

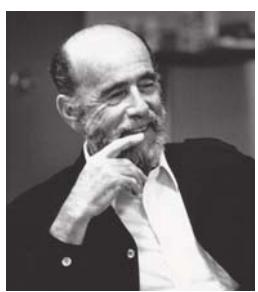
# THE MAGIC MIRROR

Number 15  
(February 2009)

*"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*

## Sid Fleischman to speak

The public is invited to hear Sid Fleischman discuss his new biography, written for young people, *The Trouble Begins at 8: A Life of Mark Twain in the Wild, Wild West*, at the Residence Dining Hall on the Fresno State campus, Friday, March 13th. Following a reception at 6 p.m., the author will speak at 6:45 p.m.



Fleischman is the best-selling author of *The Abracadabra Kid: A Writer's Life* (his autobiography), *Escape! The Story of the Great Houdini*, *The Entertainer and the Dybluk*, *By the Great Horn Spoon*, *The Scarebird*, the McBroom stories, and many other books for children and young adults. He won the Newbery

*(See Fleischman, page 5)*

## Katherine Paterson in April

The public is invited to a lecture by Katherine Paterson, a two-time Newbery medalist for *Bridge to Terabithia* (recently made into a movie) and *Jacob Have I Loved*. Her other titles include *Bread and Roses, Too*; *The Same Stuff as Stars*; *Preacher's Boy*; *Jip, His Story*; *Come Sing, Jimmy Jo*; and *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. Paterson is the recipient of the 2006 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award for children's literature, given by the Swedish government, and the 1998 Hans Christian Anderson Author Award, chosen by the International Board on Books for Youth. Her web site is [www.terabithia.com](http://www.terabithia.com).



The author will speak on "Stories of Our Lives" at the John Wright Theatre on the Fresno State campus at 7:30 p.m., Friday, April 17th. Free parking is available in Lot D. Paterson's books will be available for sale and autographing after the talk. Signing may be limited to suit needs of the author or hours of the facility.

Admission is free; all ages are welcome. Seating is limited. Reservations are required, by calling (559) 278-8116 or by sending e-mail to [mrianto@csufresno.edu](mailto:mrianto@csufresno.edu).

## Celebrate Beatrix Potter!

The Arne Nixon Center, in association with The Beatrix Potter Society ([beatrixpottersociety@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:beatrixpottersociety@tiscali.co.uk)) and the Fresno State Department of Theatre Arts, will host a Beatrix Potter conference April 17–19 in the new Henry Madden Library and at other locations to be announced. Beatrix Potter is the British author/artist of 23 classic children's books, including *Peter Rabbit* (her first, published in 1902), *The Tailor of Gloucester*, and *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*. In later life Beatrix Potter turned to farming, sheep breeding, and preservationist leadership, especially in her beloved Lake District.



Conference speakers will include two-time Newbery medalist Katherine Paterson, who will discuss her award-winning children's books following a 6 p.m. reception at the Library on Friday, April 17th. The reception, sponsored by ANCA, the Arne Nixon Advocates, and honoring ANCA Life Members, is by invitation only. All conference registrants are invited to the reception and to Paterson's lecture, which follows.

Though best known for her children's novels, Katherine Paterson is also the co-author of "The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck," a musical play. At the conference, Saturday, April 18th, following a performance of the play, she will give a talk, "From the Page to the Stage: Dramatic Adaptations of Children's Literature," with Fresno State director J. Daniel Herring, who has worked with Paterson on several occasions.

