

PENNING & INK

E A S T E R N P E N N S Y L V A N I A C H A P T E R

Spring 2003 RA's Message

I wish I could say that Spring is in the air, but this winter has firmly dug in its bitter, icy heels and refuses to budge. What a difference from last winter! Makes one want to hibernate. But, as busy writers, illustrators, and volunteers that is not an option. There are new articles to write and submit, manuscript changes to make, art to create, and, let's not forget, retreats to plan. Though I often feel like I'm slowly losing what little mind I have left, here's an update on where we are at the moment with the **Pocono Mountains Retreat**.

The printer mailed out the brochures on January 24. All chapter members should have received them by now. We also mailed to non-chapter members who did attend last year's retreat. Of course, anyone who emailed us a request also received a brochure. Although we continue to encounter snags, we hope we are successfully working through them.

All retreat faculty have received their packets of information and I am happy to report are looking forward to this year's retreat. They submitted great presentation titles and seem excited to share their knowledge and expertise with all those who will attend the retreat. On another positive note, all

Linda Brewster Rodgers



faculty have agreed to critique manuscripts and portfolios. Time to blow the dust off that manuscript and polish up that plot so an expert can take a look.

All's running smoothly with our growing list of volunteers. Everyone is on track doing their important part of the retreat puzzle so that when **April 4** arrives, the final picture will be complete. What would we do without volunteers?? I'm sure I wouldn't be writing you this message if

they were not helping with necessary and important jobs that one or two people would not have time to do.

So, the retreat planning is moving ahead and **April 4** will be here before we know it. I'm looking forward to this year's retreat and I hope you all are, too.

I wanted to address two other issues that have surfaced on and off for the past year. One is going online with the newsletter. I polled our "elist" and found that just over half of those who responded liked the new online version. Not quite half who responded preferred the mailed version. This is a difficult call. The online version can reach a greater audience, looks terrific in color, and saves our chapter a hunk of money we can spend on other worthwhile efforts. But for those of you who aren't sure how to download the newsletter, it

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Editor's Note

As I stitch together this newsletter, I am listening in the background to the television news discussing in great length and great detail the ins and outs, ups and downs, pros and cons...of going to war. I feel as if I am practically working wholly against the grain as I carefully read, choose, and compose our newsletter

that speaks of hope, creativity, inspiration and promise.

I was thinking at the beginning of the month, when the Penn & Ink deadline came and went, and my email box was fairly bare, that maybe our spirits were somehow being consumed by the headlines. Why bother? What's the point? I even considered for a moment that there might not be enough to put together a newsletter...and that that would just have to be OK. Then I stopped. And said NO. I refuse to succumb to this possibility. Give us a bit more time. Work with the circumstance, yet be specific in requesting what I need. 15 extra days, and I am overflowing with articles! Thank you so very much. My optimism has returned, and it is my hope that as you read through this issue of Penn & Ink you will feel refreshed and renewed.

And speaking of optimism, do you know that we have nearly 500 members in our Eastern PA chapter? It has come to my attention that we need to limit our Member News to those residing in Eastern PA and report only book listings. As an SCBWI policy, each member is to submit to his or her individual chapter for this. My apologies to those of you I have needed to drop due to this. Additionally, since our web site is supported by SCBWI funds, we can only advertise SCBWI sponsored events. The good news is that we TOTALLY support ALL members who wish to submit articles and artwork, and who would like to register for our events! Thank you! -Leslie Hanlon

SCBWI

Eastern PA Chapter

Critique Group Seekers

Gwen Holmes, coordinator

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Gwen is planning on sending out an update to list members this month asking you to contact her in order to remain on the list. Please be sure to respond when you receive this

Martha G. Fenoglio

RA MESSAGE...continued from page 1

can pose a problem. Also, there are those of you who really like to "hold" that piece of paper in your hands and curl up in a comfy chair to read it. If you can download it, printing the newsletter out does solve that problem. However, please let us know if you can't download the newsletter and maybe we can help. Our website manager is very talented and might be able to suggest something. If you don't let us know, it will be difficult for us to address the problem. I have heard grumblings through others who know others. Laurie and I are only an email away.

