



the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

An Author Profile

Mini Grey

By Patricia M. Newman

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 Mad Jack Kidd (arrrr)

Mini Grey remembers winning second place in the fancy dress competition at a local celebration in her English village. Grey, her sister and a friend dressed as characters from the movie *Jaws*: Grey's sister was the glamorous swimmer in the opening scene of the movie; her friend was the fisherman, and Grey, the shark. "I made the shark costume out of a painted sheet," she says. After learning more about Grey, it comes as no surprise that she chose to be the character requiring the most artistic talent. As soon as she could handle art materials, she drew and modeled her world. "I remember feeling quite advanced," she says, "when I was four and worked out how to draw the chimneys of houses properly, and when I was six I had another breakthrough working out how to draw horses' legs." Grey developed her vivid imagination early with "let's pretend" games with her sisters and brother. "I particularly liked making things, especially models of all sorts." In college Grey studied Art but switched to English at the University College London when she realized the Fine Arts weren't for her. She also trained to be a theater designer making sets, painting backdrops and creating costumes; a logical extension of her model-building and costume-making experiences as a child. After months of scraping by financially, Grey left the theater, but took with her a newfound knowledge that she liked working with the children who'd participated in her plays. After the appropriate training, Grey became a primary school teacher and taught in South London for six years.

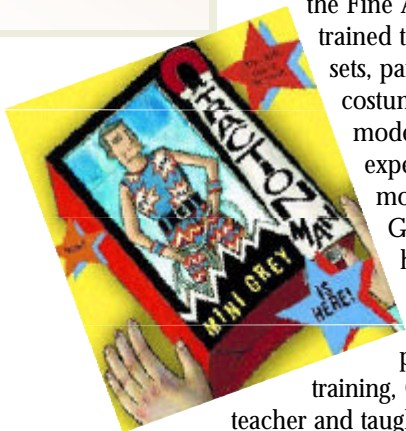
Her after-school classes on model making and pottery were especially popular. But a new idea

began nagging Grey. "When I became a teacher, I was bowled over by the wonderful picture books I found in my classroom and school libraries. I used them as inspira-



tion for classroom projects. . . But I secretly wanted to make my own picture book." Grey became a student once more for a two-year Sequential Illustration program at Brighton University. Her first book, *Egg Drop* (Red Fox, 2003) was sold to her tutor's editor. Some of Grey's stories come from asking "What if. . .?" like *Biscuit Bear* (Jonathan Cape, 2004). She asked her self, "What if I baked a biscuit and it came to life? What would it want to do? . . . I've always longed to see something truly inexplicable or extraordinary happen; like see a ghost or meet an alien, or see a cup get up and hover across the table. So having a biscuit come to life is a sort of wish-fulfillment." In addition to the "What if. . ." approach to writing, Grey employs a combination of other techniques to launch her stories. "I

(Continued, see "Profile" page 2)



HOW TO CONTACT Mini Grey

Fan Mail: mini.grey@ntworld.com
Website:
www.randomhouse.com/kids/tractionman

SELECTIONS FROM Mini Grey's LIBRARY

Traction Man is Here!, Knopf, 2005.
The Very Smart Pea and the Princess to Be,
Knopf, 2004. Available in the United
Kingdom
Biscuit Bear, Jonathan Cape Children's
Books, 2004.
Egg Drop, Red Fox, 2003.

Upcoming

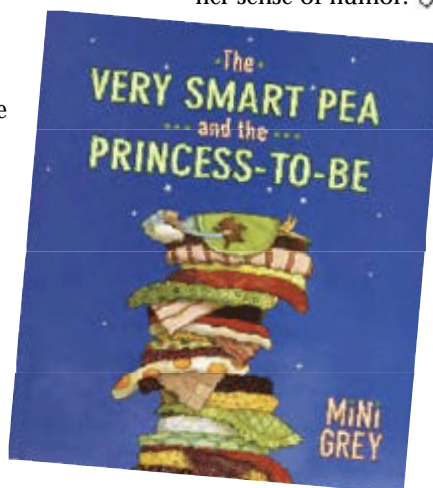
The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon,
Knopf, 2006.

