would not have worked using the more elaborate, naturalistic oil paintings. I think that an artist's "style" must develop naturally. It is not artificially in-



vented or chosen. As an artist works, the hand, eye, and mind begin to work in a certain way — in a characteristic manner that is unique to that artist. A book is more than just a container that holds text and images. The book form — its shape, its materials, its heft, its binding — all influence the overall effect of the book.

My Friend Rabbit has been described as having a "living ladder" at the climax of the narrative, and a view that requires the reader to tilt the book. Why did you choose to use this technique?

I tried the tower of animals on the normal two-page layout and it simply looked too short and squeezed. Then I tried tipping the tower — angled from lower left corner to upper right. That worked better and it eventually sparked the idea to turn the book vertically. What I hadn't expected until I saw the book turned was the way the story slows, makes the reader look more closely — it makes you physically change the position of the book. All this, I hope, gets the reader more involved.

In your wordless picture book *Time Flies*, a 1995 Caldecott Honor book, how did you present the concept to the publisher?

With a small dummy (photocopies of the preliminary drawings put in simple, side-sewn book format). Also, two larger 2"x3" transparencies of finished paintings. For the dummies submitted by mail, I

used normal 35mm slides.

What pitch or submission approaches have you found work the best to impress editors and art directors?

Put only your strongest work in the portfolio — if you want to illustrate books then your samples should demonstrate your abilities to that end. Demonstrate your understanding of how narrative works in a picture book. Other things are obvious, but bear repeating: know your craft; have an interest and some knowledge of picture books; care about your audience.

In hindsight, what career mistakes have you learned from the most?

I should have drawn more. Drawing is seeing and to make books that take place in the world you have to be aware of what's around you. Drawing makes you to look closely, not to just see, but to behold and understand. I'm still trying to catch up. For me, it all begins with good drawing (or fails with bad drawing).

What sage advice can you offer to unpublished illustrators looking for their first book deal?

Make sure that what you love about the work is the work itself. So often, I meet authors and illustrators more interested in being published than in making books. After you send your work out, forget about it and work on the next project. You'll find the bite of rejection is diminished by the excitement of making something new. ☞

Illustrator Stephanie Gwyn Brown's first picture book, *Professor Aesop's The Crow and the Pitcher*, has just been published by Tricycle Press. Author Vicki Arkoff has newly joined the roster of children's book reviewers for *Kirkus Reviews*.

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Good news!

Linda Singleton's young adult book, *DOUBLE VISION*, will be out in April from www.AmberQuill.com.

Lynn E. Hazen's first middle grade novel, *MERMAID MARY MARGARET*, will be published by Bloomsbury USA on their Spring 2004 list.

Karen Szybalski's first picture book, *TOO LOUD*, will be coming out on the *Wee Ones Magazine* website, www.weeonesmag.com for the month of March 2003.

Ginger Wadsworth's newest book, *BENJAMIN BANNEKER, PIONEERING SCIENTIST*, illustrated by Craig Orback, and published by Carolrhoda Books, is out. It's in Carolrhoda's *On My Own* biography series for grades 1-3. Ginger just signed a contract in January to write a book on Cesar Chavez, also for Carolrhoda Books, in the *On My Own* biography series, due out in the fall of 2004. Lastly, Ms. Wadsworth finished final editing for *WORDS WEST: VOICES OF YOUNG PIONEERS*, a covered wagon migration book with Clarion Books, due out in the fall of 2003. It is illustrated with over 100 archival photographs and illustrations. Her other fall 2003 book is with Lerner Books, *THE WRIGHT BROTHERS*, and is part of their history maker's series.

Susie Wilson's new picture book, *BIG DAY ON THE RIVER*, will be out from Henry Holt in April 2003. Randy Cecil illustrated the book with wonderful and unusual art. The story's about an adventurous little girl who wants to raft alone down a river, while her unhelpful relatives keep supplying her with all the things she doesn't need. ☞

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