



the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

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An Author profile Jennifer Holm

by Patricia Newman

Jennifer Holm used to do a great imitation of a child raking the lawn—raking with one hand while secretly reading a book she held in the other. According to Holm, “I loved books more than anything and I fantasized about becoming a writer.” But as she grew up and finished school, the idea of becoming a writer intimidated her. She preferred international economics and diplomacy to the usual English major path followed by many writers. In her senior year at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, she gathered her courage and audited a short story course. Her fellow students’ criticism was brutal. She remembers thinking, “If this is writing, I don’t think I’m cut out for it.” Instead, she began working for a New York City film company and eventually became a broadcast producer, creating commercials for American Express, Hershey’s, Huggies Baby Wipes, and music videos for early rappers.

When Holm’s father became seriously ill, Holm began spending more time with him. They passed the hours with stories of his child-

hood in Washington. From her father’s farm and his adventures on the Nasel River, Holm created May Amelia and her family. *Our Only May Amelia* (HarperCollins,

1999), Holm’s first book and winner of a Newbery Honor, has resulted in some unusual fan mail.

One little girl asked her mother to video tape an original impromptu production of May Amelia’s adventures complete with costumes. One child wrote a letter to Wilbert, May Amelia’s older brother, commiserating about having a large family and a little sister. But Holm says her “most rabid fan” journeyed three hours from Seattle to Naselle, Washington with his grandparents, found the cattle ranch described in Holm’s book (still owned by Holm’s aunt and uncle), and asked to meet May Amelia!

Holm not only relied on her family’s oral histories for *Our Only May Amelia*, she also delved into the history of Western Washington for an accurate picture of the events of the time. In the course of her reading, the oystermen on Shoalwater Bay intrigued her (again, because of family connections), but she decided they belonged in another book. Holm

(See “Jennifer Holm” on page 3)



Contributors this issue:

- Patricia Newman
- Angelica Carpenter
- Tekla White

**The Acorn
December 2003**
Article deadline
Nov. 7th

Regional Advisor's Corner

Greetings from North Central California,



Networking Thank you, Nancy Barnet for setting up the new Yahoo group, SCBWI_Norca. It's a great way to stay in touch with other Northern California members. If you haven't signed-up, please contact Nancy, mail to: nbarnet@att.net and enjoy the Northern California SCBWI connection. Nancy organized an illustrators' list as well. Contact her if you want to be included with

this group.

Margaret Speaker Yuan emails event notices to members who have signed-on to her list. For more information, contact Margaret, book-s4women@yahoo.com.

Sara Kahn maintains our website scbwinnorca.org and she has a list of published authors and illustrators who will visit schools, libraries, and bookstores. Check with your regional advisor to be added to that site.

If you want to connect with a critique group, contact our Assistant Regional Advisor, Connie Goldsmith, goldwright@aol.com for information.

If you change your email address, please notify the Los Angeles office scbwi@scbwi.org as well as the Northern California lists. If I send out program announcements by email rather than regular mail, many messages bounce back because the address has changed. The Los Angeles office sends me the updated lists when I'm ready to mail the information. That way I don't miss new members. E-mail registration forms do save postage, which leaves more money for speakers and the conference.

Conference Time I'm looking forward to seeing many writers and illustrators at the October 18, 2003 conference at Fresno State Univer-

sity. We are fortunate to share the conference with members of the Arne Nixon Center Advocates and the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature. The reception and tour of the Center Friday evening will give our writers and illustrators the opportunity to see this extraordinary collection and find out about Arne Nixon's work in the field of children's literature. Our thanks to Denise Scian-dra, the president of ANCA, and Angelica Shirley Carpenter, the Curator of the Arne Nixon Children's Literature Center, for co-sponsoring this conference with the North Central California SCBWI.

Our outstanding speakers are Dianne Hess, the Executive editor of Scholastic Press; Deborah Nourse Lattimore, an art teacher who has written and illustrated dozens of books for children; Stephen Mooser, the president and co-founder of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and author of more than fifty books for children; Alexis O'Neill, a picture book author who will talk about selling your work without an agent; and Patricia McKissack, the author of children's books that have earned Newbery, Caldecott, and Coretta Scott King awards.