Other conference speakers include Judy Taylor, chairman of The Beatrix Potter Society and the author of many books about Beatrix Potter including *Beatrix Potter: Artist, Storyteller and Countrywoman*; Selwyn Goodacre, collector of Beatrix Potter piracies and a columnist for *The Beatrix Potter Society Newsletter*; ANCA President Denise Sciandra, an active member of the Society whose articles have appeared in *The Fresno Bee*

*(See Potter, page 4)*

# Mother Goose comes to California

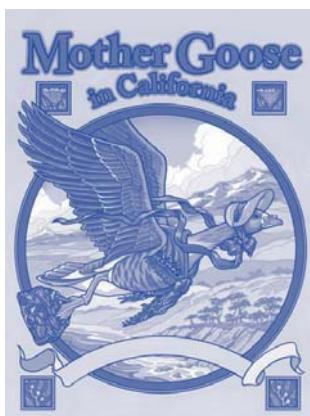
A flying pig launches Doug Hansen's splendid new ABC picture book, *Mother Goose in California*, published by Heyday Books in Berkeley. A is for Air: "Dickery, dickery dare/The pig flew up in the air." Hansen's pig is a pilot, flying a 1930s airplane over the Golden Gate Bridge, which is still under construction. Border pictures show a couple of California condors keeping him company in the sky.

Hansen, who is a faculty member in the Department of Art and Design at Fresno State, did some of his research in the Arne Nixon Center. The rhymes he chose to illustrate are traditional, some famous and others less well-known. The colorful paintings portray California animals wearing historical costumes in Golden State settings, real and imagined. A prospecting bear smokes his pipe at Joshua Tree. Humpty Dumpty falls off the wall in old Monterey. The North Wind blows over Yosemite Valley. A sea otter, fetchingly attired in a blue bonnet, sells seashells by the seashore at Morro Rock. The old woman who lives in a shoe is a California quail, a bird known for its large broods.

Hansen's characters charm and amuse, and his illustrations glow. Decorative borders offer extra story details that children will love to spot. An addendum and map identify animals, plants, and locations, but the Mother Goose set will enjoy this book first for its funny pictures and rhymes. Later they can grow into its natural science, history, and geography.

Here is a book to start readers California dreaming, wherever they happen to live.

—Angelica Carpenter



## Reading the World XI

The Arne Nixon Center will be well represented at Reading the World XI, an annual multicultural children's literature conference, to be held March 28–29 in San Francisco. This conference is hosted by the Center for Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, School of Education, University of San Francisco. Speakers will include Theresa Breslin, Angelica Carpenter, Michael Cart, Sarah Ellis, Francisco Jiménez, Rosemary Wells, and Junko Yokota. For more information, including a registration form, see the web site at [www.soe.usfca.edu/institutes/reading\\_world/conference.html](http://www.soe.usfca.edu/institutes/reading_world/conference.html).



## Tales & Tidbits from ANCA

(Arne Nixon Center Advocates)

by Denise Sciandra, ANCA President

I ate a hedgehog for breakfast. It was a specialty of the Witherspoon Bread Company in Princeton, New Jersey, made from a baguette. In a gesture of camaraderie, I told other Beatrix Potter Society members about the hedgehog that made me think of Potter's creation, Mrs. Tiggy-winkle. Did that cause a run on them? When I went back, they were all sold out.

The Beatrix Potter Society chose to meet in Princeton because of the Cotsen Library on the Princeton University campus. It houses Lloyd Cotsen's extensive collection of Beatrix Potter manuscripts, original art, photographs, and the largest assemblage of "picture letters" written by Beatrix Potter. Judy Taylor, a Potter scholar, talked about the importance of the letters in understanding Potter's work and how they so compactly and easily share Potter's thoughts with children.

Of the 69 known picture letters, 30 are in the Cotsen Collection in Princeton. Six are in the Linder Collection in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, including the most celebrated one, the Peter Rabbit letter. That was written in 1893 to Noel Moore, the very sick son of Annie Moore, Potter's last governess.

"My dear Noel, I don't know what to write to you, so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits whose names were—Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter."

Fortunately, Noel kept this letter safely so that Potter could borrow it back in 1900 to rework the pictures and try to sell the story to a publisher. The rest is history. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* has been constantly in print for more than one hundred years.

Potter wrote other picture letters to Moore's eight children.

"My dear Freda [Moore], Because you are fond of fairy-tales and have been ill, I have made you a story all for yourself—a new one that nobody has read before. And the queerest thing about it—is that I heard it in Gloucestershire, and it is true! At least about the tailor, the waistcoat, and the 'No more twist'."

