

Who The Heck

Is



Patricia Polacco?

I'm so glad you are here and that you would like to know more about me.

I was born in Lansing, Michigan in 1944. Soon after my birth I lived, in Williamston, Michigan and then moved onto my grandparents farm in Union City , Michigan.



I lived on the farm with my mom and Grandparents until 1949. That is when my Babushka (my grandmother) died and we prepared to move away from Michigan. I must say that living on that little farm with them was the most magical time of my life...and that my Babushka and other grandparents were some of the most inspirational people in my life.

My parents were divorced when I was 3, and both my father and mother moved back into the homes of their parents. I spent the school year with my mother, and the summers with my dad. In both households I was the apple of my grandparents' eyes! I would say that these relationships with my grandparents have most definitely influenced my life and my work. You probably have noticed that in almost every book that I write there is a very



young person who is interacting with an elderly person. Personally, I feel that this is the most valuable experience of my life....having the wonder of knowing both children and elderly people.



The respect that I learned as a very young person certainly carried over into my life in later years. I have always like hearing stories from these folks. My genuine curiosity for the wonder of living a very long life prepared me to accept the declining years of my own parents.

To get back to the farm in Union City...this place was so magical to me that I have never forgotten it! This was the place where I heard such wonderful stories told...this was the place that a real meteor fell into our font yard...that very meteorite is now our family headstone in the graveyard here in Union City.



Did I tell you that [I now live in Union City?](#) This is after living in Oakland, California for almost 37 years. But, you see, every year I'd come back to Michigan to see my Dad and family.



Anyway...

In 1949 we left the farm to move , first to Coral Gables, Florida. I lived there with my Mom and my brother, Richard, for almost 3 years. Then we moved to Oakland, California . I remained there for most of my young life on into my adulthood. We lived on Ocean View Drive in the Rockridge District. What I loved the most about this neighborhood is that all of my neighbors came in as many colors, ideas and religions as there are people on the planet. How lucky I was to know so many people that were so different and yet so much alike.

It is on Ocean View that I met my best friend, Stewart Grinnell Washington. We are best friends to this day! He has a younger brother, Winston and three sisters; Jackie, Terry and Robin. When I was a student in elementary school I wasn't a very good student. had a terrible time with reading and math. As a matter of fact, I did not learn how to read until I was almost 14 years old. Can you imagine what it was like to see all my friends do so well in school and I wasn't! I thought I was dumb. I didn't like school because there was this boy that always teased me and made me feel even dumber. When I was fourteen, it was learned that I have a learning disability. It is called dyslexia. I felt trapped in a body that wouldn't do what everybody else could do. That was when one of my hero's, [my teacher](#), found what was wrong with me and got me the help I needed to succeed in school. Of course , now that I am an adult, I realize that being learning disabled does not mean DUMB AT ALL! As a matter of fact, I have learned that being learning disabled only means that I cannot learn the way most of you do. As a matter of fact most learning disabled children are actually GENIUSES! once I learned how to read and caught up with the rest of my fellow students, I did very well.



I went on to Uuniversity, majored in Fine Art, then went on to do a



graduate degree and even ended up with a Ph.D. in Art History. For a time I restored ancient pieces of art for museums. I eventually became the mother of two children, Steven and Traci, and devoted much of my days to their education and upbringing.

I did not start writing [children's books](#) until I was 41 years old.

Mind you the "art" has always been there for me most of my life.

Apparently one of the symptoms of my disability in academics is the ability of draw very, very well. So drawing, painting and sculpture has always been a part of my life even before I started illustrating my books. The books were quite a surprise, really. Mind you, I came from a family of incredible storytellers. My mother's people were from the Ukraine and Russia...my father's people were from Ireland. My extended family,(Stewart's family) were from the bayous of Louisiana...also great story tellers. When you are raised on HEARING stories.....NOT SEEING THEM, you become very good at telling stories yourself. So at the age of 41 I started putting stories that I told down on paper and did drawings to help illustrate them...I guess the rest is history.

I have enjoyed a wonderful career of writing books for children . Who could have guessed that little girl that was having such a tough time in school would end up an illustrator and author. Children and adults alike ask me where I get my ideas...I get them from the same place that you do....MY IMAGINATION... I would guess the reason my imagination is so fertile is because I came from storytelling and, WE DID NOT OWN A

T.V!!!!!!!!!!!! You see, when one is a writer, actor, dancer, musician; a creator of any kind, he or she does these things because they listen to that "voice" inside of them. All of us have that "voice". It is where all inspired thoughts come from...but when you have electronic screens in front, of you, speaking that voice for you... it DROWNS OUT THE VOICE! When I talk to children and aspiring writers, I always ask them to listen to the voice, turn off the T.V. and



LISTEN...LISTEN...LISTEN.



Now that I have moved back to Union City I am intending to open my house and community and invite people to come there to take part in writing seminars, story telling festivals, literature conferences and various events that celebrate children's literature. Keep an eye on my [newsletter](#) and my [coming soon](#) page and you may wish to come to one of these events.

Much love, and I look forward to seeing you and meeting you in person.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Patricia Polacco". The signature is written in black ink on a light background.



My Books!



Click on any book cover to find out more about that book!



 Original Artwork Available
 Video Available

Books containing artwork to preview include:

- Boatride with Lilian Two Blossom

- Uncle Vova's Tree
- Casey at the Bat
- Appelemondo's Dreams
- Picnic at Mudsock Meadow
- Bee Tree
- Babushka Baba Yaga
- Some Birthday
- My Rotten Red Headed Older Brother
- Just Plain Fancy
- Mrs. Katz and Tush
- Tikvah Means Hope



Coming Soon:
The Butterfly
The Calhoun Club
Betty Doll

TO SEE SOME BOOKS AND PROJECTS I'M WORKING ON

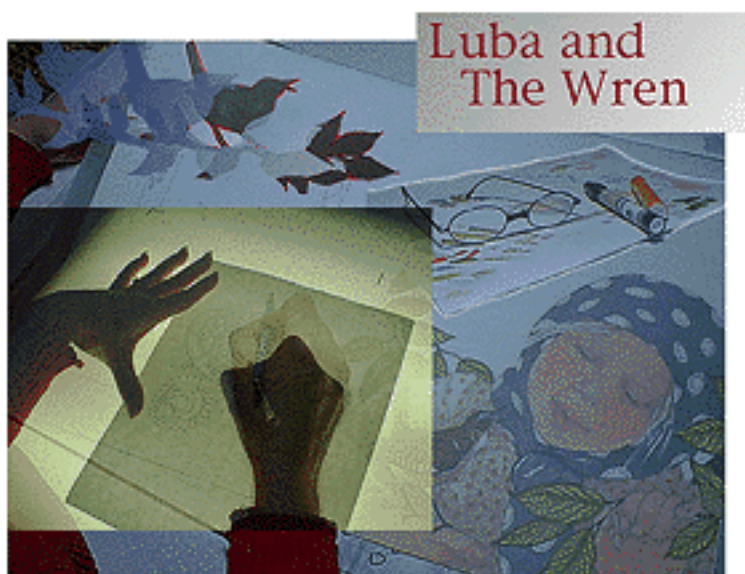
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Buy this Book

Video 
Preview



THIS IS A RETELLING, OR ADAPTION OF THE OLD RUSSIAN FOLK TALE THE FISHERMAN AND THE FLOUNDER.



IN MY STORY THE HEROINE IS A SMALL GIRL THAT FREES A WREN CAUGHT IN A FOULERS NEST IN THE FOREST. LUBA IS ASTONISHED TO HEAR THE WREN SPEAK TO HER, FOR IT WAS ENCHANTED. TO THANK LUBA FOR FREEING IT IT TOLD HER THAT SHE COLD HAVE ANY WISHES THAT SHE COULD THINK OF...BUT LITTLE LUBA IS MODEST, CONTENT AND WISHES FOR NOTHING. UPON RETURNING HOME AND TELLING

HER PARENTS OF THE ENCHANTED BIRD, THE PARENTS BEG HER TO RETURN TO

THE FOREST AND ASK THE WREN FOR A BIGGER HOUSE ON FERTILE LAND FOR THEY WERE POOR....LUBA DOES AS THEY ASK ONLY TO RETURN HOME TO A BIGGER HOUSE ON RICH LAND. LUBA THOUGHT HER PARENTS WOULD BE CONTENT, BUT ONLY AFTER A FEW SHORT WEEKS THEY ASKED HER TO RETURN TO THE FOREST AND ASK FOR MORE.....THEY DID THIS TO LUBA OVER AND OVER AGAIN...NOTHING SEEMED TO SATISFY THEM. THEY WANTED MORE AND MORE.....ONLY AT THE END DO THEY BECOME CONTENT AT LAST...YOU'LL BE VERY SURPRISED TO SEE HOW...



THIS STORY , AGAIN, COMES FROM A CONCERN THAT I HAVE TODAY FOR OUR PRECIOUS CHILDREN. CHILDREN THAT ARE LEFT IN THE WAKE OF THEIR OWN PARENTS AMBITION. I CONSIDER OUR CHILDREN THE GREATEST RESOURCE AND TREASURE THAT WE POSSESS AS A SPECIES. WE NEED

TO HONOR THEM.

