



the acorn

Newsletter for the North/Central California Region of the SCBWI

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Author Profile

By Patricia Newman

Steve Jenkins

Steve Jenkins lived in the Virginia countryside as a child. His backyard seemed as big as a forest and he spent his time catching little critters and collecting rocks. He captured box turtles, lizards, and spiders and housed them in stray boxes and jars. Jenkins remembers drawing pictures of them and writing little stories. The animals either escaped their temporary homes, or Jenkins and his father released them before they perished.

In college, Jenkins was torn between science and art. Before choosing to study design, he remembers checking out the students on the North Carolina State University campus. "The scientists wore slide rules and the design students looked more like hippies, drove VW buses, and had a lot more fun. I guess it was a lifestyle choice to study art." After a pause, he adds, "Not a particularly responsible decision."

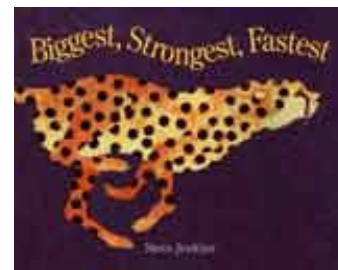
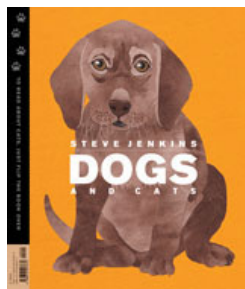
After a brief stint in advertising, Jenkins worked for several large design firms before opening his own firm with his wife, Robin Page. He first used his trademark cut paper collage technique on a series of book covers for Frommer's travel guides. But reading to his children opened up the world of children's books. "Because of my design training it was not totally absurd to think about making a book myself."

"Although I've always been interested in drawing," says Jenkins, "I've never been particularly good at it." Using his design skills in composition and color, Jenkins frequents a store in New York City where he chooses handmade papers from all over

the world for his illustrations. "The paper can do a lot of the work that would have to be expressed in some other way with brush strokes or pencil shading," he says. "It's the nature of the paper." Jenkins's hard and fast rule is to let the paper do the work; he never embellishes his illustrations with any other media. He cuts his paper shapes (and the accompanying adhesive backing) with X-Acto knives, using between 200 and 300 blades per book.

Drawing on his lifelong interest in science, Jenkins creates picture books

about the natural world. *Biggest, Strongest, Fastest* (Houghton Mifflin, 1995) grew out of the questions his son asked about animals. Caldecott Honor book, *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* (with Robin Page, Houghton Mifflin, 2003), examines a variety of animal tails and their functions. A bronze cast of a gorilla hand at the San Diego Zoo inspired *Actual Size* (Houghton Mifflin, 2004), a book that compares the sizes of very large and very small animals. The idea for *Looking Down* (Houghton Mifflin, 1995) came to Jenkins while on an airplane with his daughter. As she looked out the window at the tiny houses and cars, he realized she had no concept of the way distance influences what we see. Jenkins



HOW TO CONTACT
STEVE JENKINS
www.stevejenkinsbooks.com

SELECTIONS FROM
STEVE JENKINS'S LIBRARY

Author/Illustrator

Living Color, Houghton Mifflin, Fall 2007.

Dogs and Cats, 2007.

Move! with Robin Page, 2006.

Prehistoric Actual Size, 2005.

I See a Kookaburra! with Robin Page, 2005.

Actual Size, 2004.

What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?, 2003.

Life on Earth, 2002.

The Top of the World, 1999.

Biggest, Strongest, Fastest, 1995.

Illustrator

Next Stop Neptune by Alvin Jenkins, 2004.

(All of the above books are published by Houghton Mifflin)

Look for "Jenkins" on page 2

Jenkins

begins *Looking Down* in outer space and zooms closer and closer to the same spot on Earth.

Jenkins is proudest of *Life on Earth* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002), an ambitious book explaining evolutionary theory in terms a seven year old can grasp. In several of his other books, Jenkins was preoccupied with scale, for instance distance in *Top of the World*, and size in *Actual Size*. Time was the scale in *Life on Earth*, and the problem-how to illustrate 4.6 billion years of Earth's history. Jenkins says, "I felt a lot of pressure," not only because of the scope of his time scale, but because, unlike most of his other books, the topic of *Life on Earth* was so focused it couldn't be reworked into another concept if it faltered.