Patricia Newman is a children's author living in Carmichael. Her first picture book, *Jingle the Brass* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), is now available. Visit her website at: www.patriciamnewman.com.

Profile

often start thinking about fairy stories and nursery rhymes because that gives me some characters to bounce around. . . A blank piece of paper is very daunting." The *Very Smart Pea and the Princess-to-Be* (Knopf, 2004) is Grey's spoof on *The Princess and the Pea* told from the pea's point of view. "Sometimes," says Grey, "I do brainstorm-pictures where I draw as many situations as possible that my characters might find themselves in." Grey's newest book, *Traction Man is Here!* (Knopf, 2005), recently won the 2005 Boston Globe-Horn Book award. The story chronicles the adventure of a toy action figure, perfectly capturing the essence of childhood imagination. Readers will have no trouble visualizing Grey's sketchbook loaded with harrowing rescues and near misses in which the title character finds himself entangled. Grey doesn't usually have to venture too far from her Oxford home to conduct research. "My stories often seem to take place in quite ordinary settings. . . For *Biscuit Bear*, of course, I had to do detailed research into all types of biscuits and eat them," she quips. (She especially

loves shortbread and anything with chocolate.) "My latest book [*The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon* (Knopf, 2006)] starts off set in the 1930s so I had to research the way that toys and cars and ships and clothes looked then." According to Grey, the biggest misconception about writing for children is that picture books are for people who cannot yet read well. "Picture books," she says, "are a particular way of telling a story two ways at once; through words and through pictures; and can be as simple or as complicated as anything else." Grey captures the humor and drama of childhood in her books because she remembers how it feels to be a child. Even as an adult, Grey stays in touch with her inner child: she takes pride in the fact that she was born in the front seat of a mini-car in a car-park in South Wales and she delights in running down corridors. "I love it because everyone always tells you not to, and the longness and thinness of the corridor give a greater feeling of speed." Her readers can only hope she continues to share her sense of humor. 🍌



How To Find A Legitimate Subsidy Publisher

By Margaret Speaker Yuan

Legitimate subsidy houses will work with an author to develop a marketable, well-designed, well-edited book. The legitimate houses take pride in their work. Some of them will partially fund projects that they undertake. These houses, since they have a financial stake in the book, will produce better quality books than

(Continued, see "Yuan" page 3)

Subsidy Publishing

The Vanity Press of the 21st Century

By Margaret Speaker Yuan

RA San Francisco North/East Bay Region

There's an old phrase my grandmother (a teacher of Latin) use to quote, "Caveat emptor." It means 'Let the buyer beware.' When authors consider publishing through subsidy presses, it's a phrase that should be remembered and used frequently. Subsidy publishing is the new name for an old scam, the vanity press. Subsidy publishers promise to get books into print FAST FAST FAST, but there's a catch. The author will have to pay for the book. Unless the author happens to employ one of the legitimate subsidy houses and has solid experience in the business end of publishing, the money is likely to be wasted. The books simply will not sell if they do not meet some minimum standards of production and editing.

The old-style vanity presses were well-known in the industry for publishing any book that the author was willing to fund. The presses produced books that were not edited, had poor cover designs, were not typeset, were not proofread, frequently lacked indexing (for non-fiction works), and most importantly, were not marketed at all. Bookstores would not touch books from vanity presses.

Contemporary subsidy publishers often claim that they only publish books they feel are marketable, yet inquiries prove otherwise. Many subsidy presses also claim that they rigorously edit their books and employ fabulous cover designers, typesetters, and illustrators. Whether these claims are credible depends on the publishing house.

For authors, there are a few simple questions that will help determine if spending money to publish a book is worthwhile.

What is your business plan?

If you haven't written a business plan, stop here and write one. If you have written one that ends at "Get my book published," go back and finish it. The business plan should include goals for sales and future business as well as your plans for how to accomplish those goals.

What exactly are you buying if you pay for the production of your book?