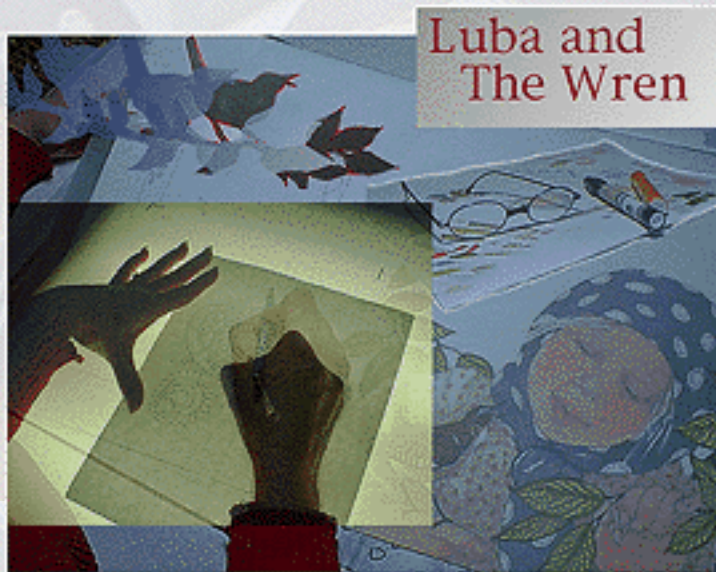
Patricia Polacco



TO VIEW INDIVIDUAL PAGES FROM SOME PAST BOOKS,

CLICK HERE.....





LUBA AND THE WREN

Video 
Preview

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Patricia Polacco



TO VIEW INDIVIDUAL PAGES FROM SOME PAST BOOKS,

CLICK HERE.....



MRS. MACK
PATRICIA POLACCO



MRS. MACK



THIS IS A GIRL AND HORSE STORY!

I WROTE THIS FOR MANY REASONS...MOST
ESPECIALLY TO HONOR

TWO INDIVIDUALS THAT MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO
ME.

MRS.. MACK, BERNICE MACFADDEN, THE WOMAN
THAT TAUGHT ME NOT

ONLY TO RIDE ANY HORSE

THERE IS, BUT SHE ALSO TAUGHT ME

ABOUT VALUING HUMAN BEINGS NO

MATTER HOW DIFFERENT THEY
WERE FROM MYSELF.



THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL IN THIS
STORY THAT IS HONORED IS
PENNY--MY SHINING COPPER PENNY,
THE HORSE THAT I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO
LOVE AND OWN FOR THE TIME. MRS.
MACK GAVE HER TO ME, AND PENNY WENT BACK TO LIVE WITH MRS. MACK
AFTER I GREW UP.



THIS STORY BOOK IS DIFFERENT THAN MOST
PICTURE BOOKS IN
THAT IT HAS CHAPTER HEADINGS AND MORE
TEXT THAN MOST

PICTURE BOOKS.

I TRIED TO MAKE A BOOK THAT AN OLDER

CHILD MIGHT LIKE TO READ. BUT A CHILD THAT IS
TOO YOUNG FOR
THE YOUNG ADULT PAPERBACK.

IT IS A BITTERSWEET STORY ABOUT THE
STRUGGLE OF
LEARNING TO RIDE, EVEN WHEN IT
SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE.

IT IS ABOUT FORTITUDE AND NOT

GIVING UP...BUT IT IS ALSO ABOUT THE GIFT OF LOVE

AND THE WONDER OF BEING YOUNG.

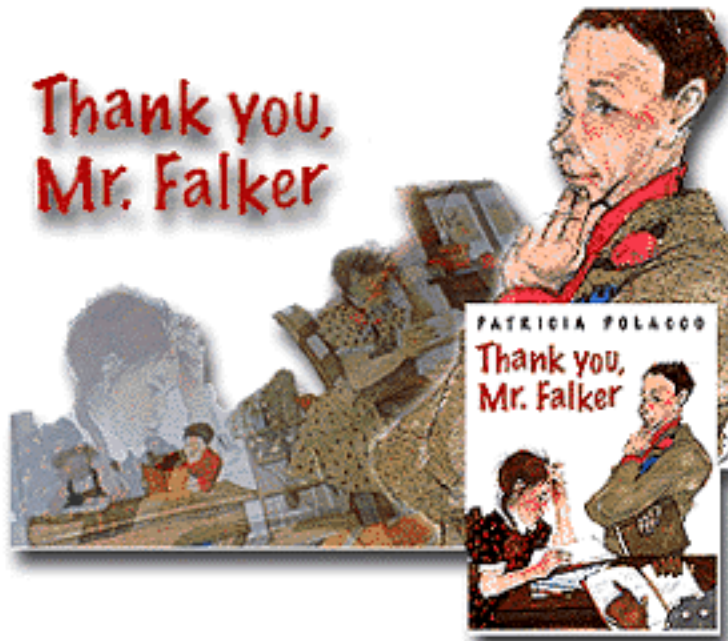


Patricia Polacco

TO VIEW INDIVIDUAL PAGES FROM SOME PAST BOOKS,

CLICK HERE.....





THANK YOU MR. FALKER



THIS STORY IS TRULY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL. IT IS ABOUT MY OWN STRUGGLE WITH NOT BEING ABLE TO READ.

THIS STORY HONORS THE TEACHER THAT TOOK TIME TO SEE A CHILD THAT WAS DROWNING AND NEEDED HELP. I AM A DYSLEXIC, DISNUMERIC AND DISGRAPHIC. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO TRY AND LEARN ALONG WITH OTHER STUDENTS WHEN I NEEDED SPECIALIZED HELP...HELP THAT WASN'T AVAILABLE IN THOSE DAYS. I REMEMBER FEELING DUMB, THAT TERRIBLE FEELING ABOUT MYSELF WAS COMPOUNDED BY BEING TEASED BY A BULLY. THAT BOY CHANGED MY LIFE AND MADE ME FEEL SO UNSAFE AND SO SAD THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL ANYMORE. MR. FALKER, MY HERO, MY TEACHER, NOT ONLY STOPPED THIS BOY FROM TEASING ME, BUT HE ALSO NOTICED THAT I WASN'T READING WELL AND GOT A READING SPECIALIST TO HELP ME THREE DAYS A WEEK.



TO THIS DAY, I REMEMBER THE FIRST DAY THAT WORDS ON A PAGE HAD MEANING TO ME...MR. FALKER HAD REACHED INTO THE MOST LONELY DARKNESS AND PULLED ME INTO BRIGHT SUNLIGHT AND SAT ME ON A SHOOTING STAR. I SHALL NEVER FORGET HIM...SO THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN BOTH TO HONOR MR. FALKER, BUT ALSO TO WARN YOUNG PEOPLE THAT MEAN WORDS HAVE A TERRIBLE POWER...AND THAT THEY SHOULD DO ALL THAT THEY CAN TO SEE THAT TEASING STOPS AT THEIR SCHOOL.



