



Number 18
(August 2010)

"It is the function of some people to be a lamp and some to be a mirror. I have been very pleased to function as a mirror of others' work." – Arne Nixon

Virginia Pilegard to speak for ANCA

The Arne Nixon Center Advocates invite everyone to their annual meeting, featuring picture book author Virginia Walton Pilegard. The program will be held on Friday, September 17, at the Henry Madden Library, 5200 N. Barton Avenue, Fresno. Parking is free on campus.

The evening will begin with a reception, featuring Chinese hors d'oeuvres, wine, and soft drinks at 6 p.m. The meeting will begin at 6:45 p.m. There is no charge for admission, but reservations are required: please call (559) 278-8116 or send e-mail to mrrianto@csufresno.edu.

Petunia's Place bookstore will sell the author's books at the event.

Virginia Pilegard began writing for children while teaching math to third and fourth graders. Her Warlord series of seven picture books features well-researched adventure stories set in ancient China, each demonstrating a math concept.

The Warlord's Puzzle and *The Warlord's Beads* are listed on the state of California's core curriculum literature list for mathematics. Pilegard has traveled to China to do research for the series and for her newest book, *The Emperor's Army*, a picture book history of the terra-cotta warriors. Her web site is www.virginiapilegard.com.

To find out how a girl who was raised in the mountains north of Fresno, in a two-room cabin with neither electricity nor plumbing, grew up to be a researcher and writer about ancient China, please join ANCA and Virginia Pilegard on September 17.



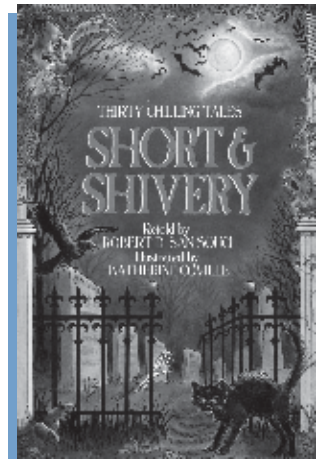
Robert San Souci to speak October 17

Everyone is invited to a talk by author Robert D. San Souci at 2 p.m. on Sunday, October 17, at the Woodward Park Library, 944 E. Perrin Avenue in northeast Fresno. The program, which is co-sponsored by the Arne Nixon Center, is part of the Fresno County Public Library's Big Read, under the leadership of Jeanne Johnson. The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Science and Arts Midwest. Other community sponsors include ABC30, KJWL, the Fresno County Employees Credit Union, and KVPT.

The Big Read theme this year is the works of Edgar Allan Poe and other scary stories, like *Haunted Houses (Are You Scared Yet?)* by Robert San Souci. The Big Read will offer more than 100 programs in October and November, including this one, which is suitable for readers of all ages. Refreshments will be served. The author's books will be available for sale and autographing from Petunia's Place bookstore.

Robert San Souci is known for spooky stories like *Cinderella Skeleton* and for two frightening series, *Dare to be Scared* and *Short & Shivery*. Many of his other best-selling picture books are retellings of traditional tales; these include *The Talking Eggs*, *Little Gold Star*, *Sister Tricksters*, and *Fa Mulan*, a 2,000-year-old Chinese tale which he also converted into a movie story for Disney Studios.

Arne Nixon gave Robert San Souci and his brother, author/illustrator Daniel San Souci, their first professional speaking engagement, in Fresno. In return, Robert San Souci dedicated his book *The Faithful Friend* to Professor Nixon. Robert San Souci, who lives in San Francisco, has donated his papers to the Arne Nixon Center (an ongoing donation). His web site is rsansouci.com.



Friends of Freddy to flock to Fresno

The Friends of Freddy will gather at the Arne Nixon Center from March 19–20, 2011, to celebrate that pig o' their hearts, Freddy, the talking animal hero of 25 children's books written by the late Walter R. Brooks and published by Alfred A. Knopf from 1927 to 1958, the year of the author's death.

In addition to the Freddy books, Brooks was the author of more than 200 short stories for adults, 20 of them featuring Ed the Talking Horse, whose adventures formed the basis of the kitsch classic TV show of the 60s, "Mr. Ed."