At the very least, the subsidy house should provide copy editing, cover design, registration of

(Continued, see "Subsidy" page 3)

Subsidy

the copyright (in the author's name), interior design or typeset, a galley for the author to read, proofreading, Library of Congress cataloging, ISBN, indexing (for non-fiction), and bar coding. If the author doesn't know what all of these details are, and if the subsidy publisher isn't willing to educate him or her, it's not time to buy.

Another key factor in any subsidy contract is the print run. The number of copies of the book that the publisher will print depends on many factors. The contract should specify how many copies are to be printed, where they will be stored, and who pays for both storage and insurance.

What marketing services are included in the deal?

Again, at the very least, the publishing house should provide back cover copy, which is the key element in selling a book. Having the author write the back cover copy is usually a dead give-away that the house isn't expecting to sell many books. Back cover copy is usually written by people who have solid advertising or marketing experience. Writing marketing copy is a completely different skill from writing a book.

Will the book be sent out for review?

How many copies, and where will it be sent? Will press releases be mailed to the media? Who will follow-up with the media? Will the book be sent to trade shows? If the subsidy publisher is not prepared to follow-through on marketing, the author has a decision to make. Marketing is a critical step in the success of a book. If the publisher is not going to market the book, the above tasks will still have to be done, usually by the author. If the author does not have experience in these areas, or is unwilling to devote the energy, money, and time that is needed to perform them, it's not time to buy.

When is the payment for the books due? Is financing available?

Distributors and bookstores may delay payment to the author up to 90 days. There will most likely be a portion of payment withheld in case books are returned. If the subsidy house demands payment up front, the author will have to carry unsold

inventory. Cash flow can be a problem. If the subsidy publisher will not allow payment 90 days or more after delivery of the books, or does not have financing available, again, it may not be a company that the author wants to hire.

Is the author willing to undertake all the tasks involved in opening a small business that will market the book?

These tasks include but are not limited to making sales calls both in person and on the phone, finding a distributor for the book, making more sales calls, book-keeping that includes tracking all the expenses of the book production and marketing, making more sales calls, creating and sending out marketing materials, selling at trade shows, packaging and shipping books, answering media inquiries, and then there's always making more sales calls. Many authors in traditional royalty-based publishing complain that they're responsible for marketing the book in any case, so why not publish with a subsidy house? There's one simple answer: the author is not facing thousands of dollars of potential loss if the book doesn't sell. One item that has not been mentioned is writing more books. The choice for an author who publishes his or her own book is whether to spend two to three years publishing and selling the book or whether to spend two or three years writing.

What, in the final analysis, is to be gained by paying for the publication of a book?

This last question is perhaps the most important. The hope is that we'll save time by getting into print faster than we would if we send our work to traditional royalty-based houses. The hope is that we'll make money from selling our books. It has happened in the past. John James Audubon, Beatrix Potter, Lewis Carroll, and Frank Baum all published their own works, at least initially. They had a vision that we all share: success in sharing our works with the public. The reality is that publishing is a business. If it is approached like a business, with consideration for the bottom line, for marketability of the product, and for an understanding of the demands of running a small business, it is possible to create a successful

book through subsidy publishing. It's also risky, time-consuming, and full of obscure and boring details. My personal decision has been to seek a royalty-based publisher for my works. I self-published two activity kits for children that sold successfully at book fairs and at toy stores. I decided not to continue the business because marketing the kits simply absorbed too much time. I didn't have time for my main job as a writer, which is to write. ☺

Yuan

ones that expect the author to pay for the entire cost of production. They will also spend time and energy marketing the books they produce, in order to recover their financial investment.