We have an active elist of our chapter members who have requested to be included on the list. The elist is sent out to announce upcoming chapter events, SCBWI national news, and publisher information. Anyone can be on the list. I know some of you like receiving these kinds of updates, while others are not interested. If you want to be included, please let me know.

Finally, amidst all that surrounds us...busy schedules, brochures to mail again that never arrived, problems with downloading the newsletter...it's important to remember that these are only minor inconveniences in the whole scheme of things. The recent Columbia shuttle tragedy makes us realize that we all hang from the thinnest life thread and it is important to keep our perspective about all the inconveniences that surround us.

Arlette N. Braman

Co-RA



Sharing the Stage for Meaningful Author Events

By Marji Ackerman

Are you tired of nightmarish bookstore visits where a half dozen mothers, in need of few quiet moments alone, drop off their children leaving you to “story sit” while they do double cappuccinos and shop? To add insult to injury they return from their “power vacation” with cell phone blasting and whisk the little ones off never thanking you for your sitting skills let alone bothering to buy your newest book. Many authors have experienced the let down of a dead book signing. It seems with some creative, well-planned collaborating you can make the time you spend worthwhile to yourself and others and draw a motivated readership to your events. The following recent event is just an example of how forming partnerships can make a difference.

It is a rainy and chilly February 1st in the Lehigh Valley. One might reason that it would be a good Saturday afternoon to stay at home, light a fire, read or watch a movie, yet people are flocking into Barnes and Noble Bookstore.

There is standing room only in the children’s book department with school age children, and their younger siblings carpeting the floor in front of the small stage. To the left of the stage seven first grade students sit on chairs decorated with brightly colored balloons. Surrounding the area are grandparents, parents, store and school staff members with camcorders and digital cameras in hand.

Carly Simon, the special events coordinator for the store, welcomes the crowd as she introduces SCBWI members: Author, **Kay Winters**, and Marji Ackerman (that’s me) a “pre-published author” and first grade teacher in the East Penn School District.

Carly recounts how she and I have been organizing these exciting First Grade Reading Debut events with children and authors for the past 3 years. (In previous years, SCBWI members **Frank Murphy** and **Betty Tatham** participated.) Carly mentions that seven students are about to make their debut as readers and turns the program over to me.



Richard Gorton

As I welcome the students, families and staff from my own school, I also comment on the number of students from other school districts who are there to participate and meet Kay Winters. I do a short commercial about the wonderful programming Kay does in elementary schools and then thank parents and grandparents for reading with their children.

Setting the mood for the program, I explain that first grade students are mastering the skill that is the single most important precursor to their success in school and life. They are learning to read. I remind the audience that today we are celebrating the effort and accomplishment that each child makes becoming a reader. I relate that six other classmates made their debut in December at the Moravian Bookshop in Bethlehem with Illustrator/Author **Peter Catalanotto**. Reminding families of the final debut in March at the

Emmaus Public Library I tease them about the delicious refreshments we will serve on that evening. Making reference to Barnes and Noble’s events flyer I mention that in March and April, authors **Susan Katz** and **Linda Oatman High** will partner with other first grade classrooms from Lincoln School for reading debuts.

The program begins. One by one, each well rehearsed but nervous student takes the stage and begins to read a book that was carefully chosen to reflect the student’s ability, and personality. Several readings are from Kay’s books. **TIGER TRAIL** and **DID YOU SEE WHAT I SAW?** are both used but **OLIVIA** (Ina Falconer) and **I STINK** (Kate & Jim McMullan), also debut. First page jitters quickly turn into smiles of confidence as the audience responds appropriately to the humor or beauty of each story. Each student finishes reading to applause. I congratulate and welcome the child to “the world of books”, gifting them with a book, flowers and a certificate. As the student takes a bow or curtsy, the audience applauds again. Cameras flash.

The picture becomes even more magical as the student portion of this event transitions into the author’s talk. Kay warmly engages the students in a reading of one of her poems and covers me with chicken pox spots as she reads another. Adults and children alike listen intently as she gives a quick overview of her books. Tears well in adult listeners eyes, as Kay reads a poem, *If Nancy Hanks Came Back as a Ghost*, once read to her by her own 3rd grade teacher. She relates how the poem haunted her all those years and that her book about Abe Lincoln, was her answer to Nancy Hanks, Abraham’s mother.