Founded by Toronto playwright Dave Carley in 1984, this literary fan club has grown from a stalwart three or four to more than 600 members throughout the U. S., Canada, and England. Beginning in 1986, the Club began holding biennial conventions in New York, near Roxbury, where Brooks lived the last ten years of his life. The original whimsical purpose of the club was to "spread the names and fame of Walter R. Brooks and Freddy the Pig throughout the known universe." More seriously the Club was dedicated to seeing the Freddy books back in print and readily available for new generations of readers. Their dream came true in 1998 when The Overlook Press began reissuing the series. As a result, all the Freddy titles are once again in print in beautiful hardcover facsimile editions.

The Fresno gathering will be held, in part, to celebrate the gift of Michael Cart's collection of Freddy books and related materials as well as both Brook's personal files and Cart's as well. The latter is Brook's biographer; his book *Talking Animals and Others: The Life and Work of Walter R. Brooks* was published by Overlook in 2009.



Please join us!

2010

September 17: ANCA Annual Meeting,
Henry Madden Library, 6:00 p.m.

October 17: Robert San Souci,
Woodward Park Library, 2:00 p.m.

2011

February: ANCA Life Members' Tea,
Date & Location TBA

March 19, 20: Friends of Freddy
Annual Meeting, Henry Madden Library

April 10: Centennial Secret Garden Party
Location TBA

October 21–23: IBBY Regional Conference
Fresno State campus



Tales & Tidbits from ANCA

(Arne Nixon Center Advocates)

by Denise Sciandra, ANCA President

I have spent many happy hours reading to Sam in the glider this past year. Sam is my one-year-old grandson and the glider is a 21st-century rocking chair.

We began with *Mother Goose*. At two months, Sam was photographed looking directly at the open book as he sat in my lap. By eleven months, he had his favorite rhymes. When we get to "This Little Pig," he nonchalantly raises his foot closer to my hand so that I can reach his little "piggies" as I recite the rhyme.

Lamaze's interactive *Discovery Farm*, made of cloth, has brought hours of pleasure. He loved pulling the chick out of the egg pouch and it was an accomplishment when he could unsnap the duck from its page.

Rosemary Wells' new board book, *Love*, a Baby Max and Ruby story, was a hit from the first reading. "I love the one who wakes me." [Mother] "I love the one who takes me." [Father] "I love the one who plays with me." [Ruby] "I love the one who stays with me." [Grandma] "Guess which one I love the most? The one who makes my jelly toast." [Everyone]

Nancy Tafuri's beautifully illustrated *Goodnight, My Duckling* tells a simple story of a mother duck gathering her ducklings to swim down the river for bedtime. Little Duckling gets separated from his family. Various animals greet him: "Good night." "Sleep tight." "Are you lost?" Turtle returns him piggyback to his family. Sam has engaged so much with this story that he now points to Little Duckling in each illustration.

A book borrowed from the library was so popular that I purchased it. *Kiss Kiss!* by Margaret Wild tells the story of Baby Hippo, who forgets to kiss his mother before going out to play. Through the mud, the rocks, the mossy bank, the long, long grass, and the leafy trees waddles Baby Hippo and this is what he hears: "Kiss, kiss." All the animal mothers are kissing their children. He hurries back to kiss his own mama.

At six months, Sam wasn't ready for Dr. Seuss' *Hop on Pop*. At eleven months, he loved it, every page except the one about the bees. We skip that one.

At Sam's birthday party, guests marveled at how he held a gift book and turned each page in the right direction. He's done that for so long that it seems like he's always done it.

I look forward to spending many more hours in the glider with Sam. We both benefit. I especially love his excitement to get into my lap and the occasional spontaneous kiss. I'll interrupt any story for a kiss.

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by Angelica Carpenter

I've lived my life—my whole life—on an academic calendar. I was a student, or a teacher, or both, until becoming a librarian in my early 30s. After that, until moving to Fresno in 1999, I worked in small public libraries where the schedule depended, to a surprising degree, on the public school calendar. From September through May we helped high schoolers with term papers and younger children (or their hapless parents) with science fair projects. In summertime, swarms of hot, sticky kids flocked in, looking for craft projects, puppet shows, air conditioning, and more R. L. Stine books, please.

