

HAPPY NEW
YEAR!



drawing by Chelsey Shuder

The ACORN

JANUARY TO
APRIL 2007



drawing by Paulette Trinh

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

Google Yourself

by Deborah Lee Rose

I google almost every day of my life when working on children's books and other writing projects. Still it didn't occur to me to google myself until a local newspaper reporter suggested I try. My first attempt didn't turn up much-a few of my book titles (not all), several scattered reviews (including some "stinkers"), and one outdated biographical article (I didn't have my own website yet). Then I tried googling each of my book titles. I was in for some surprises:

My book "Into the A,B,Sea" was recommended on a major school district's summer reading list, under the wrong author's name.

"One Nighttime Sea", which hadn't gotten a lot of reviews, was now on a top choice list from a regional reading organization, though I hadn't known either the list or the organization existed.

A school in the Midwest was putting on a staged production of "The People Who Hugged the Trees", without having asked for any performance permissions.

Two separate entrepreneurs were making, and selling on eBay, felt board sets based on The Twelve Days of Kindergarten. I had sold no subsidiary rights for such products or even received an inquiry about such rights. One of the sellers had even posted online the entire text of my book as

Continued see Google p2 col 1

Patricia McKissack

An Author Profile

By Patricia M. Newman



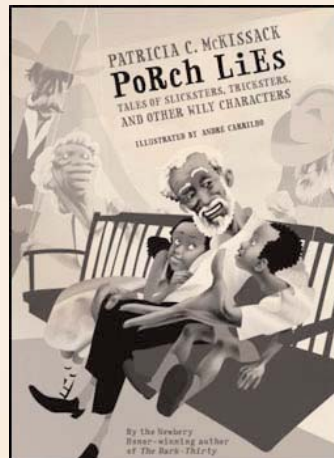
Patricia McKissack was a writer even before she considered it as a profession. She loved words as a child, and loved making up stories. One of her favorite radio shows was Machine Gun Kelly, and she used him as the main character for several of her initial stories. "I had no concept of a gun, let alone a machine gun," she quips, but that didn't stop her from writing.

Pat grew up in a storytelling family that nurtured the talent within her. "A huggy, touchy, kissy people with a story, a smile, and a piece of bread to share," says Pat. She remembers gathering around the fireplace, on the back porch, or around the table at meal times to hear the latest yarn.

In school, Pat wrote for traditional publications-her high school yearbook, her college newspaper, her sorority's newsletter. She followed a degree in English with a teaching career, a master's in early childhood education, and finally a stint as an editor for a book publisher.

One day, Pat remembers returning home from the publishing house exhausted from the daily battles she waged to get her

Continued see McKissack p2 col 2



Register Your Name in Someone's Mind

by Trish Kaspar

Getting to know you is exactly what we want as writers: to put our names out where people recognize them. How is that done? For a start....

1. Write to your local newspaper. Suggest a column, highlighting one of your talents or avocations; or write letters to the editor concerning issues you feel strongly about. Your name is registered in someone's mind.

2. Respond to a magazine's article (Utne, AARP, Sierra, National Parks, whatever). Agree or disagree with something you've read in their publication; give good reasons for your response. I've been called or e-mailed by people who've read my letter to the editor. My name is registered in someone's mind.

3. Submit your creativity to local giveaway newspapers. Puzzles, word games, community activities, book reviews, sports reports. For instance, go to kids' soccer games, then send a review, highlighting the game and getting your name out there.

4. Create a piece for a school or church newsletter; use one of your other columns, tweaking the content to fit the venue, and getting your name in another venue.

5. Do you hike or knit?

Continued see Register p2 col 4

Google

advertisement for the felt set, a clear infringement of my copyright.

These google self-discoveries triggered a major "aha" that librarians, teachers, reviewers, parents and other readers, including potential subsidiary rights purchasers, should be able to find accurate, cohesive information about my books and me (including how to contact me or my agent) in one official place. This e-piphany became the powerful incentive for finally creating and launching my own website. The site would let visitors find

- 1) up-to-date information about all my books.
- 2) not only what other writers could tell them about me, but what I could tell them about myself.
- 3) favorable reviews but no "stinkers".
- 4) authorized contacts for questions regarding rights and permissions.