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One of the newly debuted readers takes the stage and sits next to Kay to do a shared reading of Kay's newest book, ABE LINCOLN: THE BOY WHO LOVED BOOKS. Dressed as Nancy Hanks, Kay reads the title. The small reader smiles up at Kay, and then proudly reads the author's name. Turning the page into the text, reader and author take turns reading. Sitting side by side they make a memory that will last a lifetime.

An hour later, as Kay finishes signing the last book, she sits back, takes a deep breath and brightens the room with one of her generous smiles. She starts to tell Carly and me the reasons why this was an outstanding and successful event for all involved. She delights over the children who read, the manners of the audience and the memories that were made. She finishes with "I'd love to do this again next year!"



Richard Gorton

Reading Debuts are just one idea for partnering readers and authors. Given a little thought, there are countless ways to begin forming collaborations that will result in meaningful experiences. I have listed a few important tips you might consider as you begin to brainstorm ways to connect with groups of highly motivated readers.

- 1. Build partnerships** by letting schools you have worked with in the past know when you will be doing events in their area. Accept invitations to speak at teacher nights in bookstores. Here you will meet dedicated teachers who share your passion for bringing good books and children together.
- 2. Communicate effectively.** Plan ahead and keep all members in the partnership abreast of what is going on. I recommend bookstore staff, teachers and authors keep in touch by using email and copy notes to each other so all are aware of plans, times, books ordered, etc. Phone conversations to fine tune plans are needed closer to the event.
- 3. Actively include children** in your events. Parents and Grandparents flock to events which include their child as part of the "show". These shared moments will live in the reader's memory and you will develop devoted fans both young and old.
- 4. Make the transition seamless between the child-centered events and the author event.** If you let time lapse between events you will lose part of your audience. We made this mistake the first time we collaborated with an author.
- 5. Request** that the store send a **press release** before a given event and provide materials for the store to send to local newspapers. Include pictures, an autobiography etc.
- 6. Be open to adventure.** If an idea seems a little crazy, it just might be productive and great fun. Isn't having fun one of the reasons you became a children's writer to begin with? *

Remedy For Battle Fatigue

By Diane Kolb

Kay. You've written your first children's book. You did everything right; networking with other writers, maybe tried a critique group, read your manuscript aloud, had others read your manuscript, edited grammar and spelling, checked out the market, found the right publishers to submit to, sent it out and BINGO- the rejection letters started pouring in.

Sound familiar? After attending one writers conference after another, I see clearly that this is the norm for many beginning writers. It is the prime cause of promising writers giving up on their abilities. That was me. I was ready to admit defeat. So what do you do when you've done everything by the book and still have not enjoyed success? I have a motto over my computer that reads: "IF YOU'RE LOSING THE BATTLE...FALL BACK AND REGROUP!" It's meant to give me a swift kick in the rear and shake me out of feeling sorry for myself.

This has always worked for me. First of all, FALL BACK. I had to learn not to be wedded to my manuscript. I had to learn that change is essential to growth—a comrade not an enemy. I hated to redo anything I wrote. Editing and rewriting was painful so I avoided it like an old boyfriend.

Next, I had to be brave and REGROUP. I thought this process would be traumatic but it brought surprising results. I had to look at my manuscript with new eyes; listen to what my critiquers and editors suggested. I wrote out my plot line like a sentence diagram (remember those?). It was actually fun. I looked for avenues of adventure; a new angle, a different ending. I tried inventing an unusual character or added some humor. This strategy has served me well. The idea I thought was so wonderful the first time turned out to be even better the next time around.

So if you're suffering from battle fatigue, FALL BACK and REGROUP! *



Martha G. Fenoglio

Newbery Medalist Linda Sue Park Peels Off Labels at the SCBWI Mid-Winter Conference in NYC

By Cheri Hinchman-Widzowski

Eyes moistened, hearts swelled, and applause thundered through the Ballroom at the Roosevelt Hotel as the over-capacity crowd rose to its collective feet to pay homage to Linda Sue Park as she completed her keynote address.