It will be a great opportunity to make new friends and visit with each other. Remember to bring your school visit information for our display table. Librarians and teachers are invited to the conference. There will be a brag table to display your published work, and illustrators will have space for their portfolios. I hope to see you there.

Our next conference will be held in Davis on April 3, 2004.

Remember to send your questions and ideas to our Acorn editors and to me. Proposed articles can be sent to Tekla White.

Write-On,
Tekla White
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The Arne Nixon Center

by Angelica Carpenter


The Arne Nixon Center is thriving. It opened in 2001. The collection has grown from 22,000 (Arne's original gift) to almost 35,000 items.

Pam Munoz Ryan, Michael Cart, Alma Flor Ada, Deborah Nourse Lattimore, and many other authors and illustrators have announced plans to donate their papers.

ANCA (The Arne Nixon Center Advocates), the Center's Friends' group, has 372 members. The Center recently sponsored the first international conference ever held on Frances Hodgson Burnett; this attracted 100 people from England, Ireland, Japan, Australia, and many parts of the United States. As an outgrowth of the conference, a Frances Hodgson Burnett Literary Society will soon be formed. A Burnett listserv is already active; to join, go to

www.franceshodgsonburnett@yahoo.com.

The Center's Web site may be seen at www.arnenixoncenter.org. It includes photos of the Burnett conference and membership information for ANCA.

Members receive advance notice of events and the Center's newsletter, The Magic Mirror. The Web site has information on upcoming events. After the SCBWI Regional Conference in October 2003, the next major program will be the 31st annual conference of the Children's Literature Association, June 10-12, 2004. 

Angelica Carpenter is the Curator of the The Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature

Arne Nixon: reflecting creativity

by Angelica Carpenter

Arne John Nixon was born in 1927 in Frederick, South Dakota. He taught school in North Dakota, Washington State (where he taught Native American students), the Sudan, and in Tulare, California. He received his doctorate in education at Columbia University. He joined the faculty of California State University, Fresno, in 1961. He taught children's literature and storytelling for more than thirty years, organizing conferences that attracted tens of thousands of people. Visits from dozens of America's best known authors and illustrators helped to establish Fresno State as a center for the study of children's literature.

A sought-after speaker, Dr. Nixon told stories to audiences throughout California and around the world. Wherever he trav-

eled, he bought children's books. He donated his collection of approximately 22,000 volumes to the Henry Madden Library in 1995, founding the Arne Nixon Center for the study of Children's Literature. When he died in 1997, he left the Library a generous bequest to ensure that the Center would perpetuate his work.

Arne Nixon's listeners encouraged him to write his own books for children, but Dr. Nixon always declined. "It is the function of some people to be a lamp and some to be a mirror of other's work, he explained. "I have been very pleased to function as a mirror of others work." Maybe so, but it was a magic mirror, one that changed the loves of his students and audiences. His spirit and his work live on in the Arne Nixon Center. ☞

Jennifer Holm

(Continued from page 1)

began thinking about a refined young lady leaving the safety and civilization of the East to meet a fiancé in the West. The *Boston Jane* trilogy continues Holm's fascination with Western Washington history and has even spawned a new hobby for Holm—collecting books for young ladies (circa 19th century), such as *The Young Lady's Friend* with gems like, "There is more to be learned about pouring out tea and coffee, than most young ladies are willing to believe."

The Creek (HarperCollins, 2003), Holm's newest book and her first contemporary novel, incorporates the woods of her childhood neighborhood, her pack of friends, and a fictional mystery. Through Penny, the main character, Holm revisits her childhood, re-experiencing some parts and rewriting others.

Holm has already proven she's not shy about experimenting with new formats for her writing. In 2004, her fans can expect yet another new idea—the graphic novel. *Eighth Graders Are Stupid* (Atheneum, 2004) is a fully illustrated novel about a seventh grade girl told entirely through her stuff—email, letters, receipts, homework, etc. Holm's mother gave her the idea when she gave Holm the box of stuff she'd been saving which included things like horrible class pictures, report cards, notes Holm passed in class, articles, and recital programs.