If you have decided that subsidy publishing is the avenue to pursue, here are some ways to find a good house:

- [Talk to an independent book consultant.](#) Pay for this service. Not only will independent book consultants be able to evaluate the entire project, they will have personal contacts within the industry. They may be able to save you from a costly mistake by steering you to a subsidy publisher that has a good reputation
 - [Join a publishing organization.](#) There are local associations almost everywhere in the United States. A list is available through the Publishers Marketing Association (www.pma-online.com, and look at the affiliates page.) Get some education in the field before you spend more money.
 - [Ask for referrals.](#) Satisfied customers are your best source for evaluating a subsidy publisher.
 - [Talk to the editor or hire your own.](#) [Editing is a must for any book.](#) Most authors are not good editors, and most simply cannot edit their own works. Having a second pair of eyes read through the work critically is imperative. If the editor at the subsidy house is not someone that you feel you can work with, find someone else.
 - [Look at sample books.](#) Look at the front
- (Continued, see "Legitimate Subsidy" page 4)

An interview With Tamora Pierce

By Emily Jiang

Since the release of *Alanna: The First Adventure* in 1983, Tamora Pierce has written over 25 fantasy books for teens and children and has an 8-book contract for Random House thru 2010. She is a very busy person who generously shared with me some of her wisdom gathered from over twenty years of writing for children and teens.

What kinds of challenges do you encounter when writing for kids and teens?

Pierce: Keeping it real in terms of characters. Keeping it intelligent. The typical fantasy/sci audience among kids is skewed towards the more intelligent kids because speculative fiction gives their minds more rooms to expand, producing a more actively engaged reader. It's a challenge to keep the story engaging without dumbing it down, and also dealing with contemporary issues completely in the fantasy setting so there is never any preaching.

Preaching is fatal. I'm from the Samuel Goldwyn train of thought about writing for kids. "If you need to send a message, call Western Union." You cannot preach or give the big message thing, or you will not be accepted. Kids are an extremely sophisticated audience. They are very smart about what is being pitched to them. They have been seduced by the best, and they have not been fooled.

What is your typical timeline for writing a book, from conception to publication?

Pierce: It used to take me a year to write a book. During the mid-90s on, I started writing two books a year, generally two drafts, with three months per draft. I don't know how long it takes to write a book anymore; maybe 6-9 months, broken up around the traveling. Usually these days, by the time I start writing, I've been thinking about the book for 4-6 years because different ideas are always coming. And I talk about them with my husband Tim.

For my daily process, I set a page count because if I don't, I will just goof off. I start out around seven pages a day, and as I get closer to deadline, the page count creeps up. And have to have the page count done before I watch TV. I read what I did the day before and edit or even throw out what didn't work. Near the end of the book, I print and go over by hand. Back in the happy days when I actually had more time, I would read it aloud because doing so catches stuff you'd miss when only reading on the screen. Unless I'm setting up new cycle or a new character with a new setting, each book typically takes two drafts. Then my editor gives feedback, and we go back and forth a lot. Some things I'll agree on; some things I won't. I learn so much from each editor. Once I get over "It wasn't perfect," I'm grateful because they make me look good.

Now that people like me, I actually get input into the artist and the design - rough sketches and web site. I tend to be a bit laissez-faire unless I think the artist is totally wrong. I never know what they will come up with.

Your newest book *Will of the Empress* has come out, and how do you feel?

Pierce: The closer we get to the book getting out, I'm more convinced it will do a big belly flop.

What even now?

Pierce: Especially now because I'm taking bigger and bigger risks. I try new things in each book each time, and I'm always terrified that something will go awry! It wasn't until 1997 that I actually realized I was going to be a success at this. The problem with trying new things each time is that you never know if you won't lay a big fat egg, and for me that that means being poor.

Another big fear is to have your fans hate you when they love you so much. *Will of the Empress* has an openly gay character, when before only I hinted at it. I might be accused of writing a popular interest or being politically correct or I might have people come at me with pitchforks, but I felt I owed it to my gay fans to present the truth. Also, trying something new with each book helps me as an artist to learn and grow. The alternative is stagnation. And you do see it. There are plenty of writers out there where their 20th book is just like their 15th book is like their 12th book. They're writing for their fans now. They're not writing to gain new fans, just for the old ones.

What do you recommend for today's aspiring writers?

(Continued, see "Pierce" page 6)

Legitimate Subsidy

cover. Would you buy this book? Read the back cover copy. Has it hooked you? Does it make you want to buy the book? Find out who wrote the back cover copy and talk to that person.