The four books Jenkins created with his wife, Robin Page, have been her concepts. Page is a graphic artist and book designer. Together Jenkins and Page work on the text of the book. Page often decides how each two-page spread will look and even completes some of the initial sketches before Jenkins chooses and cuts his paper shapes. "We've worked together for 25 years on design projects," says Jenkins. "There is no clear division of labor."

Jenkins estimates that he devotes 60% of his time to children's books and 40% to his graphic design business. "I may have to put the books aside for a week for a corporate design client," he says. "Things may be on a short time schedule." Because of his design focus, the visual aspect of children's books is where Jenkins feels most comfortable. A soft-spoken, serious man, he says, "I was forced to put words in my books because people have that expectation." Writing the text is the hardest part of each book, and Jenkins categorizes his process as "still evolving."

Research is a large part of every Jenkins book. For every

topic, he says, "I usually spend two months reading." Reading helps him refine his topic and helps him choose which animals to include. His goal with each book is to make children look more closely at the world around them. "Anything gets more interesting when you look closely at it," says Jenkins. For him, both a fact and his guiding light. ☞

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

Thanks Be To Illustrators

By Patricia Kaspar

There are frogs, frogs, frogs, flying kites high and handsome

A polka-dotted frog in green-stockinged feet

Frogs bringing smiles to word-weary writers.

Thanks be to illustrators: You make life so sweet! ☞

Patricia Kaspar has had poems, recipes, & crafts published in *Hopscotch*, *Lollipops*, *Boys' Quest*, *Pockets*, and local newspapers; Reader Rabbit User's Guide (The Learning Company) for students 6-9; National Kidney Foundation newsletter staff for kids and young adults with kidney disease

ACORN SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The Acorn is a triyearly publication. Issues will be posted on the SCBWI NorCa website <http://www.scbwinorca.org/news/newletterl.htm> hopefully around the middle of January, May, and September of each year. The deadline for submissions is one month prior to each publication date. Please contact Linda Royden about submission due dates or for more information.

Bring On The Books!

By Linda Joy Singleton

I've heard many authors say they can't read other books in their genre because they don't want to be influenced by other writing styles. But for me reading other books is an important part of my writing education. Bring on the books! While I read for enjoyment I also read to learn-my own self-taught Writing 101 Lessons. When I'm reading, these are some things I study:

- **Dialogue** Writing for kids is a continuing challenge as I age further away from my own childhood. What I look for are the phrases and shorthand of language that kids identify with, like the sarcastic reply of "Yeah, right" or long-lasting slang like "cool" and "wow." When I notice that some words I thought would last like "awesome" aren't being used, I stop using them, too. I also notice any clever way to swear without actually swearing. I'm not personally comfortable with a lot of swearing when it's important to the scene in YA books.

- **Voice** Everyone has his or her own voice but some voices ring with amazing authenticity. When I read a book with great voice I ask myself what is working and why. I never try to copy anyone else but instead ask myself how I can dig deeper in myself to improve my voice.

- **Format** There are many ways of telling a story using journals, time-lines, chapter topics, flashbacks, alternate viewpoints and inventive styles like 2008 Caldecott winner, "The Invention of Hugo Cabret" by Brian Selznick. While I tend to write in a linear style, I find it useful to study what works and doesn't in other books. I do have a book coming up that's split into three parts--something I might not have felt comfortable trying unless I'd seen it done in many ways by many other writers.

- **Emotion** When I'm reading a book and feel a strong emotion, I ask myself what the author did right. Making readers feel any emotions -- sad, happy, anger, love -- is a wonderful skill. I respect authors who do this well and try to learn from them. So next time you feel guilty for pulling open a book to read for pleasure, remind yourself that reading can be fun but it's also part of an author's job. Have fun reading and writing! ☞

Linda Joy Singleton

www.LiveJournal.com/users/LindaJSingleton
<http://www.myspace.com/lindajoyingleton>

Contests & blogs at: www.LindaJoySingleton.com

Ghosts Whisper to Psychic Medium, Sabine , in THE SEER series:

- #1. DON'T DIE, DRAGONFLY
- #2. LAST DANCE
- #3. WITCH BALL
- #4. SWORD PLAY
- #5. FATAL CHARM (07)

INTO THE MIRROR (Blooming Tree Press/2008)

DEAD GIRL Trilogy begins Fall 08/Flux

Coming Full Circle

By Linda Boyden

In 1986, I left an abusive marriage. On the positive side, I had three beautiful children, but on the negative side, I had no car, no job, no income, and no place to live in the isolated central Nevada town we had been calling home. Despite my lovely college degree, this necessary decision had made us homeless.