With wit, passion, and heart-felt sincerity, Ms. Park sent an important message to those present—both aspiring writers and illustrators and those who have already tasted the sweetness of success: ignore the labels placed upon you and focus on the process and craft of writing.

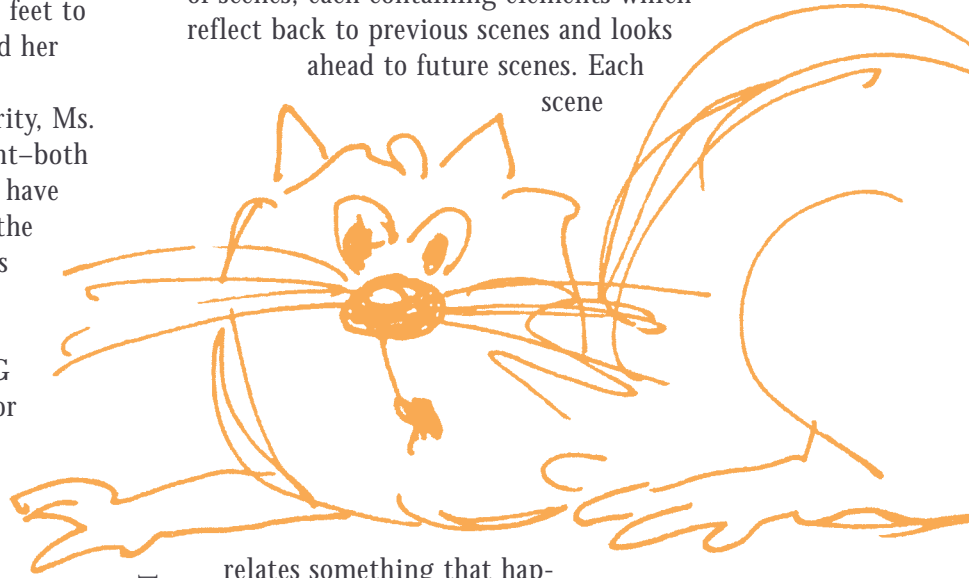
These labels, which include unpublished author, published author, YA novelist, MG novelist, literary, and mass-market, are useful for marketing and sales but are irrelevant to the actual writing. Linda Sue encouraged us to not let these labels interfere with telling the story we want to tell—just write the best story we can.

Ms. Park described the labels attached to her—Newbery medalist (wonderful, but which didn't come with a 48-hour day or a personal secretary) and national hero (ascribed to her during a tour of South Korea in which she was consulted about everything from matters of reunification with North Korea to the soccer World Cup). She said that these labels were meaningless when she sits at the keyboard—they do not grant her any special attention from the Muse. The new story she is attempting to write doesn't care if she's won the Newbery or whether she's even been published. The important thing is to focus on the craft of writing. This involves time, skill, commitment, and learning. Paraphrasing Coleridge, she said: choose the best words and put them in the best order to serve the purpose of

the story.

For Ms. Park, a novel is a story told in a series of scenes, each containing elements which reflect back to previous scenes and looks ahead to future scenes. Each

scene



Martha G. Fenoglio

relates something that happens. Ms. Park minimizes thoughts and descriptions (no action in these). She builds scenes word by word, knitting them tightly together to form a cohesive story.

Linda Sue described her intensive training to become a novelist—she studied intimately with Joyce, Faulkner, Zolotow, White, and many, many others. She didn't need any expensive courses as she found all of these wonderful teachers at her local library free for the taking and available to all. Ms. Park stressed that reading is training for writers and advised aspiring writers to read a thousand books before writing their own. She did this, then sold her first novel out of the slush pile on her first submission.

Thus her nugget of wisdom for all present: read a lot, then craft your story using the best words in the best order. *

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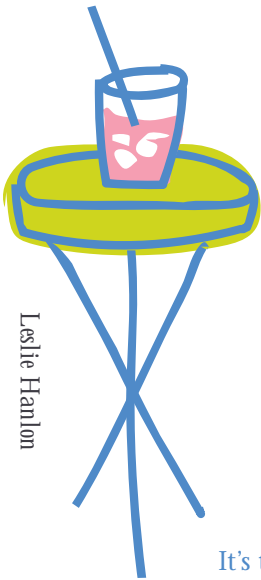
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Next Deadline: May 1

Penn&Ink Submissions: For the next issue please email articles, COLOR artwork, member news items, events, marketing news, and letters to Leslie Hanlon at dimeboxgx@earthlink.net, or mail them to her at 83 West Sedgwick Street, Philadelphia PA 19119, 215.247.3982



Eastern Pennsylvania SCBWI
Free for All!