- **Have the sample books evaluated by a professional designer.** Pay for this service. Graphic artists are usually listed in the yellow pages. Find one who designs book covers. Ask for an opinion about the sample books. Book covers sell books. A poor cover will torpedo the best content. Make sure the subsidy publisher will work with you until you are satisfied with the cover design.
- **Consult with an attorney who specializes in small-business law.** Make sure you understand every word of the contract. 🐿

Margaret Speaker Yuan is the author of eight books for middle school readers. She is one of the founding members of The StorySmiths, an editorial services firm specializing in children's literature. She is the Regional Advisor for SCBWI in the San Francisco North & East Bay region. Please contact her at books4women@yahoo.com for more information about The StorySmiths.



Illustration by Erin O'Toole

How To Get An Agent

By Lisa Rojany Buccieri and Peter Economy, Authors of *Writing Children's Books for Dummies* (Wiley, April 2005).

Many writers are able to sell their work to publishers without an agent. So why use one? Because literary agents for children's books are often in a much better position to sell your manuscript than you are, especially if you are unpublished. They have more editor contacts and more relationships cultivated in publishing—and they often know who is on the lookout for what. They can also get inside publishing houses that do not accept unagented or unsolicited submissions.

As well, agents hold your hand through the publishing process, from manuscript to finished book and beyond. They may help you shape up your manuscript by offering editorial advice or by referring you to a professional editor or book doctor. Beware: Agents should not ever charge you for editorial advice. See the Association of Author's Representatives for guidelines agents should follow: www.aar-online.org

Agents negotiate all aspects of your contract with your editor so you do not have to, leaving the writer-editor relationship cleaner and not cluttered up with monetary issues. And not only do agents pitch to publishers, they may also sell or license your work in other markets such as foreign countries or in television and film. So how do you find these miracle workers? And once found, how do you get them to notice you?

Referrals from other writers are a great way to go. Literary agencies are businesses, but they can't advertise in a traditional way. So they mostly rely on word-of-mouth advertising as well as their own recruiting efforts to bring them new authors. If you don't personally know any published or agented writers, online writers' forums often discuss agents willing to accept new clients.

Children's book writers' conferences and workshops often feature agents. Agents are often on the lookout for promising new talent and where else to find that talent than at a place where writers converge? These agents will often be bombarded with others vying for their time, so be patient, polite, and persistent—and be ready for your opportunity to pitch your idea.

There are also a number of terrific

directories—both in print and online—for finding literary agents and agencies. Be sure to focus only on agencies that specialize in children's books.



*

Good agents are very popular people. The top literary agencies receive thousands of queries, manuscripts, and proposals each and every year, and the line of prospective authors is long and competitive. So how do you get noticed?

First, pick the right agent for the job.

That means making sure that the agent handles the type of book you are submitting. If you do not know the difference between a picture book and a middle-grade novel, you are not yet ready for submission. The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators can help beginners like you get ready: www.scbwi.org

Second, make sure your query letter is only one page long and contains the following information:

1. what your manuscript is about (one sentence)
2. target audience / age, word-count, format (picture book, middle-grade novel, young adult novel, etc.)
3. why you chose this particular agent (shows you did your homework)
4. two relevant, same-format books in the marketplace that are direct competition for your book, and why your book is different
5. UNIQUE marketing ideas
6. your publishing background (if any, or relevant professional experience)
7. your contact info



*

Third, always follow an agent's submission guidelines to the letter. You can find these online or by contacting the agency.

Fourth, if the agency does not specify otherwise, make sure your manuscript is properly formatted: typed, double-spaced, 12-point Courier font, flush left with 1.25-inch left margin, ragged right text, with prop-

er, paginated headers including your last name and book title.