My website is now up and running, but I still conduct random google searches of my book titles. One recent e-treasure hunt revealed a glowing newspaper review I hadn't yet seen, for my newest book *The Twelve Days of Winter*. That review promptly joined the others of my choosing where they can all be most easily found-at deborahleerose.com.



Deborah Lee Rose has won two NAPPA Gold Awards, the highest honor given by the National Parenting Publications Awards, for *The Twelve Days of Winter* and *The Twelve Days of Kindergarten*. Anyone can google her at deborahleerose.com.

With Thanks to Jeff Jackson and Emmit Smith

By Linda Boyden

In July, 2006, my writing luck changed when I was offered a contract for my second picture book from the

Cont. see Emmit Smith p3 col 2

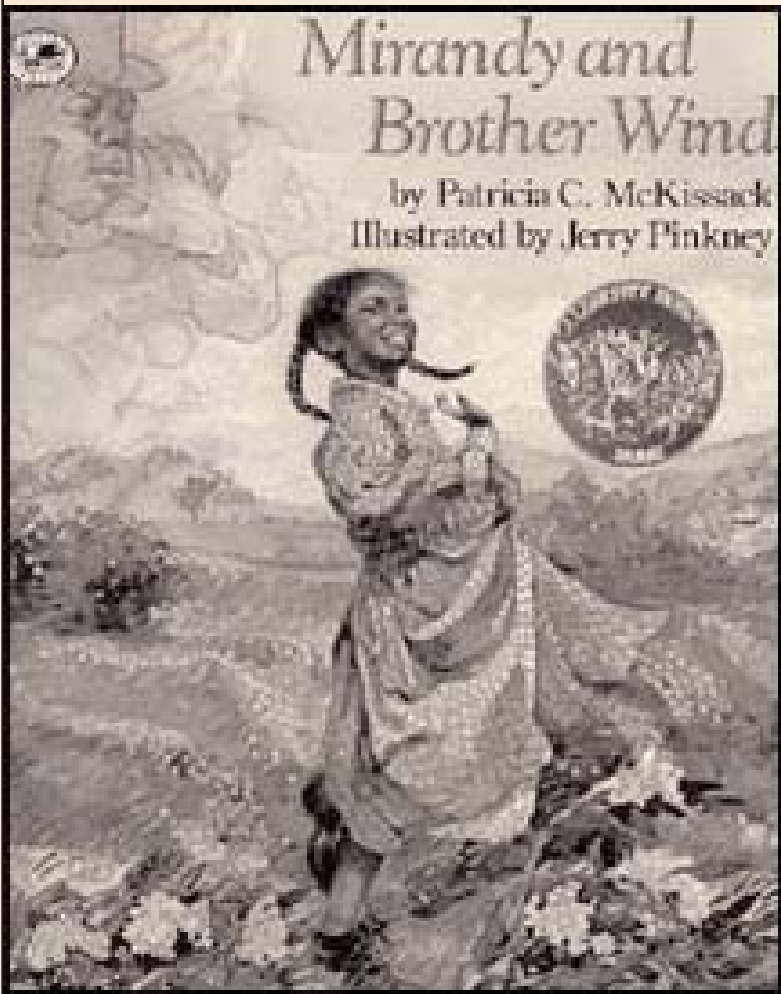
McKissak

favorite projects published. That evening she went to the park with her husband, Fredrick.

Together they sat by their favorite waterfall and Pat cried. Fred asked her to pick something she could be happy doing for the rest of her life. Pat

Luther King, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Frederick Douglass. They've toured historical plantations to understand the life of a slave and collected Southern supernatural tales, and tales of wily Southern characters.

Originally, the McKissacks were lauded for their nonfiction work.



chose writing for children and Fred promised to help her. "But Freddy, you don't know beans about children," said Pat in her gentle Southern drawl. "I know enough," he said. Pat knew he would have promised anything to get her to stop crying, but she called his bluff and rented office space for their joint venture.