Winifred Moore was the recipient of a letter about Mrs. Tiggy-winkle. Beatrix wrote of her pet hedgehog, "Mrs. Tiggy-winkle is a great traveler. I don't know how many journeys she hasn't done. She enjoys going by train, she is always very hungry when she is on a journey. I think you must ask Mrs. Tiggy-winkle to tea, she will drink milk like anything out of a doll's tea-cup!"

Mrs. Tiggy-winkle is one of my favorite characters. I admit that made it a little difficult to eat her for breakfast.

# MAGIC MIRROR

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## CURATOR'S CORNER

by Angelica Carpenter



Paul Politi grew up in Los Angeles in the 1950s. In a talk this year at the Leo Politi Library in Fresno, Paul recalled his father Leo Politi, the Caldecott winning author/illustrator. "The 1950s was the time of Ozzie and Harriet," Paul said. "I wanted Ozzie and Harriet and what did I get?—I got a house painted pinkish purple, covered with flowers and swirls!"

Paul and his younger sister, Suzanne, got a father who kept weird hours, an artist who installed mosaics in the public sidewalk in front of their house, and an inventor who jerry-rigged a primitive waterfall to a handmade swimming pool in the back yard for the children of the neighborhood to play in. They got an author who wrote and illustrated books to introduce children to the beauty he saw all around him. They got a visual historian whose pictures preserved an architectural heritage that was fast disappearing.

"I thought he was naive, living in an unreal world then," said Paul, "but now I know how wrong I was. Even when he was busy painting, he was listening, and quietly inspiring us. He was always interested in what we were doing."

Later Leo became an unconventional babysitter for his own grandchildren. "We'd drop the kids off," Paul explained, "and then go out. They would stay all night. When we picked them up in the morning we heard what they had been doing—drinking coffee with their grandfather and painting until 5 a.m.! Five-year-olds!" But now he seemed tickled by his father's behavior. "My dad never said a harsh word," said Paul, "never raised his voice. He led by example."

In 2008, the centennial of Leo Politi's birth. Paul and Suzanne oversaw a year-long, multi-state celebration of programs, exhibitions, and a promise by the Getty Museum to reissue Leo Politi's picture books, which have long been out of print. Paul and Suzanne worked often with Ann Stallcup, Leo's biographer. The best part of this celebration, Paul said, was the outpouring of love from people who shared stories as if Leo had been a part of their lives, too.

Paul recalled a childhood Christmas in which Robinson's Department store, in downtown Los Angeles, used the illustrations from Leo's book *Pedro, the Angel of Olvera Street* to decorate its windows. Each window had a scene from the book. By walking around the store, you could read the whole story. "We saw this," Paul said, "but we didn't own a camera, so no one took any pictures." When Ann's book, *Leo Politi: Artist of the Angels*, came out, someone sent Paul a photo of one of those windows. He got more pictures and more wonderful stories at every centennial event. Many people recalled Leo Politi in Philippe's restaurant, near Olvera Street, pulling a paintbox out of his pocket while the busboys gathered around to watch him sketch, paint, and autograph books, personalizing each one with special artwork.

Leo Politi had many friends, including Arne Nixon, in Fresno. In 2009 ANCA, the Arne Nixon Center Advocates, will honor him in the city where he was born by building a Leo Politi garden, designed by landscape architect Bob Boro, outside the new Henry Madden Library. Who knows what new stories this garden will inspire?



## Potter, from front page

and in many literary publications; Emma Laws, the Frederick Warne Curator of Children's Literature at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and Liz Hunter MacFarlane, National Trust House and Collections Manager of Beatrix Potter Properties in Hawkshead, England.

Saturday events include a book signing and sale with all the authors, coordinated by Petunia's Place bookstore and the Beatrix Potter Society. The Society will offer Society Publications, Judy Taylor's books, and a "Bring and Buy" table for collectors. The conference will end with a garden party (see related article on page 6) on Sunday afternoon.