Fifth, make sure to submit your manuscript and query letter with a SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope) with enough postage for its safe return (not doing so signals to the agent that you do not care enough about your work to have it sent back). And make a good impression by being polite and not stalking the agent if they do not get back to you immediately. By acting professionally, you bring yourself one step closer to getting an agent and moving along in the process of getting published! 🐾

Writing Children's Books For Dummies®
Lisa Rojany Buccieri and Peter Economy
ISBN: 0-7645-3728-8
\$19.99 U.S. / \$25.99 CAN

Here are some of the best places to find agent directories:

The Association of Authors' Representatives (www.aar-online.org)

Guide to Literary Agents by Kathryn Brogan (Writer's Digest Books)

Publishers Marketplace (www.publishersmarketplace.com)

Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market by Alice Pope and Rebecca Chrysler (Writer's Digest Books)

Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators (www.scbwi.org) provides a list of agents to their members

Writers Market by Kathryn Brogan and Robert Brewer (Writer's Digest Books)

* "Dog" and "Frog" Illustrations by Elizabeth Cunningham

Pierce

Pierce: Keep writing. Every word you write counts, no matter what, even if it's a shopping list or a letter to Grandma. I also wrote for radio, and I found that radio writing and novel writing were intertwined. I became a lot more comfortable with dialogue. One of my standing orders at a publishing house -do not correct my dialogue-people do not speak in complete sentences; the punctuation is different. After eight years in radio, I "darn well" know my dialogue. Also my job in radio was working with other writers to help them with ideas and rewrites. Helping someone else achieve their best voice, teaches you to bring clarity to your own. Keep innovating. I'm working on a project for Bruce Coville. It's a Circle of Magic Book, published first as an audio book - writing primarily for something that will heard first, published as a stand-alone book later. We don't know of anyone else writing a book to be published first as an audio book. We are crafting it as it goes, which is a lot of fun. Briar's student is the main character in this book, and I got to meet the actress playing her. It's interesting because now I have her voice in my head, and I write for her specific verbal ticks and really have fun with it.

With the first Harry Potter books, fantasy books for kids became big. Some say that it won't last, especially now that there's only one Harry Potter book left. What do you think the future of fantasy for kids will be? What will the landscape be like after Harry Potter?

Pierce: Harry has been really good for fantasy in general. There's a lot of good fantasy out there written by good writers like Garth Nix and Philip Pullman, and people are paying attention to them. After the trend, the landscape will remain, and the good writers will stay. Diane Wynne Jones was there before Harry, and she will be after. There is still going to be a solid readership of fantasy. And those kids who discovered that reading is cool with fantasy, will continue to expand their reading. 🍄

Just The Right Word

By Jeanne Harvey

T.A. Barron spoke in March at a "Writing for Children and Young Adults" conference at Book Passage, a well-known independent bookstore in Corte Madera, California. Tom is the award-winning author of the highly acclaimed epic *The Lost Years of Merlin*, the new trilogy *The Great Tree of Avalon*, and many other novels, nature books, and children's books. Madeline L'Engle says his books are a "rare gift to be treasured for a lifetime."

As he spoke to aspiring writers, he emphasized that "writing is the most difficult and and the most joyous job." No job has made him "more bleary eyed and yet feel more connected to life." However, he confided, "writing is a perpetually humbling experience" as demonstrated by three letters he's received over the years.

First, when he was a graduate student at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, and had received many rejections (42) for his first novel, he papered the wall in his bathroom in the dorm. "I thought that gave it the appropriate dignity." One of the rejections began, "Dear Sir/Madam" (the sir was circled) and proceeded to say that the publisher had considered "the fiction/nonfiction" (the word fiction was circled). As Tom emphasized, writers always tell us that personalized rejections should be savored, yet he wasn't sure if this letter could be considered very personalized.

Second, he received a letter from a boy who began, "My teacher made me write to a living author. So if you're still alive,

please answer these questions..." Tom answered this letter as "the ghost of T.A. Barron."

Third, he received a package with one black basketball sneaker with a yellow sticky note attached to it with the words "Sign here." Tom was pleased that he was being asked for an autograph, and thoughts of who had signed the other shoe ran through his mind. Perhaps Michael Jordan? He then read the child's letter which said, "I know I can write because now that I've heard you speak, I know you don't need to be very smart to write."