MEET THE EDITORS!

**Thursday June 5
1:30 – 3:30**

**Bucks County Library
Doylestown PA**

It's time! Time to make connections!

Come hear what's current in the publishing world. Editors Steve Meltzer, Dutton, Mark McVeigh, HarperCollins, and Jodi Kreitzman, Delacorte, will speak about the current state of the market, their respective houses, and critique first pages from selected submissions. Would they keep on reading? Why or why not?

Send the first page of a manuscript which you would like critiqued to Sally Keehn 1691 Lehigh Parkway North, Allentown, PA 18103 by **April 30th 2003**. Label the genre-picture book, novel, early chapter book, poetry, non-fiction etc. Do not include your name on the submitted page. Here is a chance to meet editors, hear what they are looking for, learn how to submit in these days of no unsolicited or unagented manuscripts! Bring a snack to share. Juice will be provided.

Don't miss it! Once again, deadline for first page submission is **April 30th, 2003**. No admission charge. No registration.

Questions:

Sally Keehn at Sallykeehn@AOL.com

Kay Winters at KayWin@AOL.com

Directions:

Phila and south: Take PA turnpike to Willow Grove exit. North on 611. At Edison Furlong Road keep right to Doylestown. One mile on South Main to first light. Right on Ashland, one block to Pine. Right on Pine to library parking lot on left.

Allentown and north: Take 309 south to Quakertown. Turn left on 313 and follow 313 south to 611. Turn right at Cross Keys onto 611 south. Follow 611 (South Main St.) through Doylestown Turn Left on Ashland. Go one block to Pine. Turn right onto Pine into library parking lot. Accessible by train from Philadelphia.

MEMBER NEWS

Deborah Heiligman's *A NEW BABY: BABIES: ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW* (*National Geographic*, September 2002) has been chosen by Babyzone.com [15,000,000 hits/month] as one of their 5 Best Books for their 2002-2003 Amazing Toy Awards.

Diane Kolb's middle grade historical fiction novel, *MY FATHER IS A CLOWN*, critiqued at the 2002 Pocono conference, has been accepted for publication and will be out this fall.

Nancy Springer is pleased to report the sale of a short story, "Getting Real" to *Cricket Magazine*. Two other short stories, "Who's Gonna Rock Us Home" and "The Third Silence" are forthcoming from *Cicada*. An adult/young adult crossover sf story, "Mariposa" will be published in the forthcoming hardcover anthology *FIREBIRDS*, edited by Sharyn November (Firebird imprint of Penguin Putnam) in the fall. Also being published this fall is *OUTLAW PRINCESS OF SHERWOOD*, book three in the *ROWAN HOOD* series, fantasy/adventure for middle graders, about the daughter of Robin Hood and her outlaw band. And in realistic fiction, a young adult crime novel, *BLOOD TRAIL* is forthcoming from Holiday House in April.

**Congratulations,
Members!**

5 New Ways To Connect With Fellow Writers

By Dianne Ochiltree

Going to SCBWI conferences and joining a critique group are two popular and worthwhile ways for writers to network with, learn from, and lend support to one another. However, these needn't be the only opportunities for us to get together for mutual benefit. After years of talking with colleagues about how they and their friends help each other reach common goals, here are a five of the best ideas I've heard... and which you might consider trying sometime:

1. START A "MARKETING" GROUP.

These groups can be as small as three people or as large as a few critique groups combined. The meetings can be of any frequency: monthly, quarterly, or twice a year. The purpose of the meeting is to either share ways that a published author's books can be better publicized (addressing questions such as "what exactly should go into a press packet?" or "how can I prepare myself for effective school visits?")...or to share ways that any writer, published or yet-to-be-published, can more successfully market work to publishers (everything from craft issues such as "how to write the perfect query letter" or marketing issues such as industry-wide trends in editorial needs and tastes.) If members subscribe to different writing journals or magazines (other than SCBWI ones, which of course everyone is reading!), they may share pertinent information gleaned from these, as well as from writers chat rooms, e-zines, internet newsletters, etc.