My closest girlfriend stepped in. Without hesitation, she offered us one of her rentals, free for as long as I needed it. We stayed there for almost six months, enough time for me to sell what I could and move us back east to my family where I could begin to reconstruct our lives. I do not know what I would have done without the kindness of friends and family.

Many women are not so lucky. By chance last fall, I was selected to do a storytelling performance at Sacramento's Mustard Seed School.

Tucked away in a busy section of the city, the Mustard Seed School is part of the Loaves and Fishes project. According to their website, they strive to, "Without passing judgment, and in a spirit of love and hospitality, Loaves & Fishes feeds the hungry and shelters the homeless. We provide an oasis of welcome, safety, and cleanliness for homeless men, women and children seeking survival services."

For twenty five years, the Mustard Seed School has been providing children, ages 3-15, with "a safe, nurturing and structured environment, a positive learning experience, happy memories, survival resources of food, clothing and shelter referrals, medical and dental screenings, immunization updates, counseling for children and their parents, and assistance entering or reentering public schools." Its 50+ student enrollment varies almost from day to day, but with most students spending about two weeks.

I happily accepted, but true to form, got lost. Sacramento is a BIG city, not at all what I'm used to. Who knew there would be both a C Street and a NORTH C Street...and so close together? Certainly not the online map I had printed and desperately clutched in my sweaty palms. However, once again, I was blessed by kindness—a very helpful construction worker steered me the right way so I managed to arrive on time.

Bear in mind, Mustard Seed is a working facility: everyone was happily and busily engaged so there was no fanfare when the story-

teller arrived. Luckily, I wasn't new to school performances and actually prefer to do my own set-up.

I was led to a multipurpose room, where I had enough time to position tables and chairs in a circle and set up a mock-campfire. The teachers had opted for my Native American presentation and yes, I had lugged a suitcase of river rocks and log pieces!

According to their agenda, grades 6-8 would arrive first which made my heart thump in time with the theme from Jaws: Middle school-urban middle school-urban middle school kids also coping with some very difficult problems? This was billions of light years away from my comfort zone of primary and preschool audiences, but my rationale was to come armed with a variety of materials. If one thing wasn't working, I'd switch to something else.

I started by holding up my new picture book, "Powwow's Coming" and though no one threw any tomatoes, many slumped low in their seats. I imagined their thoughts: Yo! We're middle school and that's a PICTURE BOOK, what's the matter with you? I rapidly acknowledged that fact, and then explained I would talk mostly about making the art and being a first-time illustrator. Some perked up, which I took as encouraging.

After that, I jumped to music, the universal tween language. I played a track from a cd entitled, "A Whole New Breed," by WildHorse Singers, a Long Beach, CA. based powwow drum group. Even more stopped slumping. Next, I shared my family's framed arrowhead collection, my dance shawl, a hand drum and dance rattle. More looks of enthusiasm flickered, but I had saved my most "clever" plan until last.

I read excerpts from a wonderful Joseph Bruchac middle grade novel, "Skeleton Man," which was suspenseful, gross and creepy-perfect for this age group, plus, I ended it on a cliffhanger. They actually group-moaned, they didn't want it to end! But here was the

clever part: I donated it to their teacher so she could finish it later.

The other two sessions of preschool and grades 1-5 enjoyed all the hands-on activities, books and stories. In addition, I left copies of the SCBWI Make-A-Book Favorite Animals pages, which were developed for the SCBWI September Fairytale Town event, plus a packet of Native American fun activities I have developed over the years to extend the experience.

When the last group, grades 1-5, made coyote origami to go with a Coyote trickster tale I had told, more than one child asked, "I can keep it? I can take it? For real? It's mine, really?" That was a poignant moment.