THANK YOU, MR. FALKER

Patricia Polacco



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The Keeping Quilt

Patricia Polacco

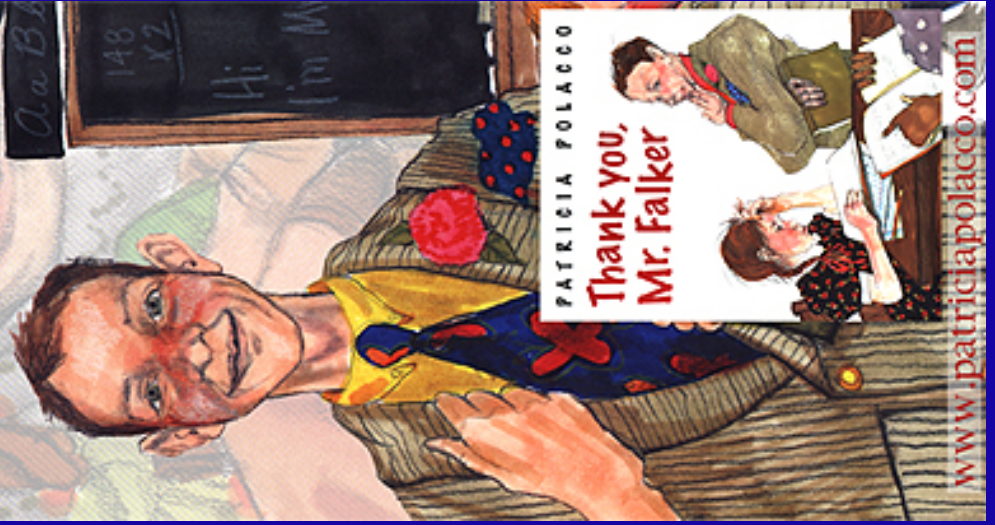




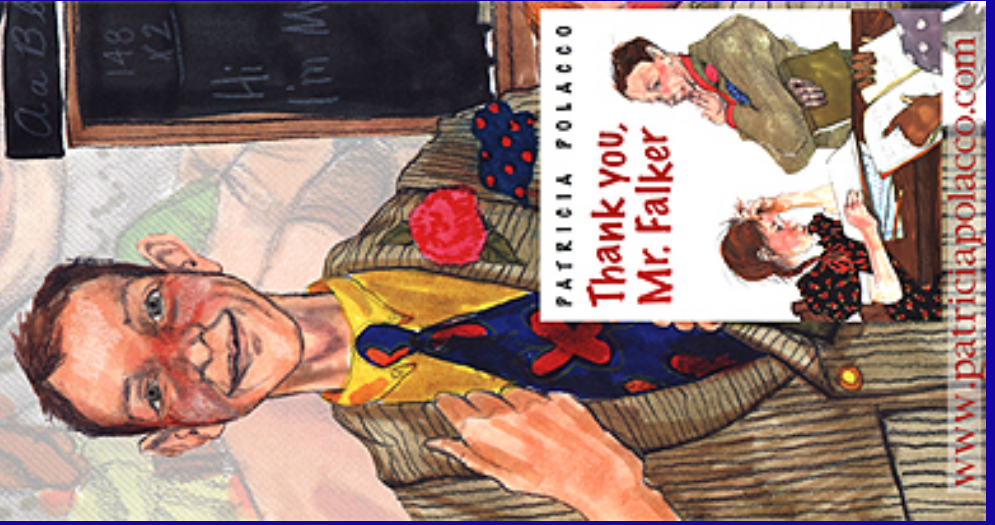
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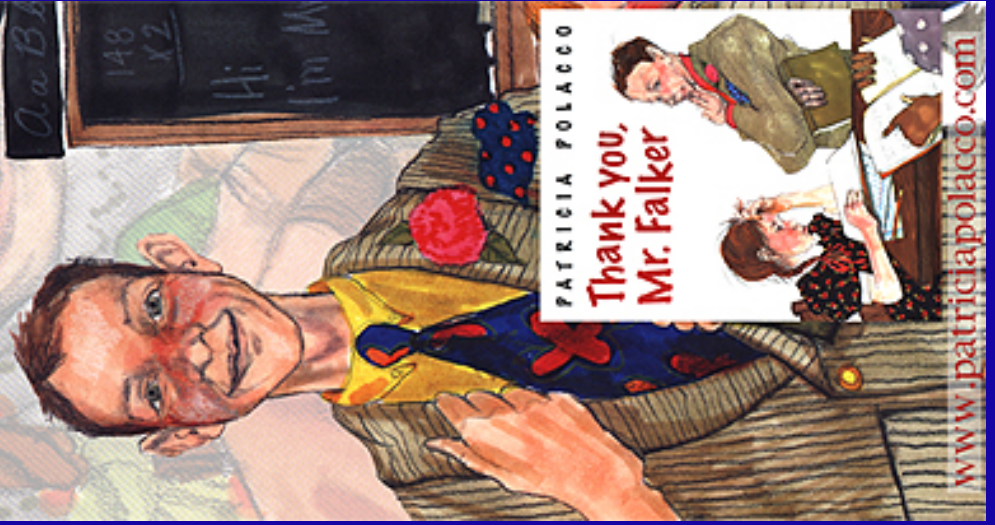
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The Keeping Quilt

The Keeping Quilt

The Keep



Tenth Anniversary Edition



I can't believe that it's been ten years since the original Keeping Quilt was published!

This special edition copy depicts the original story, and also includes some very special moments in my life that have affected me deeply... moments that I have shared with The Keeping Quilt.

From the birth of my son, Steven...





...to twenty-seven years later as I patiently wait, and wait, and wait to have grandchildren to tell the story to!

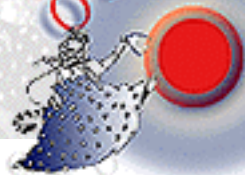
I hope that you enjoy it !

Patricia Polacco

HOME



OPTIONS



A Visit



At Work

MY STUDIO

FOR A TIME I HAD ONE OF THE ROOMS IN MY HOUSE AS MY STUDIO, BUT I FOUND THAT I NEEDED MUCH MORE ROOM TO PRODUCE THE KIND OF WORK THAT I DO. MY WRITING DESK AND OFFICE ARE STILL AT [METEOR RIDGE](#), BUT I RECENTLY ACQUIRED THIS WONDERFUL OLD VICTORIAN HOUSE ONLY ABOUT A BLOCK AWAY FROM MY HOUSE. IT IS MY ART STUDIO, A PLACE TO STORE ARTWORK, AND IT ALSO SERVES AS ADDITIONAL GUEST ROOMS WHEN MY HOUSE IS 'FULL UP'....



MY DRAWING TABLES AND BOARDS ARE HERE...THIS IS WHERE I WORK OUT WHAT MY BOOKS WILL LOOK LIKE.

I SHARE THIS SPACE WITH TWO OF MY OTHER CATS, [TUSH II AND MANINA](#)

WHEN I GET A STORY WRITTEN IN MY OFFICE AT [METEOR RIDGE](#), THEN I COME HERE TO START DRAWING THE 'DUMMY'

THE DUMMY IS A BLUEPRINT OF WHAT THE PICTURE BOOK WILL LOOK LIKE. THIS IS WHERE I FIGURE OUT WHAT IS GOING TO BE DRAWN OF EACH PAGE OF THE STORY.

SOMETIMES I USE LIVE MODELS, SOMETIMES I USE PHOTOGRAPHS AND SOMETIMES I USE JUST MY IMAGINATION TO DECIDE WHAT MY CHARACTERS WILL LOOK LIKE.

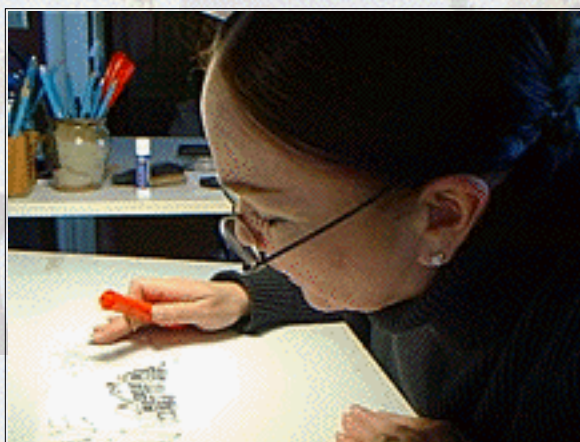


AFTER THE DUMMY IS FINISHED AND I SEND IT TO MY ART DIRECTOR IN NEW YORK, SHE WILL THEN DECIDE IF SOME OF THE DRAWINGS NEED TO BE CHANGED OR ALTERED TO BETTER DEPICT THE STORY. SHE WILL THEN SEND THE ARTWORK BACK TO ME.

I DRAW MY BOOKS 25% LARGER THAN YOU SEE THEM IN THE ACTUAL BOOKS. I PUT THESE DRAWINGS OVER A LIGHT BOX TO MAKE SURE THAT THE DRAWINGS WON'T GO INTO WHERE THE TEXT OR WORDS ARE GOING TO BE. AFTER I HAVE TRACED OUT THE FINAL ILLUSTRATION, I THEN COLOR THEM IN.



I USE PENTEL ACETONE MARKERS. I ALSO WILL PAINT INTO THEM WITH ACRYLIC PAINT, NUMBER 2 AND 6 B PENCILS, AND OIL PASTELS. SOMETIMES [WHEN YOU SEE PHOTOS OF PEOPLE IN MY BOOKS](#) -(LIKE ON A DRESSER IN FRAMES) I ACTUALLY PASTE THE PHOTOS INTO THE ARTWORK SO THAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE IT BELONGS THERE...THE PHOTOS THAT APPEAR IN MY BOOKS ARE USUALLY PICTURES OF THE PEOPLE THAT THE BOOK IS ACTUALLY ABOUT.



FROM THE TIME I GET AN IDEA FOR A STORY UNTIL YOU ACTUALLY SEE IT AS A

BOOK, ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF HAVE GONE BY. I ALSO WORK ABOUT 3 BOOKS AHEAD OF WHAT YOU SEE ON THE BOOKSHELVES.

HERE'S THE TIME FRAME:

ONE TO TWO MONTHS TO WRITE AND RE-WRITE THE STORY. MOST CHILDREN'S BOOKS ARE 32 PAGES-DOUBLE SIDED. MY EDITOR ASKS ME TO WRITE AND REWRITE MANY TIMES UNTIL THE STORY IS PERFECT.

ONE MONTH TO DRAW UP THE DUMMY WHICH IS SENT TO NEW YORK WHERE THE ART DIRECTOR MAKES CORRECTIONS ON THE ARTWORK AND THEN SENDS IT BACK TO ME.

ONE TO TWO MONTHS TO DO THE FINAL COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS.

ONE MONTH TO SCAN AND COLOR SEPARATE IN NEW YORK, THEN THE FILMS OF THE ENTIRE BOOK ARE SENT TO HONG KONG TO BE PRINTED.

MOST COLOR BOOKS ARE PRINTED IN HONG KONG, THE PRINTING PROCESS TAKES ABOUT A MONTH.

THEN THE BOOKS ARE BOUND, AND BOXED, AND SHIPPED BACK TO THE U.S. AND STORED IN THE PUBLISHERS WAREHOUSES. THEY WILL SOMETIMES STAY THERE FOR 6 MONTHS UNTIL THE PUBLICATION DATE WHEN THE BOOK IS RELEASED AND GOES ON SALE AT YOUR LOCAL BOOK STORES.



New Books



And Projects

TO SEE SOME BOOKS AND PROJECTS I'M WORKING ON

CLICK HERE



MY HOUSE, MY HOME...WELCOME!



WELCOME TO METEOR RIDGE FARM! IT'S NAME COMES FROM THE STORY ABOUT A METEOR THAT FELL ONTO MY GRANDPARENTS YARD NOT FAR FROM MY HOME. THE METEORITE IS NOW OUR FAMILY HEADSTONE IN THE VILLAGE CEMETERY; I THOUGHT MY ANCESTORS WOULD LOVE THE NAME.