2. START A "WRITING EXERCISE" GROUP.

For many of us, a commitment to physical exercise is more successful when done in a group setting. The same can be said for keeping our writing muscles in shape. Again, a writing exercise group may be as small or as large as you wish. It may meet as often as once a week, or as sporadically as your members' schedules dictate. For each meeting, find a quiet spot with room to spread out elbows, tablets, and writing tools: at a group member's kitchen table, at a small library meeting room; an idle school or church classroom; maybe even at a sympathetic local diner or coffee house that will permit you to drink java and write during their non-busy hours. A leader needs to be designated for each meeting, in order to secure the place, confirm the meeting time and to select a writing exercise to be done by the group. There are lots of sources for writing exercises that you can adapt to your group's needs. Two of the most-often mentioned books continue to be: *WRITING DOWN THE BONES* by Natalie Goldberg and *THE ARTIST'S WAY* by Julia Cameron. The benefits to this kind of group is (a) the opportunity to practice key writing skills within a "no-pressure" format; (b) the possibility that a random writing exercise may spark the beginnings of a fresh story, novel, article or project idea; and (c) the novelty of getting out of your house, in the company of REAL human



Laurie Edwards

at a "mega-store" and hit the children's book area. Assign everyone a category to investigate: historical fiction, nonfiction picture books, biographies, contemporary YA, etc. Set-up a time frame for the exploration. Then, reconvene in the book store's coffee bar area to share the findings over a mocha latte: new topics, trends in book design or organization of the information, which publisher is producing more of a category than the others, etc. This is another source of useful information to take to your next marketing focus group (see suggestion #1).

4. TAKE A FIELD TRIP TO A LOCAL LIBRARY TOGETHER.

This is organized very much like the trip to the bookstore, except that (a) it will give you a slightly different view on the marketplace, as it will have the emphasis not on up-to-the-minute consumer trends, but on the more steady, lasting trends in the library and educational marketplace. This research also necessitates looking at the work of publishers not commonly available in the retail marketplace, which may give writers an idea of appropriate, additional places to submit work and proposals. You can share your findings with each other in a quiet corner of the library or take the opportunity to share results over lunch at nearby restaurant.

5. TAKE AN "INSPIRATION DAY" FIELD TRIP.

Taking the time to give yourself a day away from the keyboard, and let your creative spirit renew itself, is one that makes a lot of sense. But it's easier to give yourself permission to take it, and perhaps more fun, too, when you take your vacation day with other writer friends. The trip could be any experience that might 'refill the well' of inspiration, from a trip to an art museum to a walk through a botanical garden. Again, new ideas for stories or projects may emerge eventually from these forays. At the very least, you will enjoy the camaraderie of fellow creative types while allowing your creativity to re-charge itself.

Publication comes and goes. Writing projects can delight or devil. One of the most constant and rewarding aspects of being a writer, for me, has always been the company of other writers. I hope that these five ideas will encourage you to find new ways to connect with your own "circle of friends" in a relaxing, helpful and supportive environment. *

beings, while satisfying your need to write.

3. TAKE A FIELD TRIP TO A LOCAL BOOSTORE TOGETHER.

The purpose of this trek is to do some market research more quickly and efficiently than you could do it on your own by taking a team approach. Arrange a time to meet with several writer friends

What To Expect When You're Conferencing: A Successful First Conference Experience

By Debbie Michiko Florence

When I attended my first children's writer's conference, I had no clue what to expect. Attending my first SCBWI conference felt like a huge step for me, and for some reason I felt like a nervous child on the first day of school. Back then, I'd wished for an article that would clue me in to what to expect. With this article, I hope to ease the nerves of first-time conference attendees.

How to Prepare

Pack for the hotel. Even if it's frigid cold outside, chances are the conference rooms will be warm. Same for hot weather outside and air conditioning inside. Dress in layers and comfortably. You don't want to be worried about your short skirt creeping up your legs when you want to focus on what the presenter is saying.