Another poignant moment was when a young man came up and told me very softly, "My mom is Oglala Sioux and do you know Crazy Horse? She named me for him." He absolutely beamed when I told him that Crazy Horse was one of my personal heroes.

What a great honor it was to share stories with these at-risk kids who have the luck to be at the Mustard Seed School and to witness kindness in action. As I drove home, I thought how it had been a good day. I felt as if I had come full circle.

To learn more about the Mustard Seed School, visit <http://sacloaves.org/programs/mustardseedschool>

Linda Boyden,
author, storyteller, illustrator & poet

Member: Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers & Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators

For young readers:

Picture books: "The Blue Roses" from Lee & Low Books 2002, winner New Voices Award, Paterson Prize and Wordcraft Circle's Book of the Year, 2003

Her first illustrated book:

"Powwow's Coming" from the University of New Mexico Press, 2007

Also for young listeners:

"Grammy Linda & Her Magic Window" preschool storytelling DVD, 2006
"Stories of the Grandmothers" Native American storytelling CD, 2006

For older readers: poetry books:

"WomanSong" & "Cemetery Plots"



Inside The Writer's Cranium By Linda Boyden

Interviewing the Interviewer: Indomitable Spirit, Patricia Newman

As a child growing up back east, delightful author and respected interviewer, Patricia Newman, loved competition. She and her friends dreamed up contests: from the ordinary, Who's the tallest?, to the kind only a kid would make up, Who could save the most eraser crumbs?

As a young adult at high school and later at Cornell University in upstate New York, her interests predicted the eclectic person she would become: sports, foreign languages, literature, plus the requirements for her Child Development major. After graduation, she had many diverse jobs, too, ranging from teaching eighth grade math in the rural south, to computer software sales and fixing computer problems across the country, to being the Assistant Director of Cornell's western regional office, visiting prospective students and planning alumni events.

The heart and joy of her life is her strong family. She met husband, Ken, at Cornell where he should have won an award for Most Original Date-Line: "Hi. You've won first prize in a contest-a dance with Ken Newman!"

Equal to his sense of humor, Patti didn't miss a beat with her comeback reply of, "So, what's Second Prize?"

In time the Newman family welcomed daughter Elise and son Scott. From that time, Patti devoted herself to their care...plus writing and her brilliant brainchild, interviewing children's authors and illustrators.

She knew she wanted to write a monthly column dealing with children's books. She chose the marketing aspect of the business because it was her least favorite part of writing for children. That led to the popular "Who Wrote That?" author/illustrator profiles which she pitched to California Kids!, a Northern California parenting magazine. Subsequently, many of the interviews have appeared in such publications as South Florida Parenting, Gainesville Family Magazine, as well as our own SCBWI e-zine, The Acorn as a regular feature. Many have been picked up by ProQuest, an online article database. All of the profiles are also available on Patti's website (listed in her credits at the end) as a resource for other authors/illustrators and teachers.

Now Inside the Author's Cranium, Patti Newman in her own words:

1. What's your favorite word?

I don't have one particular favorite word. One of the reasons I became a writer is because I like words and phrases-the way they sound, the meanings they convey. I'm partial to clever phrases that convey a wealth of meaning in a few words. For example, there was a professor at Bennington College who had to write a semester comment for one of his students (Bennington doesn't give grades). The student did not do the assigned work and never came to class. The professor struggled with different ideas until he hit upon, "John rises at noon. I teach at ten." I love the brevity and the story conveyed in

Look for "Newman" on page 5

Hunting For Help: Finding A Critique Group That's Right For You

By Nanette Cooper-McGuinness

(Editor's note: this is one of a two part series. Stay tuned for Part Two, The Careful Critiquer's Checklist: How To Give and Get Good Critiques in our next edition.)

Sleuthing for the perfect critique group? Seeking to start your own? Wondering why you might need one in the first place?

In days gone by, editors had time to nurture the writers they discovered. But in today's fevered atmosphere of mergers and acquisitions, most editors are hard-pressed to do so-even though many wish they could.

What's a writer to do? Family and friends are not the best readers, as they don't want to hurt your feelings, nor do they necessarily have the requisite skills. Yet sending out your precious manuscript before getting some feedback is a recipe for rejection, as many writers are not the best judges of where their prose has waxed overly-or underly-purple.