Together the McKissacks have researched the dissolution of slavery, the history of civil rights, African-American sailors aboard whaling ships, and prominent African-Americans like Martin

But Pat couldn't stop thinking about the reams of material that never made it into their books. Research for a nonfiction book on Apaches that she wrote at the beginning of her career became the basis for *Run Away Home*—the story of an Apache boy who escapes from the train taking him to the reservation.

While reading slave narratives for Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters, Pat stumbled across an account of a slave girl who learned to read while fanning the Missus and the young

Continued see McKissak p3 col 1

Register

Chat with a trail or handcrafty companion. Find a common thread. Plan to get together. As you share phone numbers, offer your business card, complete with writer information. Your name is registered in someone's mind.

6. Volunteer to read at your library's storytime or your kid's school, especially for events like Cat in the Hat Day/Week. Be visible in your community. Your name is registered in someone's mind.

7. Write personalized pieces to share at weddings, civic events, other celebrations. Get to know the people, then share their personalities, lives, and highlights with your audience and your audience with you.

8. Think WRITER. Everywhere you go, twist the moment into a writing opportunity. Leave your business card. Your name is registered in someone's mind.

Remember: you write because you can't NOT write, right? To revisit a phrase: think globally, act locally and get your name registered in someone's mind.

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Fall '06 SCBWI Davis Conference: Something For Every Writer

By Linda Boyden

On October 14, 2006, writers of many genres headed to the Veterans Memorial Center in Davis for the Fall SCBWI conference. No matter what our

Cont. see Fall Conference p3 col 2

McKissack

Master during their lessons. In Pat's novel, *A Picture of Freedom: A Diary of Clotee, a Slave Girl*, Clotee says, "Every time I read or write a word it puts a picture in my head." Every word but freedom. Pat's story focuses on how Clotee comes to form a picture of freedom.

Flossie and the Fox, one of Pat's most successful stories, is currently on its second generation of readers. Pat remembers sitting next to her grandfather on the porch swing while he began spinning his tale: "Did I ever tell you 'bout the time lil' Flossie Finley come out the Piney Woods heeling a fox?"

When Pat's three sons began reading they told her they were sick of books about black kids always in need, or a day late and a dollar short. The McKissack boys had enough to wear and enough to eat; they led happy-go-lucky lives and they wanted Pat to tell their story. Pat responded with the easy-reader series about Miami, a composite of her three sons.

Throughout her career, Pat has written fiction and nonfiction for a variety of age groups. The variety keeps her fresh and wards off writer's block. She writes from her St. Louis, Missouri home and describes herself as goal-oriented. Each morning she creates a manageable to-do list; when she completes the list her work is over for the day. Sometimes she's finished at 2:00p.m., and sometimes she's finished at 7:00p.m. But she doesn't exhaust herself, knowing that fresh ideas come from a fresh mind. Winner of multiple Coretta Scott King awards and the Newbery Honor, Pat keeps her readers foremost in her mind when she's working on a proj-

ect. "I care about what I am giving them," she says. "When my readers put down a Pat McKissack book they will come away with something that's enriched their lives."

HOW TO CONTACT PATRICIA MCKISSACK

Website: Find out more about Patricia McKissack at www.scholastic.com or www.randomhouse.com/kids or www.simonsayskids.com

Fan Mail: Patricia McKissack,
Author, c/o Random House
Children's Books, 1745
Broadway, New York, NY 10019



SELECTIONS FROM PATRICIA MCKISSACK'S LIBRARY

Porch Lies: Tales of Slicksters, Tricksters, and Other Wily Characters, Random House, 2006.
To Establish Justice, with Arlene Zarembka, Knopf, 2004.

Days of Jubilee: The End of Slavery in the United States with Fredrick McKissack, Scholastic, 2003.

Miami Makes the Play, Random House, 2001.
Run Away Home, Scholastic, 1997.

A Picture of Freedom: The Diary of Clotee, a Slave Girl, Scholastic, 1997.