ORIGINALLY MY HOME WAS

KNOWN AS 'THE PLANTATION', AND WAS BUILT BETWEEN 1859 AND 1860. THIS OLD PLACE IS ONE OF OUR HERITAGE TRUST HOMES HERE IN MICHIGAN, AND IT USED TO BE A PART OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD. THE HOUSE SITS ON THE CREST OF A SMALL HILL WITH MY DRIVEWAY RESTING JUST ON THE EDGE OF UNION CITY, THE SMALL VILLAGE THAT I CALL HOME.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN STOPPED HERE AT METEOR RIDGE ON HIS WAY TO BURLINGTON MICHIGAN TO MAKE A SPEECH. HE DIDN'T ACTUALLY STAY HERE , BUT HE WALKED THROUGH THE HOUSE WHILE THE HORSES WERE BEING REFRESHED. SOMETIMES I WALK THROUGH THE HOUSE AND WONDER WHICH DOORWAY HE MIGHT HAVE TOUCHED, OR WHAT ROOM COULD HE HAVE STOOD IN.....

I LIVE IN THIS WONDERFUL PLACE WITH TWO WONDERFUL CATS, MISS CHIFF AND LITTLE GRAY THING.



THIS HOUSE HAS A FULL ATTIC WITH 5 ADDITIONAL ROOMS THAT I DON'T USE. BUT MY HOME IS ALMOST ALWAYS FULL OF LAUGHTER, GOOD FRIENDS AND VARIOUS PEOPLE COMING AND GOING.

ON THE GROUNDS I HAVE A HUGE OLD BARN.



IN THE BARN ARE MY THREE OTHER COMPANIONS, MY GOAT, WILLIAM. MY PYGMY GOAT, CHERATTIE MAE AND MY SUFFOLK LAMB, BUNDLES. I TAKE THE THREE OF THEM FOR LONG WALKS ON LEASHES WHEN THE WEATHER IS GOOD...IT MAKES MY NEIGHBORS LAUGH OUT LOUD!



CHERATTIE MAE AND MY SUFFOLK LAMB, BUNDLES. I TAKE THE THREE OF THEM FOR LONG WALKS ON LEASHES WHEN THE WEATHER IS GOOD...IT MAKES MY NEIGHBORS LAUGH OUT LOUD!





I HAVE A SMALL WADING POND AND INTEND ON BUILDING A VERY LARGE POND TO ATTRACT CANADA GEESE...I'M HOPING THAT THIS PLACE WILL BE A REFUGE FOR ANIMALS AND PEOPLE ALIKE.

I LOVE THIS PLACE BECAUSE OF ALL THE WONDERFUL TREES...WHAT GLORY TO WATCH THEM DURING THE SEASONS...I HAD FORGOTTEN THE MANY VARIETIES OF BIRDS THAT LIVE HERE IN MICHIGAN. EVERY MORNING I AWAKEN TO THEIR BEAUTIFUL SINGING. IN THE SUMMER I PLANT A LARGE VEGETABLE GARDEN. I GROW MY OWN TOMATOES,SQUASH,MELONS AND RHUBARB...YUM!



MY TWO GROWN CHILDREN, TRACI AND STEVEN LIVE IN KALAMAZOO ONLY ABOUT 40 MILES AWAY AND THEY COME VISIT OFTEN. I LOVE HAVING FRIENDS COME AND STAY WITH ME. I LOVE TO COOK FOR THEM AND OFFER A QUIET RETREAT AWAY FROM THEIR BUSY LIVES...

Patricia Polacco





News For Fall

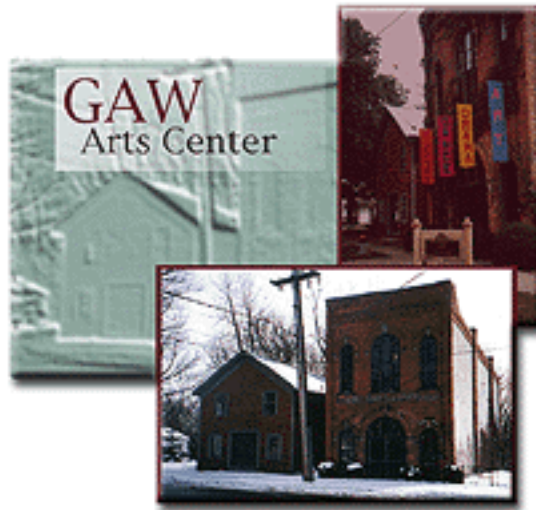
My Dears,

How I adore the fall! Especially since I have moved back to my beloved Michigan. The leaves are turning gold, red, orange, amber and sienna...it seems almost happen overnight. They flutter from their limbs and rest in a patchwork of stunning color blanketing the ground. The air is crisp in the mornigs. unmistakably fall, offering a bracing nip that is exhilarating. I savor morning walks down the streets of my village. I try, with all my might not to dive into carefully arranged leaf hills that line the yards. The sound of shuffling through them ignites sweet childhood memories. I see columns of white smoke spiraling through not quite bare limbs of sugar maples. My nostrils fill with the glorious scent of slowly burning leaves. All that is nature almost overloads the senses. Such colors! They defy any painter's brush or photographer's eye. Yet here it is in all it's glory...a feast for eyes, symphony for the ears, a haven for the soul. During the summer we celebrated some wonderous events. I would have announced them in my summer news letter, but my summer news letter didn't happen. We had a disasterous office fire on June 6th that destroyed our computer, among other things and virtually shut us down for the summer. As some of you know I bought the old firehouse here in Union City in an effort to save it

from a wrecking ball...the architecture alone was stunning and it seemed so terrible to let the glorious old building perish. My children, Traci and Steven and I decided to use this old building as a center in this village devoted to art, music, drama and dance. It was dedicated in the memory of my mother and her two brothers whose lives were dedicated to the appreciation of the arts. We named it the [Gaw Center for the Arts](#). Gaw is the family name on my mother's side. Mary Gaw Barber was a patroness of the dramatic arts and dance, Richard, her brother was a fine concert pianist and patron of music and George Gaw was an inventor and also supported all that is artistic. A piano concert was performed by Virginia Folsum, a former student of my uncle's. It was a glorious afternoon of wine, music, art and drama, Not to mention lots of laughter and a few tears. A string quartet played in the garden and a dramatic reading was performed by Stewart Washington a long time family friend and actor who was coached by my mother Mary Gaw Barber. An art show in the loft featured various pieces by relatives and friends, including my son Steven, Rebekah Barber, Darwin Herman and myself. It is hoped that in the future this center will be used as a reception hall for various occasions as well as a place to view art, hear music and see dramatic productions. Many family members attended from all over the country. Monique Gaw, widow of Richard Gaw, Martha Gaw Dinkle and her son Stephen. Family members who were unable to attend were David Gaw, Richard Barber and his family who currently live in California.

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This wonderful space will serve as a living monument to three very special people and I encourage any of you who wish to come and participate in events to e-mail me with your ideas.

Patricia Polacco



News For Winter!



Dear Ones,

Well, This is how I was dressed for most of the winter here in Michigan. I knew that the parka and muck-luks that I got in Alaska would come in handy!



I had snow drifts on my house and roof that , at times, exceeded 5 feet, Some drifts got as high as the rain gutter....The holidays were wonderful, though, even though we were battling "ice dams" on every overhang of my house...(In case you don't' know what that is.... The snow gets so deep on the roof, that it melts right next to the roof and builds up ice just along the edge of the roof...This holds water under the shingles and causes water to ooosooooze into the inner walls of the house.... **EEEEEEEEEEEEEEK!**

I guess I can say that I have really experience a "bad Michigan winter" After all, it was the great "Blizzard of 99" We did have a wonderful holiday season, as usual. It is made even more

festive by both of my children now living in Michigan only a few miles away.



celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah...as well as any other holiday that is appropriate! I had 4 trees! One in my music room, one in the library, one on the summer porch and one on the upper landing of my stairs. Each tree had a theme...I collect old sleighs and Santa Clause figures...so each tree had a Santa and his sleigh.....

I always give a huge Open House and invited every teacher and librarian and book store owner that could manage to make the trip. The house was full of good friends, children and laughter. Each child took home a teddy bear from my collection for the holidays.

I hope your holidays were grand too! Much , much love,

P.S. Next year during the holiday season, we will open the [Gaw Center](#) for the Arts and have special "Christmas" readings for the local children.... All served up with hot cider and popcorn. You can imagine that I have quite a collection of Christmas, Hanukkah and Holiday books for children and it will be my pleasure to read them for a number of evenings to the children of this village!



Dear Ones,

Well....Spring is here so suddenly that it is almost hard to imagine.

It seems like it was only a week or two ago that we were knee deep in snow here at Meteor Ridge!

We've had two huge thunderstorms and now the grass is greener than green! The trees are budding leaves, daffodils have poked through and flowers are blooming! Easter and Passover went by without my planned easter egg hunt in my yard for the children of the village...but I got a flu this winter that "flattened" me so that it was impossible to do near anything. We have many activites planned for the Spring and Summer here at Meteor Ridge....

Steward Washington(Chicken Sunday) is planning to come here to Union City to do a drama residency for our [Gaw Center for the Arts](#). We are hoping to put on some small plays and have some puppet shows for the children. We are also planning a concert of piano concertos as well as an Art Show....much to do.

I will be leaving for my Spring Tours soon, I'll be going to Connecticut, Massachusets, Baltimore, Illinois , Ohio and Mlchigan, and won't be completely through with school programs until June 6th!

Thursday, June 17th, I will be hosting an Artists House and Studio Tour for participants coming with the Mazza Institute in Ohio. This is a delightful tour that is organized by the Mazza Center at the University of Findlay. Participants load up in a bus and take tours of various Children's book authors homes and studios here in the Midwest and Canada.