Hence the rise of the critique group: writers who meet to give feedback on each other's works in progress. While online critique groups-a full topic in their own right-flourish across the internet, my own preference is for an in-person group, as I find it valuable to hear how others interact when evaluating my manuscript. I also can feel their response to my prose as I-or another group member-reads what I have written.

Good critique groups can be hard to find since they are often closed to new members. Your best solution may be to form your own group. If you do, here are some basic questions to think about:

1) WHO

- Will your group only include members of the Society for Book Writers and Illustrators? Members of any writers'/illustrators' organization? Anyone?
- How large do you want your group to be?
- How will you screen new members, if at all? And if so, what will be your criteria? Someone may have great credentials but incompatible chemistry.
- Will new members be required to bring something to read at their first meeting? How many times do they have to attend before the group decides about them?
- How will you decide if a potential new member should be accepted? Majority vote/ unanimous approval?

2) WHAT

- Will you read all genres or will you stick to the group's original focus-and what will that focus be?
- What is the group's purpose? To help each other get published? Provide support? Meet and chat? You will want to discuss this, so that people's expectations aren't wildly divergent.
- Do you want to set a page limit per person for each meeting? Or remain flexible?
- Do you want to set aside time for sharing industry information, congratulations, mutual support, etc.? (Some of this is useful, and it's hard to avoid no matter how business-like folks are!)

3) WHEN

- How often will you meet? Monthly? Biweekly?
- How long will your meeting run?
 - Will you meet during the weekday, evening, or on the weekend?

Look for "Critique" on page 5

those few words.

2. What's your least favorite word?

Swear words are my least favorite words, not because I'm a prude, but because the words are like potato chips-full of empty calories. Swear words aren't descriptive enough for me, and characters that constantly utter them in books and movies are lazy and lack the imagination to find a more powerful word.

3. Describe your style of writing:

Eclectic fiction and nonfiction. I like to challenge myself by writing in a variety of different genres. My published work includes nonfiction articles for children and adults, a short story, picture books, and easy readers. I have also written many articles, assessments, and writing prompts for educational publishers.

4. Describe your work ethic in regards to writing:

Disciplined procrastination. I'm a self-starter, no question. "I have to be self-motivated in order to write, research, be a mom, cook, volunteer, play tennis, garden, read and still have some free time. My family says I don't know how to relax. So when I write, I employ the same furious concentration with which I do everything. But, when a story idea isn't working, I have learned to leave my desk and let my brain relax enough to let my subconscious work out the problems. The shower and my yard are my favorite places to 'not write.'

5. What is your main writing fault/ flaw?

I like order and tend to impose it on a story too quickly. The initial part of the creative process is messy, illogical and fragmented and should not be organized until at least the second or third draft. I have to make myself write through the end of the first draft. My critique group helps remind me.

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

Being able to hear the character in my mind is the most helpful. When I can hear him, everything else falls into place. The engineer in *Jingle the Brass* and the pilot in *Nugget on the Flight Deck* were strong presences in my head. If I can't hear my character, I keep writing-dialogue, scene after scene-until I hit upon something that sounds right. I'm working on a novel now and I'm struggling to hear one of

•Will you have a regular time and day? A consistent time and day helps group members with scheduling. You can always be flexible when necessary.

4) WHERE

•Will you meet at group members' homes? At the same home each time? Or will you meet in a public setting: a library, bookstore, café, etc.?

•Will you have food? A meal, dessert, snack, coffee and tea? Or not?

5) HOW

•Will you bring copies of your manuscript to the meeting for each person in the group? Or just one reading-aloud copy?

•Will you read aloud or will all the members read silently? Will you read your ms. or will someone else?

•Will you pre-read, i.e., e-mail your ms. beforehand and then critique at the meeting?

•Will you give written comments as well as verbal ones?

•Who will start? Who'll go next? Does it matter to anyone?

•Will you be interested in giving or getting writing "assignments" from each other?

6) HOW MUCH

•How much time will you give each manuscript?

•Will you take turns commenting, letting each person go one at a time? Or will the whole group dive in?

•Will you have one person be a facilitator? If so, how will you decide who this should be? Or will the facilitator's role rotate? And if so, how often?