You will receive, ahead of time, a list of the different presenters. Do your research on the editors and agents who will be there. Familiarize yourself with the houses and what they publish. What books have they edited or represented? You can find out a lot of information from the web. Try to read at least one book by each of the authors who will be presenting. It's nice to be familiar with their work. You never know if you might have an opportunity to chat with them. Talking about their work an easy way to start a conversation.

Bring some of your work with you. NOT because an editor will want to read it and offer you a book contract on it, but to work on during down times, or to share with writer friends in an informal critique gathering. You never know when inspiration will hit.

Bring a canvas bag. It's helpful to have a large sturdy bag to stash any publisher catalogs, submission guidelines, magazine samples, and posters that might be offered to attendees. Often there will be a book sale, offering books written by the presenting authors. You may want to purchase some and, perhaps, get them signed. Make sure to arrive with some cash as an ATM might

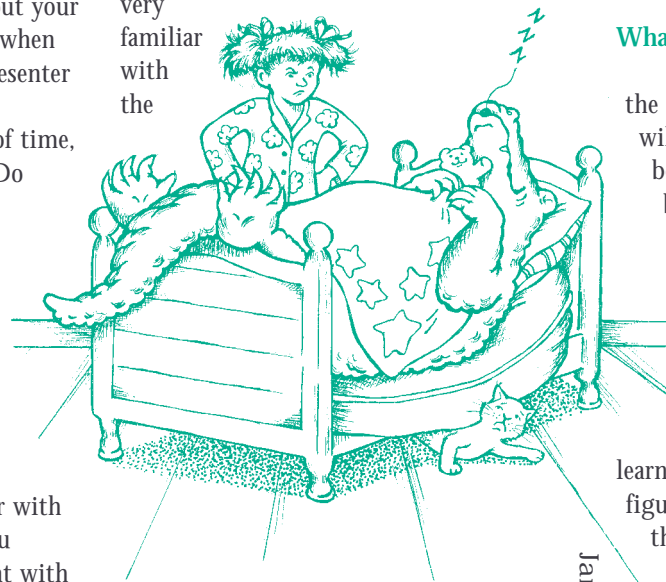
not be readily accessible if the conference is in a remote area. Bring a notebook and pen for taking notes.

What to Expect:

As with other professional conferences, expect to have to register in advance and to check-in when you arrive for the conference. Be sure to bring proper identification.

If the conference offers an opportunity to receive a professional crit, take advantage of it! For a fee (that's well worth it), you can have your work critiqued by a professional—agent, editor, or author. You will receive helpful comments from someone who is

very familiar with the



Jane Bodnar

market. Take careful notes and ask questions. Arrive on time and prepared as your time during the critique is usually limited to 10–15 minutes.

When you register at the conference, you will receive a schedule. This schedule will tell you the times and rooms of the different presentations. Take time to read over the different presentations and decide which ones you are most interested in attending. If you are at the conference with a friend, the two of you can go to different sessions and compare notes, later.

Arrive at the room early so you can get a good seat. The presenter will most likely speak to the group during most of the time and then take questions at the end. Panel discussions usually

involve audience members asking questions and the presenters answering.

If meals are served as part of the conference, the presenters usually sit down at the tables with attendees.

If the conference lasts more than one day, evenings are usually considered free time. Sometimes other optional activities are offered, such as small informal critique sessions. If there is a main gathering area, take time to stop by. You never know what might be going on. At one of the conferences I attended, there was an impromptu sing-along with one of the author's husbands on guitar, and another author and an editor dancing to the music. It was a fun evening and allowed everyone to relax and enjoy.

What Not to Expect

Do not expect to walk away from the conference with a book contract. You will be disappointed. While there might be the rare story that someone did get a book contract this way, it is not the norm. Use this opportunity as a chance to network with your peers and to learn from the professionals. Editors and agents will often invite conference attendees to submit work directly to them. Hearing these professionals speak, you will learn what they like and will be able to figure out if your work meshes with their likes.