The artists that will be visited are:

Will Clay

Denise Fleming

Patricia Polacco

David Small and Sarah Stewart

Maryann Kovalski

Paul Morin

Janet Wilson

Joe Badali

Then back to Findlay Ohio!

I'm so honored to be part of this tour!

I will also be having a [house and studio tour](#) that is open to the public on July 17th , 1999 - Saturday.

This is sponsored by the Union City Historical Society and proceeds will benefit this society's efforts to maintain and protect homes and buildings of historical significance, in this area. If you are interested in attending this event, be sure and E-mail. [My home](#) will be on this tour as well as many other wonderful fintage homes in the area.

New book out this spring is: [Luba and The Wren](#) - Philomel

Hope I see some of you at the house tour on July 17th!

I am looking forward to the summer ahead! Much, much love...

Patricia Polacco



Homes Tour



**The Green Thumb Garden Club
of Union City and The Society
for Historic Preservation
presents the 1999 Union City
and Burlington Township Homes
Tour.**

July 17 1999

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets:

\$8.00 in advance

\$10.00 day of event

For tickets please send a self addressed stamped envelope to:

**Martha Marsh
57 Sycamore Bend
Union City Mi.
49094**

There will also be a raffle for a handmade quilt: \$2.00 per ticket or 3 for \$5.00

All proceeds benefit the Garden Club and Historic Society.

A lunch will be served at the Burlington Church of God from 1100a.m. to 200 p.m.

Price is unknown at this time.

An art show featuring local artists will be held in the Gaw arts Center in Union City.

There will be no charge for the gallery, refreshments will be sold to raise money for the Gaw Center.

Patricia Polacco will also be signing books at her home as part of the homes tour.

Directions:

Union City is on highway 60

Interstate 69 to Highway 60

Interstate 94 to Highway 66 to Highway 60

Accommodations can be found in Battle Creek, Coldwater or Marshall, MI.

All are within 20 miles or so of Union City.

P.S. If you would like a brief look at my home, [click here.](#)



Dear Ones,

Well the Fall came to Michigan with the most glorious colors that I have seen since I have moved back here three years ago!

I think that this year our color display rivaled that of Vermont or any New England state, for that matter.

The air grows crisper in the mornings and I watch the squirrels, rabbits, and hares build their nests for the coming winter. My pumpkin patch grew a bumper crop just waiting to be carved for Halloween!

just before Halloween the leaves started falling...and falling...and **FALLING!!!!!!**

After a while raking didn't even work, so we had to get a leaf "sucker-upper"...and even then it was a never ending job.

Day after Day, from dawn to dusk was spent, it seems, trying to stay ahead of the falling leaves.

We did manage to harvest our pumpkins, carve them and " lay in " tons of candy treats for the goblins and masked figures that that were soon to visit. We even managed to clear up all the leaves the night before and had a huge bonfire.

On Halloween night (this year we celebrated on Saturday night in Union City). The endless parade of costumed youngsters hopped, jogged, crawled and skipped up my long drive way to "Trick and Treat "... We estimated over 1000 children came to my door this year!

Another highlight of my fall was an appearance that I did at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant Mi. ...It would have been a very routine appearance until a student brought an old friend up to the podium...

IT WAS MRS. MACK ...IN PERSON!!!!

This dear lady is almost 90 years old (in April) ...she was still "breaking horses" up until 4 months ago.

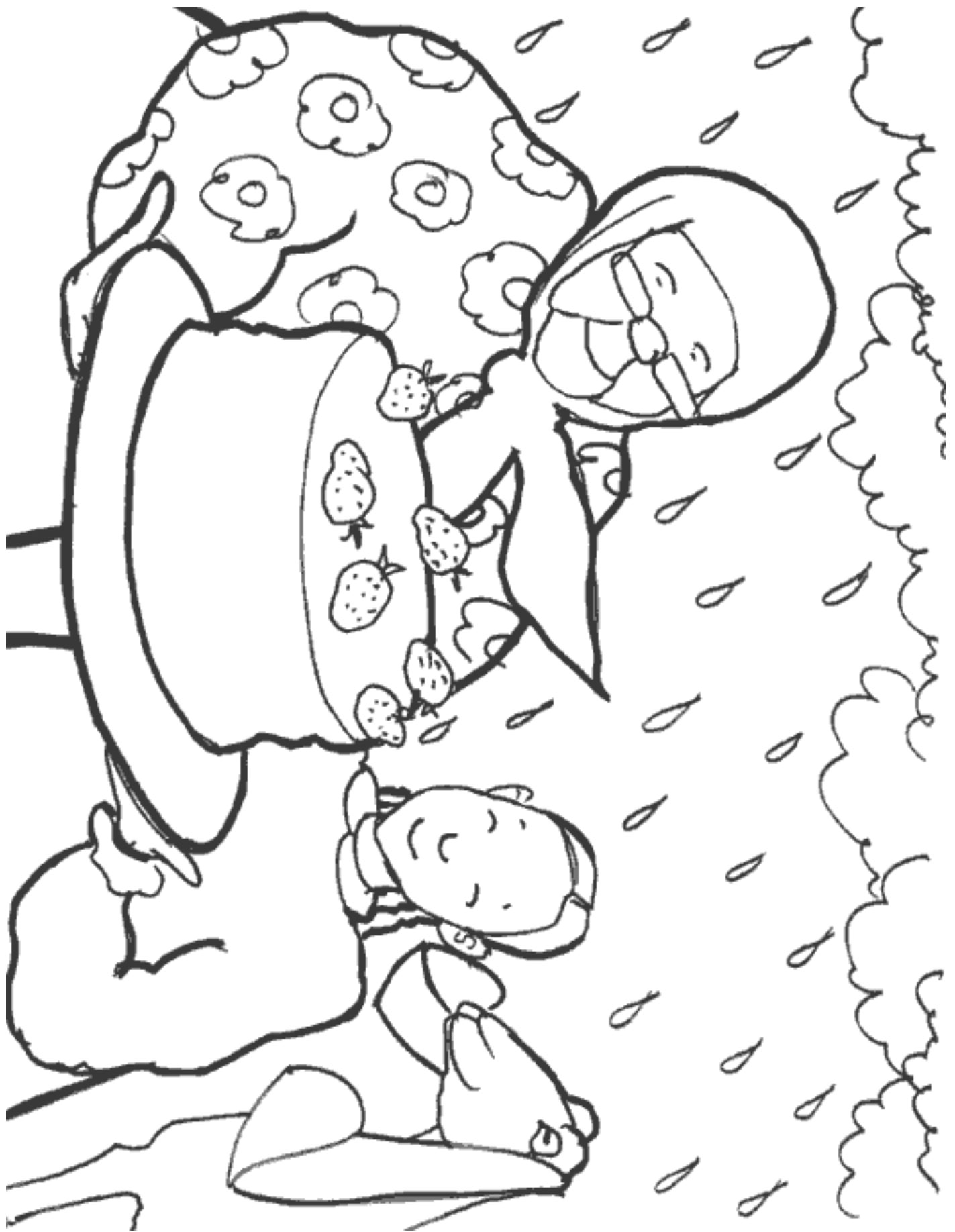
It was such a moving experience or me to be surprised by her visit. The audience was also deeply moved to see that Mrs. Mack is a real person...and such a remarkable person!

Now it seems that the fall is coming to an end...winter is almost upon us. ..Thanksgiving is this week and I already have our turkey with all the trimmings. Our plans for the holiday season are to have a "Santa's Forrest and Christmas Tree Land" at the arts center as well as an evening of telling holiday stories. We will pop popcorn, warn cocoa and perhaps even a visit from Ole St. Nick himself.

And so, for all of you I am hoping health, happiness and a glorious winter and holiday season to come!