•Will everyone be expected to bring something each time if they can, with each person getting a critique at each meeting? (This is ideal as it puts everyone on an equal footing.)

Not all these questions are crucial, nor do you have to answer them all at the beginning. But they will help you get started, so that-like Goldilocks-you'll find a group that's not too hot and not too cold, not too big and not too small, but just right. ☺

Nanette Cooper-McGuinness, singer, writer, & translator.

Member: California Writers Club, SCBWI, American Translators Assoc.,

How I Uncovered The Secret Trick To Finishing My Novel By Sally Endelfried

I have never experienced the classic writer's block, but I have certainly fallen victim to writer's procrastination, writer's insecurity, and writer's fear.

Over the years I have searched long and hard for a cure to these ills. I've attended conferences, workshops, and classes. I've gone to numerous writers' readings and visited author websites in the hopes that those who have published will shed some light on how they got where they are. I have tried writing in longhand with a fancy fountain pen (like Neil Gaiman), I've kept track of how many pages I write per day (like Garth Nix). I tried not planning the ending (like Diana Wynne Jones) and planning the ending (like J.K. Rowling). I've spoken dialogue aloud (like Jonathan Lethem) and joined a writer's group (like Donna Jo Napoli).

All of these "tricks" had one thing in common: they worked! They all got my juices flowing again and helped me produce more.

They all had another thing in common: they stopped working!

True, they gave me a kick-start and renewed my enthusiasm for my project, but it wasn't enough to carry me through to the end. I'd wander back to my usual method: sitting at my desk in front of my computer, writing my story in sequence with no plan, just moving forward as best I could. It worked all right, though it was inefficient. And then I'd hit another roadblock. My main character wouldn't behave, or I'd realize I forgot to introduce a minor character when I needed to or that my ending wasn't dramatic enough.

So I'd stop and look for another trick. If it wasn't another author's technique, it was a new binder or card file, a leather journal or cheap spiral notebook, or a variety of sizes and colors of sticky notes. I have even explored the deepest darkest depths of Microsoft Word, hoping that the Document Map or Track Changes features would save me from despair. Late last year, I finally finished my years-in-the-writing fantasy novel. And I finally realized the answer to my hunt for the perfect writing solution: there is no answer. Or, more accurately, the answer is constantly changing.

Newman

the characters, but she's coming. I can feel her getting closer...

7. Any tips on developing plot? Plug the holes. I've read numerous books and watched even more movies where I'm left wondering why the character behaved out of character, or didn't call the police, or didn't ask for help. Even my kids rail against these plot holes when they read books. As a reader I feel gypped and a little insulted that the author didn't think I'd notice the holes. A tight plot is essential to a story that makes readers want to turn the page. My critique group is essential in helping me plug the holes. One hard lesson I learned was that I cannot think of absolutely everything. At least one trusted reader is essential.

8. Who are your favorite prose authors?

I've interviewed more than 100 children's authors because I admire something about their work. There are too many good books to pick just one author! I go back to Jane Austen's books over and over, but generally, I don't have favorites. I read anything and everything. Most recently, I've read *Suite Française* by Irène Némirovsky; *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini; *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult; *Shadow Divers* by Robert Kurson; *What is the What?* by David Eggers; *March* by Geraldine Brooks; and *Gentlemen and Players* by Joanne Harris.

9. What intrigues you? How things work.

10. What annoys you? Drivers who refuse to use their blinkers. Slow computers. Celebrity authors who have no idea how to craft a story. People who don't follow through.

11. What profession other than writing would you like to learn? I'd like to learn to play the piano, although I'd never want to

play professionally.

12. What profession could you never learn?

I could never be an accountant or a tax attorney. The tedium and drudgery of all those numbers and tax codes would send me over the edge.

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

This is a hard one. I can't say writing, because writing is often a struggle and I feel a natural talent should come easy. One thing that does come easy to me is making sense of a lot of material. I guess that's why I like to write nonfiction-after collecting reams of research, the data fall into place in my mind and the piece seems almost easy to write.

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

Eleanor Roosevelt. My great-grandparents, because I'd like to ask them some questions about their lives. My father-in-law because he passed away before I really got to know him.