There are, of course, many wonderful books about school—more than 700 in the Arne Nixon Center's collection. Some reassure, like *Miss Bindergarden Gets Ready for Kindergarten*, in which a teacher and her class-to-be prepare for entry. Some amuse, like *The Teacher's Funeral* or the Ramona series by Beverly Cleary. Ramona, the subject of a movie this summer, tackles school, as she does everything, with over-the-top enthusiasm and hilarious results. There are cautionary tales, too, like *Miss Nelson is Missing* (Kids, be nice to substitute teachers.) and *Author Day* (Authors, beware of school gigs.) There are shockers (*There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*), stories of reincarnation (*Elvis is Back, and He's in the Sixth Grade!*), supernatural tales (*Vampire High*) (I am getting really tired of vampire stories), and even, in a disheartening new trend, picture books about children who are frightened of High Stakes Testing (*The Biggest Test in the Universe*). Actually this last title is quite a good book; it's the need for it that is depressing. If you wonder what else is going on in schools today, check out the middle-grade novels of Andrew Clements: *Frindle*, *No Talking*, and *Extra Credit*.

Many series books, like Harry Potter, start with a new school year. My favorites are the Betsy-Tacy high school books by Maud Hart Lovelace. Each fall, Betsy has big plans: to find a crowd (freshman year), to be Dramatic and Mysterious (as a sophomore), to win the Essay Contest, to fall in love, and to find her voice as a writer. Her ideas don't always pan out, but each year begins with new hope and a clean slate, and that, I think, is the joy of living life by the school year.

I met my husband on my first day of school at the University of Illinois. Well, I spotted him, anyway. At the end of German class, our professor said, "Now, tomorrow please sit where you want to sit this semester, so I can make a seating chart and learn your names."

"I'm sitting by him!" I thought, liking the look of Richard, and later he claimed to have thought the same about me.

As we begin a new school year, I wish you peace, love, happiness, and lots of good reading.



Answers to quiz:

- 1 *When You Reach Me*
by Rebecca Stead
- 2 *Shadow of a Bull*
by Maia Wojciechowska
- 3 *Ballet Shoes* by Noel Streatfeild
- 4 *In Our Mothers' House* by Patricia Polacco

Wicked good party

“Wicked,” the hit Broadway musical, was the theme of the Arne Nixon Center Advocates’ eighth annual Secret Garden Party, held April 11th at the home of Dr. Peyton Bryars and Dr. Richard Jennings in north Fresno. One hundred eight people enjoyed the first cloudy hour outside; when a steady rain began to fall, they were invited inside, to a beautiful, lamp-lit sun room.

Entertainment included songs by “Wicked” characters Glinda (Jackie Gomez), Elphaba (Lisette Lancaster), and Fiero (Terry Lewis). Party decorations included a chalk Yellow Brick Road, a rainbow balloon arch, a bubble machine at the champagne station, a lunchbox tree (see *Ozma of Oz*, the third Oz book), and a poppy field made of cupcakes. Master Gardeners demonstrated techniques for container gardening, edible landscaping, sustainable gardening, and topiary. A pair of non-scary winged monkeys (played by Delaney Rocca and Ellie Twohey, shown at upper right) drew the most praise.

The party grossed more than \$23,000; all profits benefit the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children’s Literature, part of the Henry Madden Library. This year’s earnings helped to support the national Oz conference.



To accompany the Oz conference, Jennifer Crow (right) curated an Oz exhibition that featured ruby slippers made by Christopher Rocha (left).

Donors listed on web site

The Center is grateful to donors for funds and materials that supplement our resources, especially in a time of shrinking budgets. Donors and gifts are listed on the web site at www.arnenixoncenter.org under “Ways to Help.” See “Join ANCA” and “Gift Books & Materials” for names. Thanks to all our donors!



Costumes from the New York production of “Wicked,” seen here with Jane Albright in the background, a board member of the International Wizard of Oz Club, were the focal point of the Oz exhibition.

Ooh, Toto, I don't think . . . Well, you know

by Michael Cart

[Thanks to *Booklist* magazine for permission to reprint Michael Cart's column, "Carte Blanche," for July 2010. *Booklist* is a publication of the American Library Association.]

No, we weren't in Kansas anymore; we were off to see the Wizard—the wonderful wizard of Oz, that is. So why on earth were we looking for him in Fresno, California? True, his creator L. Frank Baum had lived in Hollywood but that's a mighty far piece from Fresno in both miles and mindset! The answer was simple, really; we were in California's Great Central Valley for the annual convention of the International Wizard of Oz Club, a gathering that was hosted this year by the Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature at Cal State Fresno, where the Center's curator, Angelica Carpenter, is also the President of the International Wizard of Oz Club.