much love,

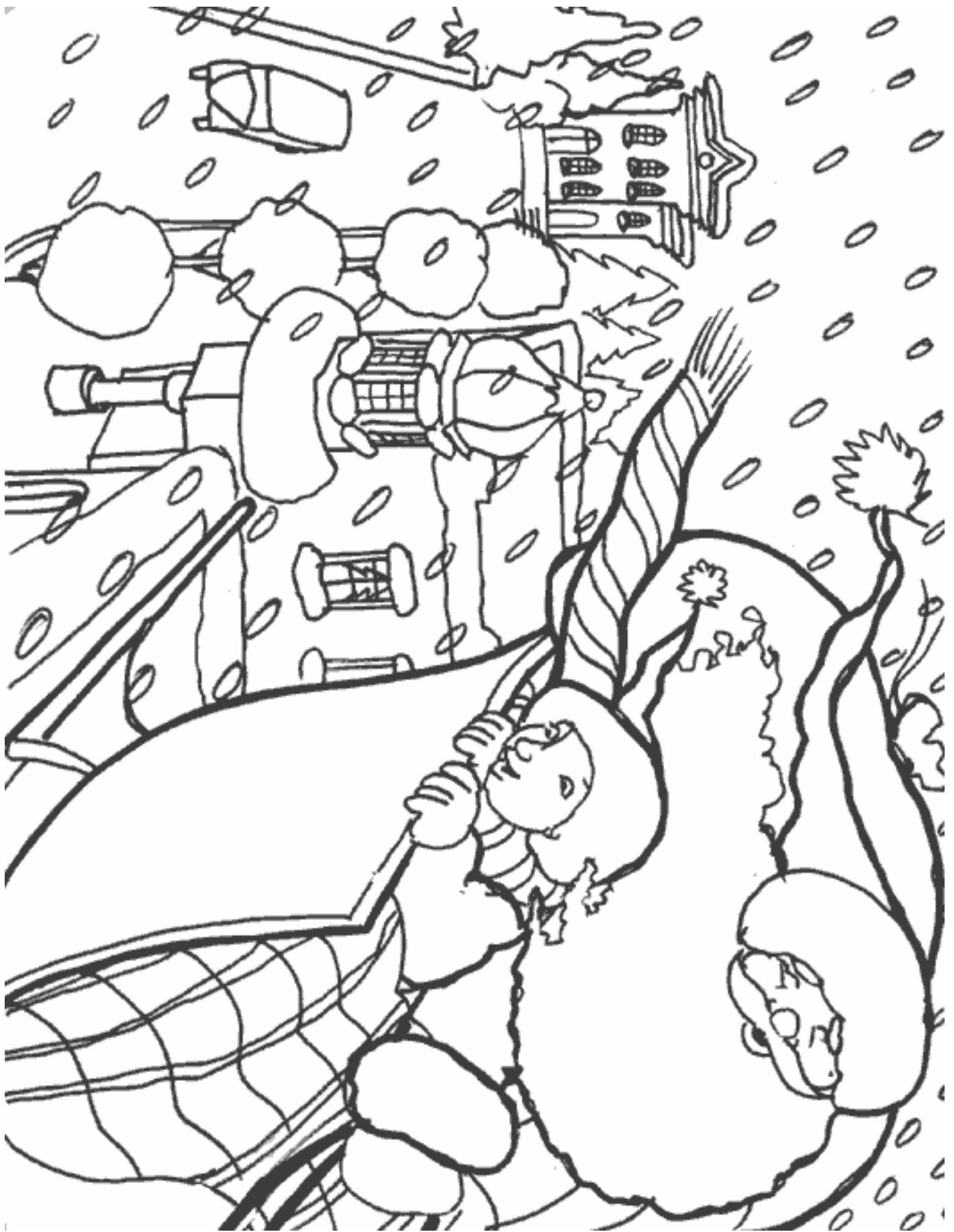
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Polacco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.













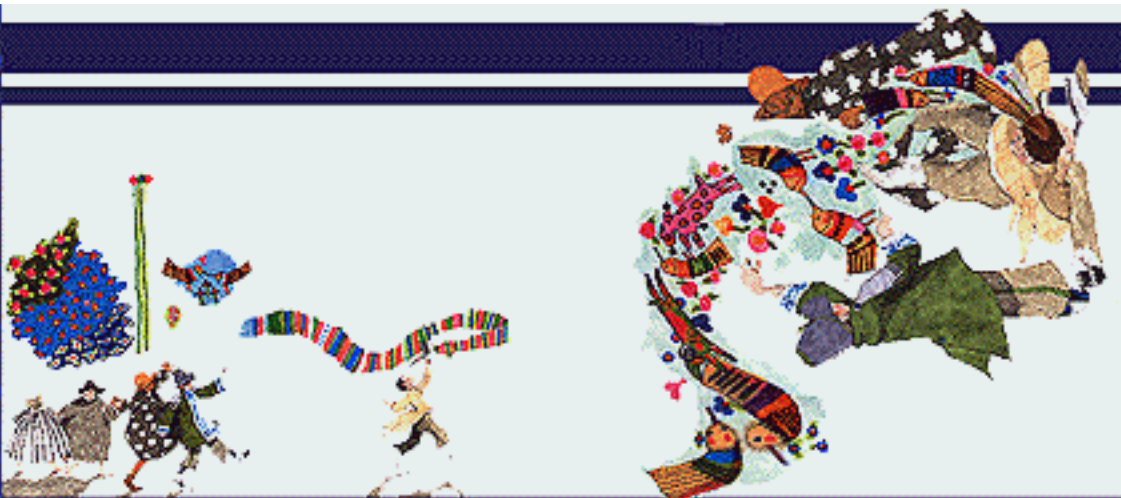






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I'd love to hear your comments and suggestions about this site and whatever else!

Just click the 'send e-mail' image below.
If for some reason this doesn't work for you,
the address is spolacco@net-link.net

Please only send photo attachments
in the form of jpeg or gif's.





Homes Tour! 1999

We had a great week end. Thanks to all those who made it all possible. The Union city historic Society and the Garden Club did a wonderful job in pulling this all together.

It is always a treat for me to see my family work on

projects such as these. We all bustle around the night before gathering cats into one room, laying down plastic to protect rugs, last minute silver polish on anything that could be polished and we were ready to go. As a special treat for us we have an old family friend, Stewart Washington visiting for the summer. It reminded me of old times when we would all be painting my grandmothers or working in the yard...Stewart was always there and my brother and I were a little like Hack Finn in our ability to attract friends to these family work parties. They always had fun though.

We would all listen to music really loud, tell jokes, order a couple of pizzas and pop and have fun. Work rarely seemed like work in those days.

We had a steady stream of people from 9 am. to 5 pm. The part I enjoyed the most was to see my mom rocking in her chair on her back porch signing books, laughing, telling tales and reminiscing with those who remembered the little town, way back when.

We all truly enjoyed meeting everyone, especially those who drove such great distances.

We had groups from Tennessee, Pennsylvania., and Maryland.all teachers. People were coming from all parts of the Midwest as well as Michigan.

One of the big bonuses for our family was to meet members of our own family for the first time.

I meet over the inter net descendants of Sheldon Curtis (of Pink And Say). What a treat to meet our 4th and 5th cousins...and to find out that we all live so close.

Steve and Stewart manned the Gaw arts center all day. An art show of local

artists was upstairs and refreshments were offered downstairs.

At the end of a long day, we had a small reception for the teachers and friends who had traveled so far to join us. We wanted to thank them for their support as well as talk to them about possible teacher's retreats in our little town of Union City.

Fun was had by all...lots of laughter , friendships made...food and fun.

I truly enjoy functions like these where I get to meet so many different people in a day. So nice to meet good people out there.

Hopefully this will become an annual tradition.





My house was originally built by a gentleman who ran one of the big industries in Union City back in the mid 1800's. He commissioned workers to come from England and Germany to do all the wood work on the homestead. Unfortunately he died before the completion of the home.



His widow and daughter had to turn the private home into an Inn and stage coach stop to help support the family and large home. It is rumored that president

Lincoln stopped there, had a ladle of water, played catch with his son and walked the grounds before continuing his trip to Burlington Mi. where he gave a speech.





Over the years since the Inn days, the house has been home for a few different people. At one point it was even an antique store. When I



bought the house five years ago it was in need of quite a bit of work. But through the years the integrity of the house had not been compromised. The wood work had never been painted over...you can still see the words " baggage room " and " stage office " painted over the living room and guest

bedroom doors. The house took about two years to build originally, and about two years for mom to renovate.

From my home in California I was able to communicate via fax with my contractor in Union City.



Being an artist certainly helped me convey what I wanted done to the house. I would simply draw what I

wanted , faxed it off and Mr. Cole knew what to do. Mr. Cole had never



renovated a house before...he had only built them from the ground up. But as you can see...he did a magnificent job. The first year was doing the nuts and bolts of the house, all the electrical, plumbing, structural, and roofing. The second year was more cosmetic. I had the original picture of the house as it stood as an Inn and was able to add back the porches that had been torn down over the years. The only changes that were made were to add on a more " modern "Kitchen and a couple more bathrooms. (None of us were too anxious to use the 6 seater out house that sat out behind the house)





The Gaw Center

The Gaw Arts center.

We were glad to open the art center for the garden club and historic society to host an art show also on the day of the homes tour. Local artists were able to show work. Painters, sculptors, quilters...so much talent in such a small town.



The art center was originally the fire house for Union City. This grand old brick building has also housed a number of enterprises. At one time it was a garage, an ice cream parlor, an antique store and a little diner.

The center is named after my mom's family's name.

Her two uncles as well as her mother were all very talented in their own ways. Music, theater, dance, art...they did it all. So it is in their name that the center has been dedicated.



Once the building has been insulated and made structurally sound it is my mother's hope to be able to provide a space for the town to explore their art. We want to offer the space for all sorts of projects. We hope to have a theater setting upstairs to be used for plays, open mike nights, dramatic readings and puppet shows. We are

talking with people who would like to teach ballet for kids of all ages...we think that's great. We would love to offer the space for the local kids to hold dances, musicals, workshops...anything to do with the arts.

That's exactly how we would like to see the center used.





The People

A look at some of the faces that attended!









Hi Everybody!

No matter what I write here, there is no way to really tell you how I feel about the trip to Union City, Michigan, home of children's author and illustrator Patricia Polacco this past weekend. Most of you probably don't even know who I am talking about, but I hope that will change. Please bear with me as I try to tell you about some of the most exciting and uplifting experiences of my life.

Last September Mary Jean Smith, a dear friend and librarian at Southside, sent me an e-mail about the National Teachers of English Conference that was going to be at Opryland Hotel in November. One of my favorite authors Karen Hess, author of Newbery Medal winner *Out of the Dust*, was going to be the guest speaker at one of the banquets and was going to signing her books. Mary Jean said to me, "You have to go. What an opportunity!" I decided I would.

In early November I received my program for the conference and it was over an each thick. Not being too well schooled in children's literature I asked Mary Jean to help me plan my weekend at NTCE. She told me I had to meet so and so and so and so, etc. Several of the authors I was familiar with because of my sixth graders, but some of the names she gave me were new to me. One of those was Patricia Polacco. When I asked about her, Mary Jean gave me a video called *The Dream Keeper* and several books written by her to read. Needless to say, I became fascinated with this person and knew I wanted to meet her too. I felt that we were kindred spirits as defined by Lucy Maud Montgomery.