You will walk away with some new friends in the field. You might meet other beginning writers and form a support group. You might click with an editor. Or you might become friendly with a published and well-known author. Look at these people as human beings, though. They are not your stepping stone on the path to publication. Authors you become friendly with are not likely to give your work their editors, nor should you expect them to. But you will gain some great insight into the world of children's writing through them and the friendship. You will meet individual editors and be able to put a face to the name in the market book. You will know first hand the kind of books that editor likes. You will meet others like you.

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WHAT TO EXPECT...continued from page 8

You will learn a lot about the publishing world. Attending these conferences is worth every cent and every minute. I always return from a conference inspired, buoyed, and motivated. You will learn a great deal. Make the best of it!

DOs and DON'Ts: Conference Etiquette

Do attend the conference with an open mind.

Do your research before arriving at the conference. Be aware of the basics of writing and submitting (which you can learn through the SCBWI handbook or Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market book).

During a panel discussion, ask only one question so that others in the audience have an opportunity to participate as well. Make sure your question cannot be answered easily by looking in a book or on the web. (A good question posed to a specific editor would be "What do you look for in a cover letter?" A bad question would be "What kind of paper should I use to print up my manuscript?" The first question addresses the editor's personal preference. The second can be looked up in any basic guide.)

Don't approach an editor/agent/author in the middle of a professional crit session. The person being critiqued has paid good money to have the privilege of one-on-one time with that professional. (This actually happened to a friend of mine while she was being critiqued!)

Do bring business cards with your contact information to exchange with other writers.

Do mingle. Introduce yourself to that person sitting next to you. It's a great way to meet people in your field.

Don't shove your manuscript, no matter how wonderful it is, at agents, editors, or

authors, asking them to read and critique it. Sign up for the professional critique for this golden opportunity. If you do have a chance to talk to the editor of your dreams, you may inquire if you can query them or submit to them at their office.

Do take careful notes during presentations.

Do take advantage of the opportunity to submit to the editors and agents who presented at the conference. Make sure you let them know you heard them speak at a conference (and let them know which one).

Don't interrupt the speaker during a presentation or monopolize his/her time after. Don't talk to your seatmates during the presentation.

Do get your books signed by the authors. :)

Don't complain to the conference coordinator about every little thing. Most often, the coordinator is a volunteer and doing the best he/she can to provide a wonderful experience for the attendees. If you have a legitimate concern/gripe, address the coordinator kindly.

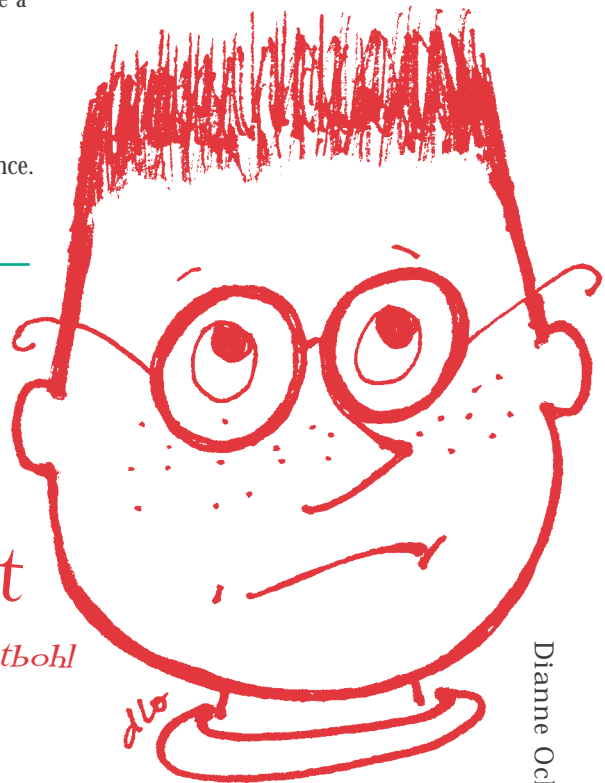
Do thank the coordinator and the other volunteers who put together the conference.

Do have a wonderful time! *

You can learn more about Debbi by visiting her web site:
www.geocities.com/justkidink

A meatball can fly.
Watch it zoom through the air.
Propelled by a fork-wielding-boy.

With one flick of his wrist.
Balanced fork on his fist.
A useful and practical toy.



Dianne Ochiltree

The Catapult

By Phillip Tietbohl

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