With the theme "Oz: The Books," the conference was a gathering—of fans, experts, writers, and artists who have contributed works to the ever-expanding Oz oeuvre, random observers (that'd be me, among others), the stray University official, etc.—that was devoted to celebration, criticism (of the literary sort—no personal canards allowed), and commentary. It was a chance to catch up with old friends, to make new ones, to network, to ogle exhibits and displays, and generally to do the same kinds of stuff one does at an ALA conference. There were stand-alone speeches, panel discussions, learned papers, and a lavish Saturday evening banquet held on the sumptuous grounds of The University House, home to University President John Welty.

This was, I confess, the first time I had attended one of the Oz conferences. I was front and center at this one for two reasons: (1) I'm a founding director of the Nixon Center's Governing Committee and (2) I was a program participant, serving as moderator of a panel called "Behind That Screen," which explored the real magic of creating new Oz books. The panel members were Gregory Maguire, author of the Oz-based trilogy that began with *Wicked*, which became the celebrated Broadway musical of the same name, and continued with *Son of a Witch* and *A Lion among Men*. Then there was Tommy Kovac, graphic novel artist and author, whose recent *Wonderland*, an imaginative sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, received a starred review here in *Booklist*, and Eric Shanower, the author-illustrator of five original Oz books and author of the recent re-telling of *The Wizard*, which—illustrated by Skottie Young—was selected as a Great Graphic Novel for Teens by The Young Adult Library Services Association (*Wonderland* was also on the list). All three of these distinguished panelists are currently working on new Oz projects and, as such, are operating in a great Oz tradition.

For while Baum himself wrote 14 Oz titles, countless others have been written since his death in 1919. Ruth Plumly Thompson alone wrote 19, while John R. Neill, Baum's illustrator, wrote three, and so on and so on ad (it sometimes seems) infinitum.



"Behind That Screen" panel participants were, from left to right, Eric Shanower, Gregory Maguire, Michael Cart (moderator), and Tommy Kovac.

I was, myself, a devoted Oz fan when I was a kid and typically received at least one Oz book every Christmas. In 1952, though, I received two—*The Shaggy Man of Oz* by Jack Snow and *The Hidden Valley of Oz* by Rachel R. Cosgrove. How do I know this? Simple: on the page before the half-title page of each I find written—with a flourish—"Michael Cart, Date: December 28, 1952; Age: 11. 1319 Sycamore Street. Logansport, Indiana." Ah, good times . . .

While I liked the Oz books, I never read or collected them systematically nor did I know too much about Baum. Having attended the recent conference, I now know a whole lot more, thanks in part to the Keynote Speech by Michael Patrick Hearn, the world's leading authority on L. Frank Baum and *The Wizard of Oz*. His speech, titled "The Discovery of Baum, the Great and Terrible," was a fascinating overview of a near lifetime of research (Hearn was only 20 when he signed the contract for his first book, the now-classic *Annotated Wizard of Oz*). Also of note was a joint presentation by Baum's great-grandson Robert Baum and Peter E. Hanff, co-author of *Bibliographia Oziana* and Deputy Director of The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley. Their program featured readings of Baum's often light-hearted correspondence with his publishers (Robert Baum read the letters from his great-grandfather and Hanff read the replies from his publisher.)



Peter Hanff and Robert Baum

(See Oh, Toto, page 6)

The star-studded program also featured Emmy award-winning producer John Fricke, who is regarded as the preeminent expert on the 1939 MGM musical starring Judy Garland. His presentation was every bit as blithely amusing as its title “If Ever—Oh Ever!—A Wiz There Woz: MGM’s “Wizard” and How It Grew. And Grew. And Grew.”

John Fricke

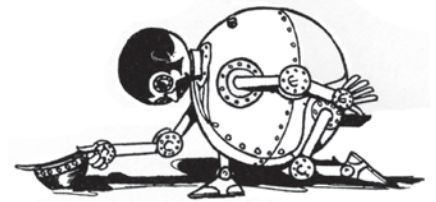


Attention was also given to Baum’s own translations of his work into musical comedies and movies. For example, David Maxine—who received an Emmy nomination for his two-CD set of vintage recordings from Baum’s 1903 Broadway musical, “The Wizard of Oz”—spoke about Louis F. Gottschalk, who composed the score for Baum’s later musical “The Tik-Tok Man of Oz” and for many of Baum’s movies.