Early registration will be available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, April 17th, in the Arne Nixon Center in the Library's south wing. You must pay to park on campus during the day on Friday. Parking is free after 5 p.m. Friday and on the weekend. Saturday registration will open at 8:30 a.m. at the Library. Refreshments will be served, courtesy of ANCA, the Arne Nixon Center Advocates. The conference program begins at 9:15 a.m. on Saturday.

Registration for the conference is limited to 100 people. The cost for ANCA or BPS members is \$99; for non-members, \$125. The deadline for registration is March 31st. For more information and a registration form, see the web site at [www.arnenixoncenter.org](http://www.arnenixoncenter.org) or call (559) 278-8116 or send e-mail to [mrrianto@csufresno.edu](mailto:mrrianto@csufresno.edu).

Continuing education credit of one hour is available for an additional fee of \$60 from Fresno State's Division of Continuing & Global Education. You may request a credit registration form from the contacts above, or you may register for credit with a check or credit card at the conference.

The Piccadilly Inn-University, across the street from campus, offers special rates for attendees; call (559) 224-4200. Hotel rooms are limited; please book early.

### Save these dates!

#### **March 13**

Sid Fleischman, 6 p.m.,  
Residence Dining Hall

#### **April 17**

Katherine Paterson, 7:30 p.m.,  
John Wright Theatre

#### **April 17-19**

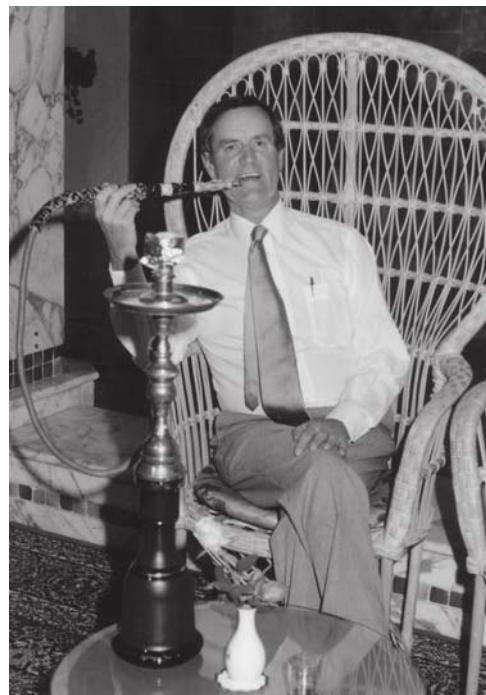
Beatrix Potter conference

#### **April 19**

Secret Garden Party, 3-5 p.m.

#### **April 23**

Naomi Shihab Nye, 3 p.m.  
Q&A, Peters Auditorium;  
7 p.m. poetry reading,  
Satellite Student Union



*Selwyn Goodacre, a leader in the Lewis Carroll and Beatrix Potter societies, demonstrates a hookah in this Carrollian photo.*

*At the Beatrix Potter conference, he will discuss "The Humour in the Little Books of Beatrix Potter."*