The Dark Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural, Knopf, 1992.

A Million Fish... More or Less, Knopf, 1992.

Nettie Jo's Friends, Knopf, 1989.

Mirandy and Brother Wind, Knopf, 1988.

Flossie and the Fox, Dial, 1986.

Upcoming

Stitchin' and Pullin': The Quilters of Gee's Bend, Random House, 2007.

A Friend for Today, Scholastic, January 2007.



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.

Emmit Smith
University of New Mexico
Press. There was tap-dancing in the Boyden house until it occurred to me that I may have bitten off more than I could chew: I had also agreed to be the book's illustrator.

Other than loving to "color," what did I know about art, specifically the art of book illustrating? I had never been to art school, had no formal training, but what I did have was a serious deadline.

I took a leave of absence from my part-time job, reorganized my office, lined up all my pretty new art toys, and sat down, waiting for the art to happen. I waited, and waited, and waited until reality slapped me silly: I am a middle-aged writer. What have I done?

So I emailed a panicky message to the only professional artist I even halfway knew, our own Jeff Jackson, who graciously sent me the following advice. It jump-started me on the right path, and maybe will help other budding illustrators.

1. Set deadlines for specific illustrations. Limit your time on each one. Projects tend to be scary and exciting simultaneously. You pour your heart into an illustration, stay up all night to complete it, but in the morning discover it is flawed, therefore....

2. Don't dwell on a piece too long. The magic disappears if you do, so set aside the ornery piece and get to work on another page. You'll find yourself captivated by the new one, which in turns recaptures the magic, but which, of course, can't help but fade. When it does, return to the previously ornery one and chances are you'll be able to complete it, but don't work without a....

3. Storyboard.
Storyboarding began in the 1920's with Walt Disney's animation team headed by Web Smith as a cheap way to keep track of story goals.

Storyboarding is the best way to see the project as a whole and to develop a time plan. It enables you to know the most

Cont. see Emmit Smith p4 col 1

Fall Conference

interests or needs, speakers presented something of value for every writer.

Erin Dealey addressed the picture book genre, starting with an introduction and overview. She also suggested to compare and analyze your manuscript with your favorite in-print picture book to see what areas are on the mark and what needs improvement.

Linda Joy Singleton's presentation moved us into the arena of YA. She offered sound advice about creating believable teen characters. Write about the kid you'd be NOW; be aware of how kids of today dress, speak, get around, and how much they are techno-savvy.

Connie Goldsmith walked us through a nonfiction book proposal, emphasizing that you must show prospective editors that you have done your homework. She believes a good nonfiction proposal has the potential to sell your book before you write the first word.

Loretta Ichord's presentation showed us how to lively up our school, library, or bookstore visits.

Authors/illustrators must be organized and promote yourself via flyers, brochures, postcards and websites prior to each event.

Jeri Chase Ferris introduced us to CAN!, the Children's Authors Network, which is an organization designed to connect authors/illustrators with schools. Their motto is "Changing lives, one book at a time."

Last, but certainly not least, was HarperCollins editor, Kristin Daly, whose energy and stamina was nothing short of amazing. While workshops were going on, Ms. Daly conferred with

Cont. see Conference p4 col 2

WRITING, READING & COLLECTING SERIES BOOKS

By Linda Joy Singleton

It all started with Nancy Drew and Judy Bolton. Then I branched out to Trixie Belden, Beverly Gray, Dana Girls, Cherry Ames, Penny Parker, etc. One hundred books



saved from my childhood grew to over 5,000 titles in my home library. And I don't just read and collect juvenile series books-now I write them, too.

In 4th grade, my teacher had a contest to encourage reading. She kept a chart with each student's name across from a list of books read in a month. I was proud to be a top reader, averaging a book a day. I also wrote my own stories. When I was 14, I submitted short stories to American Girl Magazine and received encouraging rejections. I also applied for a correspondence writing college but was rejected because I was too young. On the application I wrote that I wanted to be a series book author.