15. What is your favorite writing motto/mantra?

Indomitable spirit. When my son took karate, indomitable spirit was part of the school creed. I borrowed it for myself because it fits writing as well as karate. To survive countless rejections, slow and sometimes indifferent editors, contracts, and critics, an indomitable spirit comes in handy. 🍀

Visit Patti Newman at:
Patricia Newman
pm.newman@earthlink.net
www.patriciamnewman.com

Her works:

"Nugget on the Flight Deck"
(Walker & Company, TBA)
"Jingle the Brass" (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
"Seasons Around the World"
(Pearson Learning)
"The Science of Play" (Pearson Learning)

Critique

ChamberMusic America, Opera America, SF Early Music Society

Fiction and nonfiction in Positive Teens, SCBWI Bulletin, Kidtime, Byline and other publications.

Upcoming: "Marian Anderson: Singer of Courage," Hopscotch for Girls, April 2009.

Upcoming: "Anything But Farming: Opera Singer Birgit Nilsson," Highlights for Children (TBA).

Upcoming: *Translator, Sin Ilusion* (No Pasaran, v.3), by Vittorio Giardino, April 2008, NBM Publishing. (Upper YA graphic novel about Spanish Civil war)

<http://www.nanette.biz>

Where can you find critique groups and/ or members?

SCBWI (<http://www.scbwi.org>) is a gold mine here. Try:

- Contacting the critique group coordinator for your region. Check the regional chapter's website for their e-mail and/or phone number.
- Contacting the Regional Advisor for your chapter. S/he will be listed with SCBWI and should be able to connect you with the critique group coordinator if you can't find their name on the website.
- Joining the local SCBWI listserv and/or discussion group. Then query the listserv members about future fellow critiquers.
- Going to local or regional writers' conferences, particularly those sponsored by SCBWI.

SECRET

On the days when I am capable of spitting out six or ten pages, that's what I do. But on the days when I am stuck or afraid or confused, I shake it up. I print out some pages and work on revisions outside with a pen and some extra paper. Or I use a laptop and leave my office and sit on the couch. Taking a ride on BART and staring out the window with a notebook in my lap is a great way to solve plot problems. But the point is, it really doesn't matter what change to my usual routine I make, it's that I change something. It makes me see my work from a different angle and leads me back to it refreshed and ready to go.

In fact, now that I've shaken my routine up by taking a break to write this article (on the couch, in a hardcover notebook, with a Pentel Rolling Writer pen, in case anyone's interested), I am ready to go back to my desk, turn on the computer, and work on my next novel! 🍀

In Remembrance

Sue Tasker passed away unexpectedly on February 3, 2008. Hailing from Leeds, England, she moved to California in 1990 with her husband and three daughters. An avid writer all her life, she was published in school newspapers and a national magazine as a teenager, and most recently in the Livermore Wine Country Literary Harvest and Once Upon a Time magazine. Sue's friendly, welcoming nature and ongoing support and encouragement of all writers made her a welcome addition to the conferences at Asilomar and Davis. With a passion for helping other writers, she co-founded the California Writers Club Tri-Valley Branch and received the prestigious Jack London Award for exemplary service. She was also a longtime dedicated member of SCBWI.

Nancy Dunne shared with us the sad news that her mother, author Mary Josephine Collins Dunne, passed away on January 23, 2008. Born in County Down, Ireland, January 15, 1914, Mrs. Dunne immigrated to America as a child and her family settled in San Francisco. During her writing career, she published 15 novels, among them "Hoby & Stub" and "The Secret of Captives Cave", as well as many poems and short magazine pieces. Mrs. Dunne was a recipient of the Jack London award in 1989, a respected member of the California Writers group and active in the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

Good News:

By **Genny Heikka**

ARA SCBWI Norca

Connie Goldsmith's book, *SUPERBUGS STRIKE BACK* won the Society of School Librarians International Book Award for Best Science Book in grades 7-12 category.

Jeff Jackson has signed a contract to illustrate and design the "All About Me" series of educational books for middle graders. The first in the series, published by *ISHK*, will be entitled *Me and My Memory: Why We Forget Some Things and Remember Others* by Robert Guarin.

Connie McLennan was voted Highlights October's "Illustrator of the Month" for her illustrations for "The Cupboard".

Marisa Montes author of *LOS GATOS BLACK ON HALLOWEEN*, published by Henry Holt, won a 2008 Pura Belpré Honor Award.