## Donations of books & materials

July 1–December 31, 2008

*Alma Flor Ada: 5 boxes of her papers and books*

*Rosie Arenas: 1 book*

*Janet Bancroft: 1 book*

*Deborah Bellew: 1 book*

*Marjorie Burgeson: 8 boxes of books*

*Sarah Cardoza: 5 posters*

*Angelica Carpenter: 33 books*

*Linda Cassady: 5 books*

*Julie Garvey: 3 story hats and 2 story boards from Arne Nixon's collection.*

*Pamela Harer: 1 book*

*Henry Holt and Company: 1 book*

*Kingfisher Books: 15 books*

*Lerner Publishing Group: 23 books*

*Roberta Ling: 4 books*

*Peter McDonald: 1 book*

*Arturo Mendoza: 26 books and other items*

*Connie Mills: 31 books*

*Blossom Norman: 9 books and other items*

*Dolores Pires: 5 books*

*Rosalie Pratt: 33 books*

*Random House: 112 books*

*Roaring Brook Press: 15 books*

*Marilyn Reynolds: 1 book*

*Mila Rianto: 6 books*

*Scholastic: 77 books*

*D. James Smith: 1 book*

*South Dakota State Historical Society Press: 2 books*

*Southeast Asian Ministry: 1 book*

*Juanita Welch: 3 books*



# Naomi Shihab Nye to speak at Fresno State

Poet Naomi Shihab Nye will speak on Thursday, April 23, at events co-sponsored by the Department of English and the Henry Madden Library. At 3 p.m. she will hold an informal “question and answer” session at Peters Auditorium. At 7 p.m. she will give a poetry reading in the Satellite Student Union. Admission is free.

Nye, the daughter of a Palestinian father and an American mother, was born in St. Louis. This self-described “wandering poet” has also lived in Jerusalem and, currently, San Antonio, where she received a degree in English and world religions at Trinity University. The recipient of a Lannan Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and four Pushcart Prizes, she writes for all ages—novels, poetry, and essays. Her subjects often reflect her heritage and her work promoting international good will through the arts. Her anthology *19 Varieties of a Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East* was a finalist for the National Book Award. Other books for young authors include the novels *Habibi* and *Going, Going*.