This dream came true when my first series, MY SISTER THE GHOST, was published by Avon Books in 1994. Next came CHEER SQUAD, REGENERATION, STRANGE ENCOUNTERS and THE SEER. My 5th THE SEER, FATAL CHARM, comes out 8-07.

Series books are more than stories; they're about friendships and families. When a book

ends, another book continues on with beloved characters. Some series like Nancy Drew have characters that remain the same age. Other series have characters that grow older like the Judy Bolton mystery series by Margaret Sutton. In the first book, THE VANISHING SHADOW, Judy is 15 years old and she grows to her mid-twenties by the last title SECRET OF THE SANDCASTLE. In the course of 38 books, Judy gets engaged twice, discovers a lost cousin, watches her high school burn down, moves to a "haunted" house, mourns her grandparents, enjoys a bridal shower and a beautiful double wedding, takes in a foster child and solves mysteries with her FBI husband in real places like Yellowstone, Long Island, Canada and Washington DC.

Collecting series books can be addicting-like going on a treasure hunt. There's a thrill of excitement whenever I go to a secondhand bookstore or thrift shop and scan the shelves for treasures. Often a "treasure" isn't a book of great value, but one to complete a collection. One time I found a rare Judy Bolton title worth over a hundred dollars for only fifty cents at a flea market. My heart raced like crazy and I was dizzy with excitement. I added this prize to the collection I was creating for my daughter.

If you'd like to start your own series collection, here are some "starter" titles from beloved mysteries series that are usually only a few dollars in stores/online:



GIRLS SERIES:
Nancy Drew by Carolyn Keene: To experience the

classic essence of the titian-haired girl detective, bypass the glossy picture covers for titles with older copyright dates, before they were made politically correct and stripped of descriptive passages. Some titles were totally rewritten such as THE MYSTERY AT THE MOSS-COVERED MANSION. The 1941 version is about a mansion where wild animals are kept. In the 1971 version, the story is about explosive oranges in the Space Center at Cape Kennedy.
<http://www.nancy-drewsleuth.com/>

Judy Bolton by Margaret Sutton: Each book is based on a real incident in the author's life. I knew the author and we co-authored another Judy Bolton titled THE TALKING SNOWMAN. These books are



written with heart and unique plots. Published from 1932-1967, Judy Bolton books were ahead of their time; dealing with issues of prejudice, child abuse and social injustice. Start off this series with THE VANISHING SHADOW, THE HAUNTED ATTIC and THE INVISIBLE CHIMES.
www.Judybolton.com

Trixie Belden by Julie Campbell and Kathryn Kenny are back in print in lovely hardback editions under \$10 each. This series mixes both the styles of having characters grow but also keeping them in a time bubble. Start off with THE SECRET OF THE MANSION, THE RED TRAILER MYSTERY and THE GATEHOUSE MYSTERY. Trixie and her

friends do volunteer work while they solve unusual mysteries.

BOYS SERIES:
ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S THE THREE INVESTIGATORS series-Very well written mysteries that have been reprinted in paperback. Start with THE SECRET OF TERROR CASTLE and THE MYSTERY OF THE STUTTERING PARROT.

ENCYCLOPEDIA BROWN series by Donald J. Sobol-Mysteries to solve in a story format. Includes fun titles like THE CASE OF THE DISGUSTING SNEAKERS.

HARDY BOYS by Franklin W. Dixon - The first book is THE TOWER TREASURE. There's an updated version, too, in paperback: The Hardy Boys #2: Identity Theft (Hardy Boys: Undercover Brothers) by Scott Lobdell.

Have fun with series books! If you have any questions about series books, you can email me by clicking on the email link on my website www.LindaJoySingleton.com

***** Writing Goals

each year. My now-annual goal for my writing is to receive 30 rejections within a year, among others.

Why do I take the time to make goals? If I hadn't given myself the goal of receiving 30 rejections in 2005, I would have just kept writing aimlessly, without focus, as I tended to have lots of great ideas but never took the time to finish or truly polish them. I had over 50 poems at different stages sitting in my drawer, several short stories at different drafts, over five more

Cont. see Writing Goals p7 col 2

What Is ZSC Anyway?