Yuyi Morales won the 2008 Pura Belpré Illustrator Award for her illustrations in *LOS GATOS BLACK ON HALLOWEEN*, published by Henry Holt. In addition, her book *LITTLE NIGHT* (Roaring Brook Press) was named an ALA Notable 2008.

Margaret O'Hair sold an article to Scholastic, which will be out in May/June. In addition, her rhyming book, *MY PUP*, will be out in April.

Deborah Rose's picture book, *BIRTHDAY ZOO*, has been selected by California Readers for the 2008 California Collections Elementary School list.

Jim Webster won first place in Children's Writer's Middle Grade Adventure Story contest this past fall for his story, "A Dragon's Quest." Children's Writer will publish his story in their March issue.

SCBWI North Central California SPRING SPIRIT IV CONFERENCE

Saturday April 5, 2008

Speakers:

PRICILLA BURRIS

PAMELA BOBOWICZ

LIZ HOCKINSON

KIRBY LARSON

VICTORIA ROCK

JERI CHASE FERRIS

HEIDI KILGRAS

JUDY ENDERLE &
STEPHANIE GORDON

FROM
WRITERS INK

JEFF JACKSON

Spring fun and
techniques for
writers and
illustrators

for more information and registration go to

http://www.scbwinorthca.org/conferences/2008_Davis_Conference.htm



Regional Advisor's Corner

From Tekla White

SCBWI Regional Advisor North Central California

Registrations for our April 5th conference in Davis are filling the mailbox. I'm looking forward to seeing so many friends and meeting new members at the conference. I know it will be inspiring as well as helpful to hear this talented team of writers, illustrators, and editors talk about the world of children's books. If you are an illustrator, please remember to bring a picture book dummy you have worked on.

I mentioned in the last Acorn that I would like to include writing and illustrating tips from our readers in my column. It's a busy world, and so far I haven't received any ideas. Please share some of your helpful hints before the next issue of the Acorn. We would all appreciate hearing from you. I'll have to add my own this time.

Marketing Tips:

Keep a separate card file with the names of schools, libraries, teachers, librarians, bookstores, and friends who would be interested in receiving a postcard notice about your new book. (Start the file even though you haven't sold that first, important book.)

As soon as the book is available, send out postcards with information about your book and a picture of your book cover.

Create a one page press release with information about you and the book to send to newspapers and the media.

Call for Volunteers:

North/Central California is planning to send out school visit postcards for our www.scbwinorthca.com speakers' page this spring and next fall. If you live in one of the region's thirty-eight counties and would like to address postcards to the schools in your county or town, please contact me. The more volunteers we have, the easier it will be to send notices about the speakers on our website. Here is what you need to do.

Step One: Find the names of the elementary schools and middle school/junior high schools in your county or town. There is a resource book in some libraries and you can find the information on the internet. Let your regional advisor know how many postcards you need.

Step Two: Write the name of the school and address on the card (provided by our region) or print out labels on your computer. Address the postcard to librarian/media specialist.

Step Three: Send the list of schools you contacted to your regional advisor, Tekla White, P.O. Box 307, Davis, CA 95617. She will send you a check for the postage.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you are willing to volunteer for this important job.

With best wishes for a healthy, happy and successful 2008

Tekla White
SCBWI Regional Advisor
North/Central California
tnwrites@cal.net



North/Central CA Region of the SCBWI
www.scbwinorca.org

Tekla White

North/Central CA
Regional Advisor
tnwrites@cal.net
PO Box 307
Davis CA 95617

Genny Heikka

Assistant RA
Good News Editor
genny.heikka@gmail.com

Pam Wilkinson

Critique Group
Coordinator
pmwmarigrace@comcast.net.

Linda Boyden

Acorn Editor
lboyden@charter.net

Jeff Jackson

Acorn Graphic Designer
gimme.a.mocha@gmail.com

SCBWI

8271 Beverly Blvd
Los Angeles CA 90048
www.scbwi.org
Phone: (323)782.1010
Fax: (323)782.1892
North/Central CA Region
of the SCBWI
www.scbwinorca.org

The Acorn

C/O Tekla White
PO Box 307
Davis CA 95617-0307