Speaking of amusing titles: some of my favorites were those attached to the many academic papers that were also presented—titles like “L. Frank Baum and Harriet Beecher Stowe: Using Sentimentalism to Inspire a Female Audience” and—my personal favorite—“Eroticism in the Emerald City: The Awakening of Dorothy’s Sexuality in Oz as Discussed in Alan Moore’s ‘Lost Girls’ ” (a note in the conference program stipulated that you “must be 18 or older to attend this session”; since my emotional age is still about twelve, I skipped this one).

Baum’s family also came under scrutiny in a fascinating presentation about the author’s relationship with his mother-in-law, the radical suffragist and abolitionist Matilda Joslyn Gage, who worked closely with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the early women’s rights movement. The Gage Foundation is currently restoring the Gage home near Syracuse, New York, as a house museum.

There’s more—much more—but it’ll have to wait for now, since I have a ticket on the next cyclone to Oz! *Baum Voyage . . .*



Laughing the day away: Oz Conference attendees and speakers.

Photos on this page by Howard Watkins

Leo Politi Garden and exhibitions

More than 100 people attended the formal dedication of the Leo Politi Garden on June 3. Speakers included President John Welty, Provost Bill Covino, Associate Library Dean Dave Tyckoson, landscape architect Bob Boro, ANCA president Denise Sciandra, Arne Nixon curator Angelica Carpenter, and Leo Politi's son, Paul Leo Politi. Politi's daughter, Suzanne Politi Bischof, and her daughter Harmony, also attended, as did representatives of the Leo Politi Branch of the Fresno County Public Library.

The garden, located on the east side of the Library, honors the friendship between Fresno's most famous children's illustrator and author, Leo Politi, and his dear friend, the late Professor Arne Nixon. Politi, who was born in Fresno, lived most of his adult life in Los Angeles, but returned many times to speak, draw, and paint at workshops put on by Nixon.



photo by Randy Vaughn-Dotta

The garden was funded by ANCA, the Arne Nixon Center's support group. ANCA raised \$75,000 via small donations and the group's annual fundraising event, the Secret Garden Party, to build the initial stage of the garden. The first round of funding provided walkways, a curving bench, and a fountain like the one in Leo Politi's 1950 Caldecott-winning picture book *Song of the Swallows*.

A second round of funding will supply copies of two Politi statues to be added to pedestals already in place.

Bob Boro designed the garden based on Leo Politi's art. "He never drew a straight line," Bob said. The plants chosen are typical of Los Angeles home gardens, like Leo Politi's. Because the garden is in a sheltered niche, it includes delicate plants that need extra protection in Fresno winters.

The Arne Nixon Center has mounted an exhibition of Leo Politi's art and books in its reading room and in the Shirley Harnish Brinker gallery, just outside the entrance to the Center. This exhibition will be open through December.

The Center is also offering a virtual exhibition of the elaborate inscriptions that Leo Politi painted or drew in books belonging to Arne Nixon and others: see www.arnenixoncenter.org under "Exhibits."

At right: ANCA Board members



photo by Howard Watkins

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Can you identify book titles from these first lines?

(Answers on page 3)

Q1 So Mom got the postcard today. It says *Congratulations* in big curly letters and at the very top is the address of Studio TV-15 on West 58th Street. After three years of trying, she has actually made it. She's going to be a contestant on *The \$20,000 Pyramid*, which is hosted by Dick Clark.

Q2 When Manolo was nine he became aware of three important facts in his life. First: the older he became, the more he looked like his father. Second: he, Manolo Olivar, was a coward. Third: everyone in the town of Arcangel expected him to grow up to be a famous bullfighter, like his father.

Q3 The Fossil sisters lived in the Cromwell Road. At that end of it which is farthest away from the Brompton Road, and yet sufficiently near it so one could be taken to look at the dolls' houses in the Victoria and Albert every wet day. If the weather were not too wet, one was expected to "save the penny and walk."

Q4 When my mothers told me about how they brought me home to live with them shortly after I was born, their eyes would shine and glisten and they'd grin from ear to ear. They told me how they had walked across dry hot deserts, sailed through turbulent seas, flew over tall mountains and trekked through fierce storms just to bring me home.

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