In 1999, Holm married Jonathan Hamel (the day before *Our Only May Amelia* came out), but recently they've formed a new partnership as co-authors. Their first venture, *The Stink Files, Dossier 001: The Postman Always Brings Mice* (HarperCollins, 2004), features an upper crust British cat who's on his way to Norway in hot pursuit of his master's murderer. But in London's Heathrow Airport luggage department, he's mistakenly routed to New Jersey. Holm describes *The Stink Files* series as "chapter books for younger readers. We've contracted for three books, but would like to do nine

ultimately, because cats have nine lives."

Holm alternates between writing and procrastinating. She works at her kitchen table in Hudson, New York and says that if she's experiencing writer's block, she dishes herself a bowl of chocolate ice cream. "You can tell by my weight when I'm writing!" ☞

Patricia Newman is a freelance children's writer living in Carmichael. She has a degree from Cornell University in child development.

Jennifer Holm's Library

The Creek, HarperCollins, 2003.
Boston Jane: Wilderness Days, HarperCollins, 2002.
Boston Jane: An Adventure, HarperCollins, 2001.
Our Only May Amelia, HarperCollins, 1999.

Upcoming

Boston Jane: The Claim, HarperCollins, Winter 2004.

The Stink Files, Dossier 001: The Postman Always Brings Mice, co-authored with Jonathan Hamel, HarperCollins, Spring 2004.

Eighth Graders Are Stupid, Atheneum, Fall 2004.

How to contact Jennifer Holm

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SCBWI award winners

Sara Kahn won the SCBWI Magazine Merit Award for her illustrations for "Poor Dumb Animals" published in two parts in October and November 2002 in *Cricket Magazine*.

Sara Iravani Kahn is an artist and illustrator currently living in San Francisco with her husband and three cats. Her illustrations using a combination of techniques have appeared in *Cricket* and *Cicada* Magazines. Sara was born in America and went back to Iran when she was five. Sara lived in Iran during war and revolution. She got her B.A. in Fine Art from Tehran University and her M.A. in Educational Psychology from Alzahra University. She got her Post Masters' Certificate in Art Therapy from UC Berkeley in 2002. While living in Iran, she illustrated twenty children's books and also taught art in kindergartens, schools and universities.

Sara started painting as a serious career when she was three. She got into her mom's belongings and found a beautiful oil color set and painted the kitchen floor. As a result the whole family was kicked out of the house.

In school, she drew caricatures of her most and least favorite teachers. Her classmates loved the ones she drew from the teachers she didn't like. One day one of these teachers found a portrait of her drawn by Sara while it was circulating in the class. The teacher was not happy and Sara got kicked out of that class. (Plus that she had to bring her parents to school the day after!)

Now, after 35 years of drawing and painting, she is happy that her paintings do not get her in trouble as much as they did when she was younger...

Sara has won many awards and scholarships for her art work from around the world, among them are: Magazine Merit Award from SCBWI, 2002, Los Angeles, USA; First Prize, International Biennial of illustration for children, 1992, Tehran, Iran; International Youth Library Scholarship, 1993 Munich, Germany; and IBBY honor list, 1996, Groningen, Holland.

Her work has been exhibited in Iran, USA, Italy, Slovak Republic, Japan and Spain.

Elizabeth Partridge won the SCBWI Golden Kite award for nonfiction for *THIS LAND WAS MADE FOR YOU AND ME: THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF WOODY GUTHRIE* (2002, Viking).

Elizabeth Partridge grew up in a large, eccentric family in the San Francisco Bay Area. She writes books for both adults and children, including her young adult biographies, *RESTLESS SPIRIT: THE LIFE AND WORK OF DOROTHEA LANGE* (Viking 1999), and *THIS LAND WAS MADE FOR YOU AND ME: THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF WOODY GUTHRIE* (2002 Viking). This Land was a National Book Award Finalist and won the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award and the SCBWI Golden Kite for non-fiction. Elizabeth's most recent book, *WHISTLING*, is a collaboration with illustrator Anna Grossnickle Hines. In the fall, *KOKI'S MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY* will be released.

Elizabeth and her husband Tom live in Berkeley and have two grown sons.

Sarah (Susie) Wilson won the SCBWI Golden Kite Award for picture book fiction for *GEORGE HOGGLESBERRY, GRADE SCHOOL ALIEN* (Tricycle Press, illustrated by Chad Cameron).