In choosing what to write about, Tom said he tries to "remember what I'm most passionate about and follow my rivers of passion, follow the rays of light." He pays attention to "what makes my heart beat, what keeps me strapped to a chair for 12 hours a day." He recommends that writers "find what releases that passionate bard in you."

For Tom, his three passions are 1) a love of nature, 2) a passion for life, and 3) a belief that there's a hero in all of us. He said, "I write stories I want to read myself. I'm trying to speak to that young adult in all of us. The author needs to win the readers' attention on page one, and keep them through the book, and then you will have them as a reader for life."

Nature has played an important role in Tom's life because he grew up on a Colorado ranch, and has returned to Colorado to raise his five children with his wife. He's an avid hiker and traveler. He believes "Nature has the power to connect us to much wider spaces and times than our own." He feels that when authors write

about Nature, "it's important to think about Nature not just as a backdrop. Nature needs to be a character and rise to all of the ironies, complexities as human characters. The trick is to use details and bring all the senses alive. Characters need to learn from Nature. Writers need to say something important about Nature because we're abusing Mother Nature right now and it's important as the bards to rise to the defense. As loving, sentient beings, we can take care of Nature."

His second passion is to participate actively in life -- "the wonder, beauty, and excitement of life." He said that it took him a long time to find the confidence to get over expectations of others as to how one succeeds in our society, and to quit his job in business to instead follow his passion -- to write. "Sure, it was scary, but not nearly as scary as growing old and dying without (Continued, see "Word" page 7)

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Word

trying this, without following this dream. I quit 20 years ago, and I haven't had a millisecond of regret and lots of wonderful things have happened to me."

Third, he passionately believes there is a "hero in all of us." He thinks our society is very confused between celebrities and heroes. "Celebrities are about fame, notoriety. The qualities down inside of a hero can't be seen -- courage, compassion, humor, wisdom, perseverance." He emphasized that often heroes aren't seen or heard or acknowledged which led to his establishing the Gloria Barron Prize (named after his 91 year old mother) which "turns the spotlight on children and young people who act heroically."

His hope for writers: "Words really are magic. Nothing is as powerful as the written or spoken word. I hope you'll persevere and tap into your passions and every so often find just the right word." 🐶

Shar be treasure

ahead mateys!

guest speakers! manuscript & portfolio reviews!

and much more!



*the scdwi spring conuerece in davis calif.
is coming Marrrch 25, 2006*

For more info twrites@cal.net

scurvy dog scrawl commandeered from Jeff (Mad Jack Kidd) Jackson ARRR!



Good News

Genny Heikka

Susan Taylor Brown's book, **ROBERT SMALLS SAILS TO FREEDOM**, is now out. Also, *Highlights Magazine* (February issue) published Susan's short story, *Harold's Hundred Days of School*. In addition, excerpts are now available from her upcoming novel, **HUGGING THE ROCK**.

Connie Goldsmith's new book about emerging infectious diseases, **INVISIBLE INVADERS**, is now out from Lerner.

Genny Heikka's picture book manuscript, **FEATHERS AND FUR, STICKY-STUCK, GREASY-GRIMY**, won 1st place in the in the children's literature category of the California Focus on Writers Contest.

Loretta Ichord's third book in her cooking/history series with Lerner just came out. The book is called **PASTA, FRIED RICE, AND MATZOH BALLS: Immigrant Cooking in America**.

Emily Jiang's novel-in-progress, **PAPER DAUGHTER**, received the Sue Alexander Most Promising New Work Award from the SCBWI annual conference in Los Angeles. Her novel also won 1st place in the YA division of the Focus on Writers Contest. In addition, her novel won 1st place in the Foster City International Writing Competition.

Trish Kaspar's "Peace and Justice" crossword puzzle was used by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom as an ancillary activity for kids whose parents (or other adult companions) attended their triennial congress in August, in San Francisco. In addition, two of Trish's submissions were published in a 2006 daily calendar, "Everyday Blessings."

Shirley Klock has two short stories coming out: "Snow Globe Moment" in *Like Mother, Like Daughter*, an anthology from Kingfisher (February 2006), and "Speaking Esperanto" in *You're the Best: Friendship Stories*, an anthology from Kingfisher (August 2006).