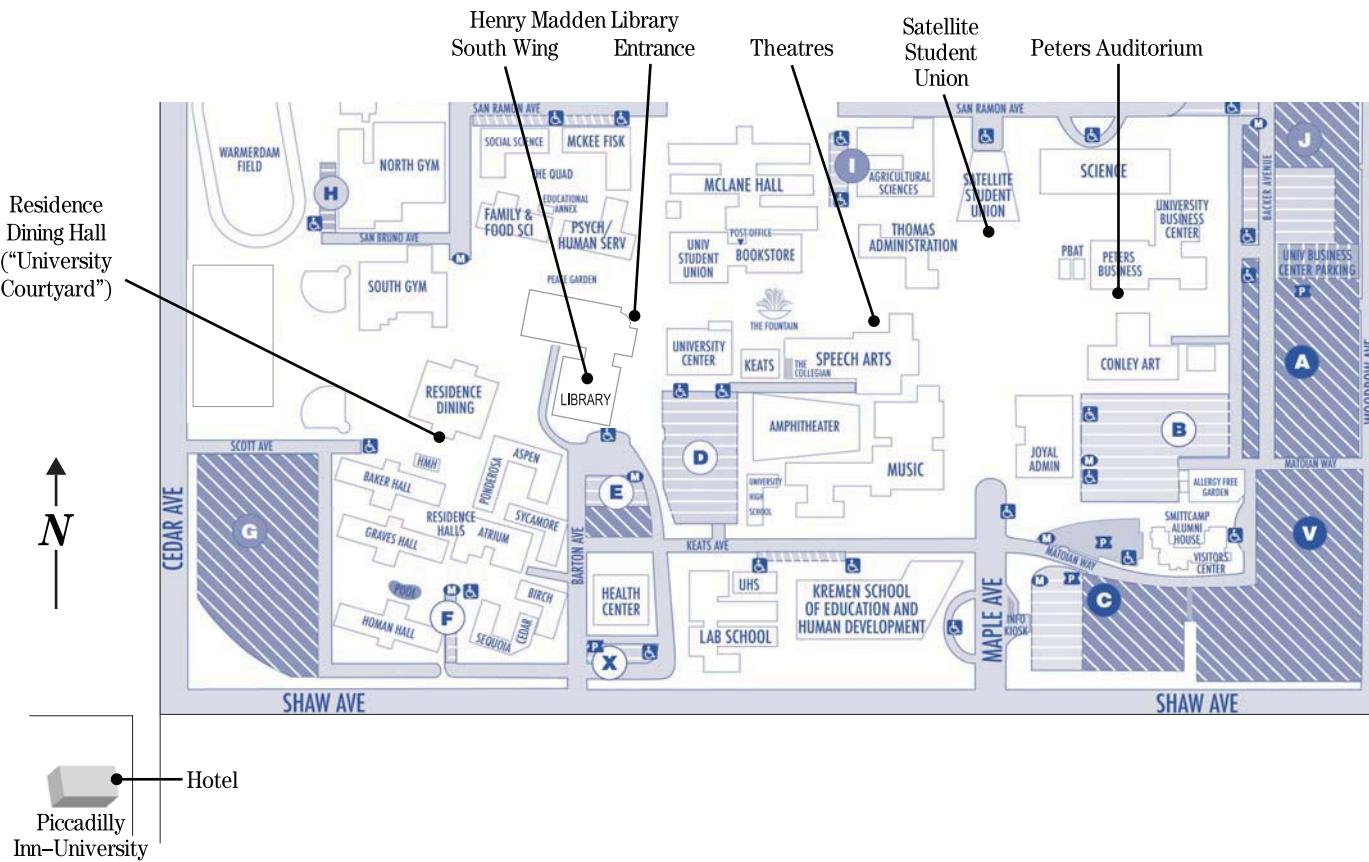
## Fleischman, from front page

for *The Whipping Boy*. His books have been made into films and plays and translated into 19 languages. His web site is [www.sidfleischman.com](http://www.sidfleischman.com).

Fleischman’s appearance is co-sponsored by ANCA, the Arne Nixon Center Advocates, the Friends of the Madden Library, and the Fresno County Public Library. Through the leadership of the Fresno County Public Library, Fresno has been chosen for a third year to participate in The Big Read, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. The Big Read provides citizens with the opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their community. This year’s book is Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

The reception and Fleischman’s talk are free. All ages are welcome. Reservations are required by calling (559) 278-8116, or sending e-mail to [mrianto@csufresno.edu](mailto:mrianto@csufresno.edu). Free parking is available in Lot G, on the northeast corner of Shaw and Cedar Avenues (enter from Cedar) or in any university lot. Fleischman’s books will be available from Petunia’s Place bookstore for sale and autographing at the talk.

## Locations mentioned in this issue:



## Looking for Leo!

In 1930 the young artist Leo Politi returned to California from Europe, where he attended art school. He was invited to decorate the new “Green Room Theater” (a name never formally adopted) in the Old Administration Building on what was then the campus of Fresno State College, now City College. Later Politi said that he had enjoyed watching dancers practice as he painted.

His design used “cubist simplifications” in somber blacks and grays. “I did about a dozen panels of different themes,” he said. “They measured about five feet in height by six feet wide and ran as a decorative frieze around the room. It was the first work I did since my return from Italy. The work was of Deco style, in vogue in the '20s and '30s. I combined abstract, cubist, and futurist elements—movements in art I was influenced by in my student days.”

The 1932 campus yearbook offered this description of his art: “Running continuously along the three walls near the ceiling of the room are figures depicting various abstract phases of life which the theatre strives to express, such as love, labor, victory, veneration, etc.” A photo from the 1933 yearbook (below) is the only known picture of these panels.

Several panels survived to the 1950s, and in 1978, after the renamed California State University, Fresno, had moved to its present location, at least one section was in storage at the Scene Shop on campus. In 2009, this cannot be found.

HELP! Out there somewhere in a drawer or a chest may be photos of these screens. The Politi family and other collectors would like to find additional pictures (or a real panel!) documenting this early phase of Leo Politi's career. At City College, the Old Administration Building is being restored, and there is interest in recreating the original designs. Leo Politi's 2008 Centennial generated much interest in his work and resulted in many new finds, photos never before known. If you have photos of these panels, please contact the Arne Nixon Center: call (559) 278-8116 or send e-mail to [mrianto@csufresno.edu](mailto:mrianto@csufresno.edu).