That Saturday was one of the most exciting days I had ever had. I got to meet Avi, Sharon Creech, Karen Cushman and Karen Hesse. I made wonderful pictures and they all signed a book for me. I could hardly wait until Sunday. When I finally got back to Opryland Hotel Sunday afternoon, my heart was broken. Patricia Polacco's appearance had been canceled. I tried not to cry right there in front of hundreds of people, but it was tough!!! My day picked up though when I got to talk to Karen Hesse for the third time in two days!!! I also got to meet a wonderful author from North Carolina, Gloria Houston.

When I got back home I thought I would surf the net and look up authors that I had met and had hoped to meet. That's when I came across (check it out)
www.patriciapolacco.com



After spending hours reading every word and looking at all the pictures, I wrote to her son and told him how much I enjoyed the site. I also ask some questions and her daughter Traci answered promptly.

I spent the rest of the school year trying to introduce Patricia Polacco's work to students, teachers, friends and acquaintances. I wanted to get my librarian something special at the end of the year. I got one of my wild ideas and started working on it. I wrote Traci and told her what I wanted. She was a tremendous help. After weeks of communicating with her and different people, it all came together. My class, my team teaching partner and I presented Mary Jean with a framed autographed picture and print to hang in the school's library.

Every week I check the website to see what's new. The last week of school there was a newsletter from Patricia Polacco that told about The Society of Historical Preservation and Green Thumb Garden Club's Home Tour. She invited everyone to come visit her. She would be giving a tour of her home and signing books that day. Why not? I asked myself. I talked with several friends and found several interested. I wrote Traci and she told me who to contact. (By this time, Traci and I were buddies.)

I started reading all I could about Branch County, Michigan and the tiny village of Union City on the Internet. I called the Branch County Chamber of Commerce and the lady I spoke to was great. She sent me all kinds of information through the mail. I called the Village Office and talked to a wonderful lady named Kim. Over the next few weeks, I talked to Carolyn Rice from the historical society and Martha Marsh from the garden club. Both ladies were so helpful and friendly. I could hardly wait to meet them.

With tickets purchased, reservations made and bags packed, Mary Jean Smith, Penny Gregory, Sharon Warren and I set out for an adventure on July 16, 1999, at 7:00 am. The trip to Coldwater, Michigan took about nine hours, with plenty of stops. Every mile of the way was filled with our own stories and wondering what it was going to be like to meet Patricia Polacco in "real life". We checked in at the Quality Inn and decided to check out Union City, about ten minutes away. We couldn't wait until the next day.

We drove up and down streets, taking it all in, and all of a sudden there it was, Meteor Ridge, home of Patricia Polacco. What a beautiful and peaceful place!! All of us sat in the car in speechless.

Tomorrow.....

About 9:30 the next morning, we arrived at the Hammond House Museum to pick up our tickets and map on the homes on tour. The Hammond House was built in 1840 and was of the first structures built in Union City. The Historical Society is responsible for its upkeep and archives. Bell Tower Park is on its grounds. Beautiful flowers and a small building that houses a bell from Union City's 1877 schoolhouse catch the eye. We meet several very friendly people there. We all bought chances on a beautiful handmade quilt. Later, I bought a cookbook because it had Union City, Michigan on the cover.

We wanted to find Traci because she was looking for us, so we headed to The Gaw Arts Center, an 1876 fire station saved when Patricia bought it. The center was an interesting place, and its future looks bright. The center is named for Patricia's mother, Mary Ellen Gaw Barber and her two brothers, Richard and George. We saw a lot of art and meet several people, but not Traci.

We all agreed to head to Meteor Ridge, home of Patricia Polacco. People, old and young alike, were everywhere. We walked the beautiful grounds. Every tree, flower, gazebo, and bridge we took in as we walked up the long drive to the house on the hill. (Not a hill to Tennesseans, but a hill to the people in Michigan.) We stood around the entrance looking at all our eyes could take in. Finally, with a deep breath, we walked through the front door.

We were greeted by members of the Historical Society. We had read that the house was once called The Plantation. It was built around 1859 and was a part of the Underground Railroad. Also, President Abraham Lincoln walked through the house one time while his horses were being refreshed. When Patricia purchased this twenty room house, it was in need of extensive renovation. What a job she did!

One of the rooms had beautiful ancient art and icons on the wall that she had restored. Restoring art was her job before she started writing children's books. The music room had a harp standing in the very center. I love the music of a harp. (I forgot to ask if she plays. I'll have to find out.)

We checked out every picture, rug, ceiling, piece of furniture, light, etc. on our tour. As we got to the dining room, I saw the top of her head on the sun porch. She was surrounded by lots of people. There was laughing and talking all around. The door was blocked, so we had to wait until for the crowd to thin, which it did rather quickly. While we were waiting, I was looking for Traci. I didn't know exactly what she looked like, but I found a person I thought to be her. It was. About the time we got on the porch, Traci walked out with some people. I missed her again, but not for long.

The time finally came. We all introduced ourselves to Patricia. She said that she was impressed that we came from so far just to see her. She told us she wanted to do something special for us. Out of the clear blue, she told us she wanted us to tour her studio where she draws and writes. She said that Traci was going to take us, but for us not to say anything to anyone else. NO PROBLEM. We were in shock! She had already invited us to a private informal conference later in the day. We were looking forward to that and now this!! Things just kept getting better and better.

Steven Polacco, Patricia's son, came up, and we had a nice conversation. He is the master of her website and does an outstanding job. Steven is an art teacher at Western Michigan University (I think that's the right name). He had been running errands and helping take of his mother in fine fashion.

In a few minutes, Traci came back in the room and I introduced myself. We hugged and introduced everyone else. We took a few pictures and got our books signed. Then Patricia told her to take care of us. We spent hours with Traci. She took us in one of their vehicles through the back of the property. The first place we went was to the cemetery.

The cemetery is a very important place, because a meteor that fell in her grandparents' front yard is the headstone for her mother's family plot and gives its name, Meteor Ridge, to her home. Patricia carries a piece of that meteorite to every school where she presents. Every child that wants may touch it and make a special wish that follows strict rules. Our hearts were touched by a grave found near the meteorite. The headstone was shaped like a baseball and had toys on its base. There was a small picture of an eight year boy. Little Tory was killed while trying to help someone who was hurt in an accident. A citizen of Union City gave up his burial plot so he could be buried near the meteorite to fulfill his dying wish. Traci said that her mother would have had him buried right beside meteorite, but she did not know until after the fact about his wish. The story of Tory will be a part of Patricia's new series of books.

From the cemetery we went to the studio. We were careful not to let the cats out. The studio is home to Blackie and Stripie, who has an extra toe. (Anyone who knows Patricia knows her cats are precious to her.) The first room we came into was the kitchen. All around the tops of the cabinets were things that people had sent to Patricia. The one thing that really stood out was the doll. A lady made the doll exactly like the doll in Patricia's story Babushka's Doll and sent to her as a gift. You'll have to read that story. It's great!

Next, we entered the studio, an open room filled with light. There were book shelves filled with things that had been given her and a few books. Her drawing table and her tools were right there in front of us. I felt like I was on hallowed ground. The paintings on the wall were some of my favorites from her books. There was also work of other artists. In the corner stood shelves of beautiful Pansky Eggs. Traci said the cats love to play with them, so they had to be protected. Patricia mentions these eggs in several of her stories, but the most famous one is Rechenka's Eggs.

Traci took us through the process of how her mother does a book, especially the art work. To show us what her work looks like when it goes to her editor, she took us in a room that had shelves from the floor to the ceiling. They were filled with huge portfolios. One for each of her books!!!!!! Traci told us we could look in any of them. We chose Thank you, Mr. Faulker. We took it to the table and opened it. All of the original drawings and editor comments in red were right in front of us. Traci let us make pictures of some of the pages. I think all of you would enjoy this story. It especially grabs the heart of any teacher.

Mr. Felker (real name, but could not be contacted for permission to use) was the teacher who discovered Patricia had dyslexia. She had always been a wonderful artist, but she could not read. She was teased terribly as a child, but Mr. Felker stopped all that and got her on the right road to learn to read by the age of fourteen. Lots of her stories talk about her disability. (She even mentioned it to us when she signing our books.) As an interesting note, the two of them met years later. He was very proud of her. Since then, Mr. Felker died of brain cancer. Traci said that his family had that book read at his funeral. In the portfolio was the beginning of a painting of Mr. Felker and Patricia the last day she saw him. I wonder if she will finish it? Before we left, Traci gave me a copy of Thank you, Mr. Faulker. Tears couldn't help but fall. She also gave each of a Patricia Polacco mobile for our classroom.

Time was flying, so we had to get on with places to go. Traci took us to the barn to meet the famous animals that are in her books and shown on her website. She acquired them at the county fair. Some children had begged her to buy their animals to keep them from being bought and sold as meat. She did. What lucky animals Bundles, William and Cherattie Mae are! They have a huge area to play in, plenty of good food and an owner that loves each of them. Patricia uses their pictures in her campaign to stop teasing and bullying nationwide. You can see them on the website.

As we came back from the barn, I had to go back on the sun porch and have Patricia sign my new treasured book. There was no one on the porch, but I heard her voice in the kitchen. I called out, "Is dinner ready?" She laughed and said, "It's just pizza." She came around the corner smiling. She graciously signed my book and told me she would see me later. I was sooooo excited!