Animals Aren't the Only Ones Who Crawl At The Zoo

By Jeff Jackson

So there I was, standing in front of all the shining, talented and eager faces at last year's North/Central California SCBWI March Conference doing my best to give a crash course in animal drawing for illustration.



drawing by Chelsey Shuder

I realized that it would be a lot of fun to get a group of illustrators who shared a similar interest in drawing animals together at a zoo and draw all day and then share what we came up with. Thus was born what we would call "Zoo Sketch-Crawl" based loosely on Enrico Casarosa's "Sketchcrawl".

Our group would meet at the main gate of a pre-defined zoo somewhere around the Bay Area in the morning and draw our way through the zoo, meeting at lunch to share and make comments about our drawings. We would then clump together at the end of the day to look again at each other's drawings before



drawing by Deb Brady

departing. This would be a perfect opportunity to meet folks who loved to

draw animals and get in some much needed sketchbook time with our four-legged friends.

That, of course, was considering the weather would act in our favor. My excitement for the opportunity began to wane when it didn't stop raining until what seemed like July (give or take a month -it rained an awful lot in the first part of last year, didn't it?). Finally after a few clear days, I started sending out emails to gather those souls that had shown some interest in this endeavor. After rallying a small group of about 20 people, we finally met for the

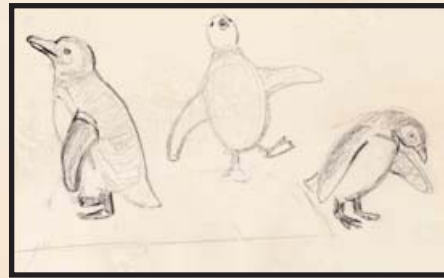


drawing by Deb Brady

first time as Zoo Sketch-Crawl at the Oakland Zoo. Again, the weather would not favor us. The day turned out to be the hottest day of the year, a stifling 112 degrees. Despite the wall of heat that we had to walk through, we tried to draw the poor animals, all of whom were lying about with their tongues hanging out. Our drawing supplies actually started melting, and soon we all did the same. We still had fun but spent more time drinking from our bottles of warm water than anything else.

The second time we met,

we chose to beat the heat



drawing by Lisa Victoria

by meeting at the San Francisco Zoo. The weather was much cooler (much, much, much cooler). This time after a suggestion we even had "kickin' stickers" to commemorate the event.

I loved the opportunity to draw animals in a group and to see the great work everyone did and everyone seemed to have a great and

flocking to a nearby zoo at least once every other month, and even set up a site or at least a forum where we can upload drawings and review each other's work. This will enable us to "meet" at any zoo and draw animals "together".

If you are interested in joining us or would like to



drawing by Lisa Victoria

draw again, please send me an email to gimme.a.mocha@gmail.com.

How about a ZSC trip in February or March?

'Could be just what the drawing doctor ordered. So dust off your sketchbooks, find those pencils, pens, watercolors or other supplies, pack a bottle of water and perhaps even a rain jacket and come on out for a day of drawing with your fellow crawlers from ZSC.



Jeff Jackson

Draws, teaches and stuff. He thinks there is no finer music than the sound of his daughter's laughter.

www.sonjebasa.net

relaxing time.

Sadly, as with life, everyone got busy doing all of the many things everyone has to do and we



One of our "kicken" stickers

did not have a third meeting...yet. Now that we have fresh new 2007, we of ZSC hope to make a habit of



drawing by Paulette Trinh

Regional Advisor's Corner

By Tekla White
North/Central Calif. SCBWI



We hope to see everyone at our Spring Spirit III event in Davis on March 10th at the Veterans Memorial Center. For more information check the Website www.scbwinorca.org. We have a group of talented presenters who will inspire us and share their writing and illustrating ideas. On May 5th, our fabulous duo from Writers Ink, Stephanie Jacob Gordon and Judith Ross Enderle will conduct a writing workshop at the Davis Senior Center. Our next event for illustrators and writers will be October 6th in Fresno with the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature at Fresno State University. The speakers for the fall event will be announced soon.