Deborah Nourse Lattimore's book, **MEDUSA**, was chosen as a

California Best Reader / California Collections, for 2006.

An expanded version of **Nanette McGuinness'** article, "So You Want to Say 'Please' in Portuguese: Online Foreign Language Resources" (which originally ran in *The Acorn* last year), was published in the SCBWI Bulletin (July/August 2005 issue).



Regional Advisor's Corner

By Tekla White

North/Central California SCBWI

Greetings from North Central California My winter newsletter is coming from the Kennedy Airport after the SCBWI Conference at the New York Hilton. Outdoors, the weather in New York has been almost as warm as it is in Davis. There were no snow flurries, but an occasional light drizzle brought out the umbrellas. Indoors, agents, editors, writers, art directors and illustrators talked about hot market trends. What's the news? Vampires, chicklit, young adult, and middle grade novels are in, and the picture book market is slowing down. Several expressed interest in nonfiction and middle grade mysteries. Almost all of the editors and agents cautioned against writing trendy stories just to sell a book. They noted that it may be years before your manuscript is in book form and in the hands of readers. The publishing process is very slow! A new trend will be on the scene by that time, and today's hot sellers could be lukewarm subjects in the future.

Instead, the advice was something we've all heard many times; write what you know and feel passionate about! They are looking for the new voice and for manuscripts that are unlike all the others. For example, the closing keynote speaker, Nikki Giovanni, shared the story behind the words in her book, *Rosa*, which was illustrated by Bryan Collier. Her comments reflected the love and admiration she felt for her friend, Rosa Parks. Each word in the book was selected with care. Everyone in the room was inspired by her page-by-page presentation. Her passion for the subject she knew, and wanted to write about, makes *Rosa*, an outstanding picture book biography. Passion and knowledge were Giovanni's magical writing tools. 🍷

Best wishes,
Tekla White

SCBWI Regional Advisor
North Central California

Connie McLennan's new book, **OCTAVIA AND HER PURPLE INK CLOUD** (ISBN: 0976494353) from Sylvan Dell Publishing, is scheduled for release on May 10. Also, she is beginning work on illustrations for **THE RAIN-FOREST GREW ALL AROUND**, also from Sylvan Dell and due out in Spring, 2007.

Carol Peterson's second book with Teacher Ideas Press, **AROUND THE WORLD THROUGH HOLIDAYS**, is now available. Carol has just signed a contract for a third book on themed science fairs, **JUMP INTO SCIENCE**, which will be forthcoming in 2007.

Ghosts whisper to psychic medium, Sabine Rose, in the third installment of **Linda Joy Singleton's** YA series, **THE SEER**

#3. **WITCH BALL**, published January 2006, from Llewellyn Worldwide. To see covers and writing news, visit www.LindaJoySingleton.com

Ginger Wadsworth announces publication of her newest book, **WOOLLY MAMMOTHS**, *On My Own Science*, illustrated by Todd Zaleski. This book is published by Millbrook/Lerner Publishing group, 2006, and is 48 pages, grades 2-4. Another new title of Ginger's is **ANNIE OAKLEY**, *History Maker Bios*, from Lerner Publishing (hardback edition) and Barnes & Noble (paperback edition), 2005. The book is 48 pages, and is for grades 3-5.

Caryn Huberman Yacowitz's picture book, **THE JADE STONE**, *A CHINESE FOLKTALE*, was recently published (November 2005) by Pelican Publishing. This book is illustrated by Ju-Hong Chen, and was originally published by Holiday House, NYC and named among the best books of the year by *SF Chronicle* and *Book Links*. It also received starred reviews in *Kirkus* and *SLJ*, and was named to California Collections 🍷



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Acorn Submission Guidelines

The Acorn would love submissions of articles of interest to children's book writers and illustrators, and photos on 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 or GIF 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.

Acorn Submission Deadlines

The Acorn is a tri-yearly publication. Issues will be posted on the SCBWI NorCa website <http://www.scbwinorca.org/news/newsletter1.htm> on or around the first day 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.

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