## Secret Garden Party on April 19

ANCA, the Arne Nixon Center Advocates, invites everyone to its seventh annual Secret Garden Party, Sunday, April 19th, from 3 to 5 p.m. The party will be held in a beautiful Old Fig Garden location, in a setting that combines formal plantings with more casual areas for strolling and exploring. The exact location will be revealed to underwriters and ticket holders upon registration. This year's party honors author/artist Beatrix Potter, the subject of a conference April 17–19 (see front page article). Special guests at the party will be members of the Beatrix Potter Society. Secret Garden Party admission is included in the conference registration fee; separate tickets are also available for purchase.

Underwriters are needed; they will receive tickets to the party and acknowledgements in promotional materials. The \$1,000 Sponsor fee includes up to eight tickets; Patrons, for a \$500 fee, get up to six tickets; Contributors, for \$250, receive up to four tickets. Individual tickets are also available for \$50. The garden party is ANCA's major annual fundraising event; all profits benefit the Arne Nixon Center, this year helping to support the Center's programs and collections.

For information call (559) 278-5790 or send e-mail to [kelliew@csufresno.edu](mailto:kelliew@csufresno.edu).



### Answers to quiz:

- 1 *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* by Beatrix Potter
- 2 *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. 1: The Pox Party* by M. T. Anderson
- 3 *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- 4 *The Little Prince* by Antoine de St. Exupéry



# Michael Cart publishes Brooks biography

Congratulations to Michael Cart, a founding member of the Arne Nixon Center's Governing Committee, on the 2009 publication of his latest book, *Talking Animals and Others: The Life and work of Walter R. Brooks, Creator of Freddy the Pig*, from The Overlook Press. Cart has spoken and written often of his childhood love for the Freddy series. Now, in what he calls "his life's work" (it took him 25 years to write, he explains), he tells the story of Freddy's creator, from Brooks' idyllic childhood in turn-of-the-century upstate New York, to his career as a columnist and short story writer for sophisticated publications like *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*, to his supreme accomplishment, the 25 Freddy novels, filled with wit, travel, and adventure.

Sadly, Cart never met Brooks, who died in 1958. He studied his subject in archival materials, in the author's personal files, and in interviews with Mrs. Brooks and friends. Eventually Cart bought the personal library of Walter R. Brooks and he is in the process of donating it, along with all of his own books, to the Arne Nixon Center.



The Friends of Freddy, a literary society of which Cart is a past president, hosts a convention in even-numbered years in Brooks country, upstate New York. For more information about Freddy or the society, see the web site at [www.freddythepig.org](http://www.freddythepig.org).

## Illustrations featured in this issue

**Front page:** Illustration from *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*, by Beatrix Potter. Frederick Warne & Co. © 1908, 2002. Reproduced by permission of Frederick Warne & Co., the owner of all rights, copyrights, and trademarks in the Beatrix Potter character names and illustrations.

**Page 3:** *Pedro, The Angel of Olvera Street*, by Leo Politi.

**Page 4:** *Juanita*, by Leo Politi.

**Page 7:** *Freddy the Pig*, illustration by Kurt Wiese

Shown left to right: author Michael Cart, Library  
Dean Peter McDonald, Fresno State President  
John Welty, and Angelica Carpenter touring  
the new library building in November.  
Photo by Mila Rianto

## SIGN ME UP!



I/We would like to join the Arne Nixon Center Advocates and enclose a donation. (Donations are tax deductible as allowable by law.)

New membership       Renewal  
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# Can you identify book titles from these first lines?

(Answers on page 6)

*Q1*

What a funny sight it is to see a brood of ducklings with a hen!

*Q2*

I was raised in a gaunt house with a garden; my earliest recollections are of floating lights in the apple-trees.

*Q3*

I was born with water on the brain. Okay, so that's not exactly true. I was actually born with too much cerebral spinal fluid inside my skull. But cerebral spinal fluid is just the doctors' fancy way of saying brain grease.

*Q4*

I thought that I was rich, with a flower that was unique in all the world; and all I had was a common rose. A common rose, and three volcanoes that come up to my knees—and one of them perhaps extinct forever . . . .

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