This year at our conferences, we hope to have a book basket for the homeless children, three-to-fifteen-year-olds, who come to the Mustard Seed School in Sacramento. Their homes may be the family car or in a different place every night. Without a permanent address, they don't have access to libraries and public schools. The Mustard Seed staff tries to place these students in a public school as soon as they are ready. While the students are attending Mustard Seed, the school provides a secure, loving place where they can learn. I hope the North Central California Region of the SCBWI will be able to sponsor a writer and an illustrator visit to the school
Cont. see R.A.'s Corner p8 col 1

Writing Goals

picture books that morphed into the beginnings of novels, and three beginnings of novels (each written up to page 50 then abandoned).

Before I started making goals, I did have many writing intentions to become a better writer. I joined SCBWI as soon as I knew I wanted to be a children's writer. I have been a member of SCBWI since the Kimberly Colen grant had been created. Each year, I considered applying for the grant, but I never did until the third year when I had my new goal of receiving 30 rejections in 2005, and that included getting rejected from a grant. Because I applied, I won the Colen grant, and I knew I had to complete my first novel beyond page 50, which was a very scary task. So to find support for me to finish my first novel, I joined a critique group and started regularly attending SCBWI events.

As creative, right-brained types, writers often struggle when it comes to thinking in terms of left-brained organizational goal-making, and I'm no different by nature. However, training can often overcome one's natural weakness. One of my previous day jobs was to be a project manager, which meant I had to be extremely organized and goal-oriented. I took classes in project management, and I learned techniques to approach taking huge overwhelming projects and breaking them down into small, bite-size, non-threatening, do-able tasks. To be more effective with my time, I have learned to apply these goal-making, project management skills to my writing.

"Receiving 30 rejections in one year" is a goal, but a more common writer's "goal" of "writing some children's books" is really an intention, not a goal. According to project

management terminology, goals are SMART. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely. Just like in creative writing, where unique details transform a flat, generic character into a full, realistic character, SMART details transforms an intention into a goal.

So instead of saying my goal is "writing some children's books," a SMART goal-oriented way would be to say "I will finish three polished picture book manuscripts by the end of the year."

Specific is the what detail, shown in "finish" and "polish" and "picture book manuscripts." Measurable is the quantity detail, shown in the number "three." Attainable is the detail that the goal-maker really wants to achieve and needs to stretch to make happen, and for a novelist like me, three polished picture books is indeed a stretch as well. Realistic is the detail that means the goal is do-able, as one must stretch to achieve a goal, yet the goal shouldn't be so ambitious as to be completely unachievable. For example, 50 polished picture books in one year probably is not a realistic goal for a person like me. I have other big projects and have never written a true picture book, while three picture books could happen. Timely is the deadline detail, shown in "by the end of the year."

A hint: The SMART details that people usually forget to include in their goals are Measurable (think quantity in numbers) and Timely (think deadline date).

Goals provide focus, and for someone as ideas-driven as myself, goals are a fabulous tool to prioritize my writing time. Happy writing and goal-setting!

My Writing Goals for 2007;
A Poem By Emily Jiang

30 rejections-
that's not too many, unless
acceptances flood.

20 good poems
requires the blood-sweat of
40 bad poems.

3 new picture books,
since my tales grow so big they
morph into novels.

2 new novel drafts-
don't look back, just keep writing
crappy new pages.

1 polished novel-
flesh out characters, tweak plot,
make every word shine.

The North Central California Region of the SCBWI

Invites you to the
**SPRING SPIRIT III
CONFERENCE**

March 10, 2007

**MANUSCRIPT CRITIQUES
PORTFOLIO REVIEWS**

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SARA GILLINGHAM
ESTER HERSHENHORN
JENNIFER JAEGER
JO S. KITTINGER
PATRICIA NEWMAN
&
TIMOTHY TRAVAGLINI**

Veterans Memorial
Center

203 E. 14th Street
Davis, California

For more information link to:

www.scbwinorca.org



**All Portrait
art by Charles
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