"I've loved star-gazing and science fiction every since an astronomy class in college. The original spark of an idea for George came from a semi-serious tabloid article I read while standing in a Safeway checkout line. It was titled, "How To Tell If Your Next Door Neighbor Is An Alien". The rest appeared bit by bit, in the months that followed.

"I grew up in Up-State New York and New England have a BA degree from Ohio University (double major, art and English), and a Diploma in Art Studies from the University of Madrid, Spain. My mother was a delightful, talented artist and librarian, and with her early encouragement, have been stapling, sewing and gluing small picture books together since the age of four. In between four and now, I've been a medical social worker, done free lance artwork, and taught children's art for 12 years in Southern California.


"I'm married to a good-natured architect and have two grown children, Leslie and Rob. My hobby is probably my work, with some painting and semi-camping and sitting around in sidewalk cafes thrown into the mix. Along with SCBWI, I belong to California Writers, the International Wizard of Oz Society and the Virginia Kittredge Crosley Society. I've had 24 children's books published (written and illustrated, or both) The next one will be *A NAP IN A LAP* illustrated by Akemi Gutierrez, Henry Holt, October 2003."

Beverly Gherman won the SCBWI Golden Kite Honor Award for non-fiction for *ANSEL ADAMS: AMERICA'S PHOTOGRAPHER*.

"When I began visiting schools after my first biography was published in the late 1980s, I asked the students how many of them read biographies if they didn't have to. Usually one child raised a hand. Sometimes the teacher's hand went up. But that was it. Today when I visit schools, almost half the students say that they read biographies because they want to. It's a whole new world.

"Now there are imaginative picture book biographies. There are diaries of fictional characters living in important historical times. There are classical biographies like my Ansel Adams book filled with magnificent black and white photographs of his work, and before that my Norman Rockwell book, filled with many colorful illustrations of his paintings, as well as black and white family photographs.

"I am thrilled that I've been writing at a time when these changes have occurred. Classrooms even spend time learning techniques for writing their own biographies about family members or friends. This gives them a greater appreciation for what I do as a biographer. I emphasize how thrilling it is to be a detective--or really a snoop--searching for information about my subjects.

"Receiving the Golden Kite Honor Award for *ANSEL ADAMS: AMERICA'S PHOTOGRAPHER* has been a fine validation for the writing I love to do." 



An abundance of good news!

Katie McAllaster Weaver reports that her first picture book, *BILL IN A CHINA SHOP*, BLOOMSBURY, will be released in the United States on September 1, 2003. When Bill the bull finally spots a shop that doesn't have a "Bulls Keep Out" sign, he goes in, hoping to purchase a particular cup for his collection. In this rhyming story, illustrated with detailed Victorian charm, triumph wins over prejudice.

Joy Allen's illustration from her new series for American Girls, *HOP SCOTCH HILL SCHOOL*, is on the cover of Publisher's Weekly Fall Children's 2003 issue. Her Hop Scotch Hill School books received the Oppenheim Toy Platinum Award and they will be shown on the Today Show in November. Joy's picture book, *MUD PIE ANNIE*, written by Sue Buchannan and published by Zondervan, won the 2003 Silver Angel Award from Excellence in Media.

Marisa Montes's time travel mystery, *A CIRCLE OF TIME*, won the WILLA Literary Award presented by the "Women Writing the West". She'll receive gold medal stamps for the book and a trophy. Her first two books of a new third-grade series from Scholastic are now available in hard cover and paperback. Book one is *A CRAZY MIXED-UP SPANGLISH DAY*, and book two is *WHO'S THAT GIRL?* There will be a total of six books in the series. Scholastic is setting up bookstore visits for Marisa. Marisa is the keynote speaker and a presenter at the Rainbow Reading Conference in Lexington, Kentucky on September 20, 2003. It's sponsored by the University of Kentucky. Other appearances will be on the panel for Latino writers in California at the annual California Librarian's Association in Ontario on November 15; The Fairytale Town, Celebration of Books in Sacramento on September 27 and 28; and she'll sign at the NCIBA and the NTCE later this year.

Betsy Franco's latest picture book is *MATHEMATICKLES!* Published by Margaret K. McElderry Books. Her words take the place of numbers in math problems. Crisp air + shadows tall + cat's thick coat = signs of fall. Betsy's book received three starred reviews, including one in Publisher's Weekly.

Look for **Cynthia Decker's** illustration in the October issue of *Lady-Bug*. She is working on illustrations for a picture book for Dutton entitled, *Everybody Makes Mistakes* which will be out in 2004.

Cynthia Chin-Lee sold a new alphabet book to Charlesbridge Publishing, *ALBERT TO ZOLTAN: 26 AMAZING MEN*. It profiles 26 outstanding men from Albert Einstein to Zoltan Kodaly. It's a companion book to *AMELIA TO ZORA: 26 AMAZING WOMEN* which is now in production.

Linda Joy Singleton sold a second series to Llewellyn Worldwide. Her middle-grade, *STRANGE ENCOUNTERS # 1, OH, NO! UFO*, will be published in August 2004. She says, "It took over seven years and many rejections to find a publisher for this book. It's based on a camping trip my family took in search of a UFO sighting when I was about 10 years-old." Linda is working on the second book in the series.

Suzanne Morrone has a story, "The Foundation", in Milkweed's anthology, *STORIES FROM WHERE WE LIVE; THE NORTHWEST*

PACIFIC COAST.

Nancy Raines Day reports from her new home in Georgia that her newest picture book, *DOUBLE THOSE WHEELS*, was published by Dutton in July. It's a rhyming, vehicle, math-concept book that received a great Publisher's Weekly review.

HARVESTING HOPE: THE STORY OF CESAR CHAVEZ, illustrated by **Yuyi Morales**, written by Kathleen Krull (Harcourt Inc. 2003) has been named a Junior Library Guild selection for the Summer 2003 Children's Book sense 76, and received starred reviews in *Publishers Weekly* and *School Library Journal*. It has also received the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Gold Award 2003. The Spanish edition of *HARVESTING HOPE*, *COSECHANDO ESPERANZA*, is due Fall 2003. *JUST A MINUTE! A TRICKSTER TALE AND COUNTING BOOK*, written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales (Chronicle Books) is due out Fall 2003.

Genna Panzarella's first children's book of illustrations came out last year titled *PIECING EARTH AND SKY TOGETHER*. This year's good news is that Hampton-Brown published a text titled *AVENUES*, and chose that book to be in it! "I am in there with some of the big names that have inspired my career over the years: James Giblin, Audrey Wood, and Jerry Pinkney!" ☞

Notable writing habits

By Tekla White

Have you ever had a great idea for a best-selling children's book and then forgotten what it was? With crowded schedules that include work, children, families, phone calls, and daily errands, it's not always possible to head for the computer when ideas happen. Stacks of note cards and pens can be the write solution.

Keep sets of cards and a pen in every room in the house. You never know where a write idea will strike. The car, your purse, and billfold are other pen and card places. Take them on outings. Be prepared with cards and pen when you have a long wait for the doctor or dentist. If you watch the other patients and think about other places you'd rather be, you will be inspired to pen great thoughts, or make-up a new world.

Add details and changes to your main idea on a separate card anywhere and anytime. It's a wait-a-minute opportunity. The one that says, "Wait, if I had Abigail rescue Hector, instead of the other-way-around."

When you have time, pop your idea cards into a categorized file box. You can invent creative titles. For example, one title could be, *IF THE SHOE FITS*. This would be a great place for Cinderella-type stories.

When it's the write time, go through your card file and choose the idea that suits your mood. An idea file is a sure way to put an end to writers' block. ☞

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Exhibit of original art from children's books

The Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA) in Oakland is pleased to announce their annual exhibit of children's book artists titled *Then & Now*, featuring original artwork from children's books accompanied by a piece the illustrator created as a child or young adult.


Then & Now runs from September 26--January 4, 2004. MOCHA hosts an opening reception on Saturday October 4, 2003 that coincides with the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association Tradeshow (located just one block from MOCHA in historic downtown Oakland). Tradeshow visitors will be invited to the reception.

For more information contact Rae Holzman at (510) 465-8770 x 310 or rae@mocha.org. The Museum of Children's Art is located at 538 9th St., Oakland CA 94607.

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 Tekla White at tnwrites@cal.net or other editors listed in this newsletter. Photos should be 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.

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. 

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