We told Traci good-bye and thanked her for our wonderful tour. We walked slowly down the driveway taking it all in one last time. At the end of the drive, a nice lady took our picture with the house in the background. (I hope it turns out.)

When we got into the car, Mary Jean said we needed to go somewhere to sit and relax on our wonderful day so far. We found the perfect place, D.J.'s right on the main street of Union City. We met people from Marshall, MI and Maryland in there, and they wanted us to sit close to them. We had seen them earlier in the day at Meteor Ridge. Marilyn and Mick (MI) and Dianne and Bill (MD) were as excited as we were. It was hard not to tell where we had been. They were so excited about just being in her home. It was a pleasure to know that men like Patricia stories too. We stayed in D.J.'s for a long time. The food was great and what fun we had! The owners came out and wanted to make our picture, which they did. We got them together and made their picture too.

From D.J.'s we went to visit three other homes on the tour. What an experience! I got to meet two of the ladies I had talked to on the phone before our trip. They were both wonderful people. I made a few pictures for my album. I had to get a picture of the St. Joseph's River, too. It was everywhere.

We drove back to Coldwater to find Taylor's Books. Traci told us that was a great place to look for books. We were searching for a copy of Aunt Chip and the Triple Creek Dam Affair. I wanted copies for two friends and myself, but we didn't have any luck. Never fear, we found plenty of others to purchase. I found two copies of the tenth anniversary edition of The Keeping Quilt. What a beautiful true story! This edition has extra pages the original did not have, including the death of her mother. That one picture will be forever engraved in my heart. (Can you imagine what people thought seeing grown women standing in a bookstore with the tears flowing?) This book is a must read that includes a lot of Jewish and family traditions. Patricia has a Russian Jewish heritage. I bought the copies, one for myself and the other for a student who read me that story aloud the first time I heard it.

We could hardly wait to get to The Gaw Art Center. When we arrived, she and Traci greeted us like old friends. There were tables with cloths, food and flowers everywhere. All together there were about twenty-five people. Four ladies from the historical society began the program by presenting Patricia with The House Beautiful Award. After that, they left. After everyone had been served, she took the floor and made a talk about how special everyone in the room was to her. She recognized Traci and Steven and said wonderful things about them. It was Steven's birthday, so we sang Happy Birthday to him. It sounded VERY good. She also introduced some cousins that showed up for the tour. Those cousins were descendants of Say in the book Pink and Say. (This one will get you.)

Another guest was her best friend Stewart Washington from Oakland, California. He was there to work with some villagers in a drama workshop. Stewart appeared in Jurassic Park, Jurassic Park II, and Outbreak. He told us to look for his legs, because he gets eaten in part II. What a character.





Stewart is mentioned in several of her books. Chicken Sunday is the main story about his family. We all enjoyed being with him. After family, she recognized each group of teachers from Maryland, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. She begin by telling how special we were in her heart. I was just overcome with emotion. You could tell she meant every word she said. She began to explain what she wanted to do for teachers. She had so many things that sounded wonderful to me, but she wanted us to be the ones to tell her what she could do for us!!!!!!!!!!!!!! We were given questionnaires to bring back to our schools and share. All of us spent a lot of time discussing the possibilities. Can you imagine???????????

Patricia signed books and signed a new poster that has all her book covers on it for every one of us. I had her sign the quilt book for my student Sara. She drew a picture for her as well. How special she made it! I now wish I had had her sign mine too. I hated to be greedy, since she had already signed four things for me. She posed for pictures for a long time. I know she was worn out, but she had a smile on her face every minute. We decided it was time to say good-bye. It was just like leaving family behind. We were a little sad. She hugged each one of us and then gave us a beautiful arrangement of flowers. She told us we had honored her by coming to her home. Words are not enough to convey our emotions. What a wonderful day experience! A day I shall never forget. When we got back to the hotel. We read several of her books aloud and discussed each. Then there was some quite time for reading. I have a hard time reading some of her books aloud because I'm so emotional. I know this is very long. I tried to hit the high spots. I would be writing until next week if I told everything good that happened to us. I still can't believe it all happened. Did we have a good time? Would go back? Don't you want to read a Patricia Polacco book? The answers are YES!!! YES!!! and I certainly hope YES!!! Thank you for your patience and for taking the time to read this epistle. To borrow a few words from Patricia's Babushka (grandmother) "I kiss your eyes and hold you in my heart and thank God."

With love, Dianne

Steven,

Just wanted to tell you what a wonderful time we Tennessee teachers had in Union City. Thanks for making us feel so special. Diane said you wanted comments about the weekend. Well, here goes.....

Meeting Patricia Polacco was an absolute delight. As an educator I was made to feel like I had the most important job in the world. Her love and knowledge of children's literature is so evident. Ms. Polacco's incredible stories share so much of herself while exposing us to the diversity in cultures and religions. Our children need the exposure to the relationships she develops through her stories. Children see that love and compassion have no boundaries marked by color, religion, nationality, or age. I love them for sharing with my students. I look forward to her future work both in writing and working with educators.

Thanks again,

Sharon Warren
Lebanon, Tennessee



We decided to have a reception following the homes tour for those who worked on the tour as well as those who had traveled such long distances to join us. We had teachers and friends from all over the country. Tennessee, Maryland, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin... people were coming from everywhere!



We took the opportunity to get feedback about hosting conferences and workshops for educators as well as storytellers and

writers. We worked, ate, drank, laughed and told stories. Friendships were made and ideas hatched.

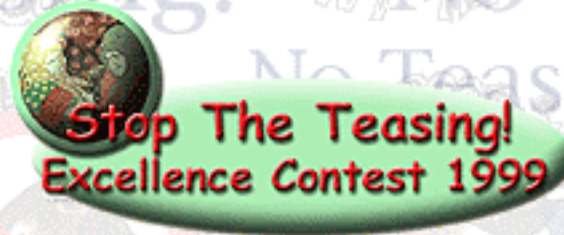




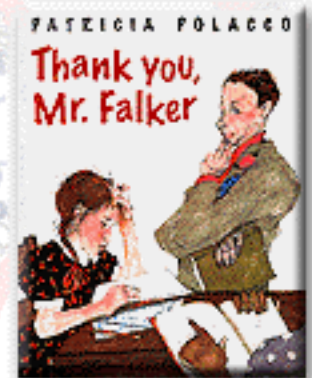




Please Help Me to Stop The Teasing!



In my latest book, *Thank You Mr. Falker*, I deal with the themes of how a wonderful educator helped me recognize and eventually overcome a reading disorder, as well as how devastated I was as a child due to the relentless teasing I endured because of my disability.



Because the subject of teasing is so close to my heart, I feel that it is time that we as a country act swiftly to remove it from our culture.

I've created a pair of "tags" that can be downloaded, cut out, and turned into pins, necklaces, whatever... as long as the kids get a chance to have them available whenever they might feel so inclined to point a finger or call a name...or be on the receiving end of such damaging behavior.



Please join me in this campaign. As we all well know, children are our most precious and valuable recourses... we simply cannot let one more child suffer the life long humiliation and scaring that can, and often times does come from teasing.

To download, [click here](#).
To download the bookmark version, [click here](#)



Thank You,

Handwritten signature of Patricia Polacco.





Here are answers to a few commonly asked questions.

Personal

My favorite Things

My favorite colors are earth tones.

My favorite food: Anything with lots of garlic.

My favorite Music: I love anything from rap to Vivaldi.

My favorite Sports: I like to run when I can, so I enjoy track and field events.

My favorite animals: cats, goats, horses, sheep, actually all animals.

I liked to have any nursery rhymes read to me as a kid. I loved them all.

I loved all Dr. Seuss and Wanda Gaag books as a child.

I have 6 cats, two goats, a ewe and many squirrels, rabbits and birds on my farm.

Where do I get my ideas?

I turn off my T.V. and listen to my inner voice. Try it yourself sometime.

People often ask why I haven't written about the men in my family.

Actually I have. My brother, father, grandfather, even Uncle Vova, and my son, Steven, is in the knew Keeping Quilt.

What do I do during my time off? Actually I 'm always working on some project or another, either around my farm or at my studio. I enjoy taking my animals for walks around the property and taking long drives on the back roads of Michigan. I can even be found on the back of a friends Harley Davidson from time to time.

Keep those letters coming!

Technical

Here are the answers to the most commonly asked questions having to do with the web page itself:

Frames vs. Frame sets:

To access the page as it was intended to be viewed, viewing with frame-sets is the best bet.

Some older browsers, however, do not allow for frame set viewing... so the page can be accessed through frames as well.

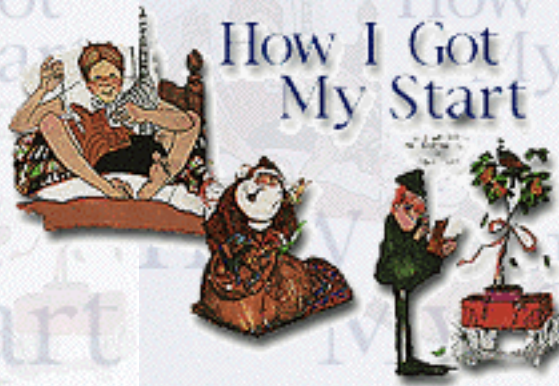
Video Previews

The plug-in required for viewing any of the video previews or messages is Apple's "Quick Time" plug-in which can be down loaded direct from Apple at: <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/>



or by clicking here:

I 'm working on encoding every thing using the "Real" player... check back for updates.



I come from a long line of story tellers, so telling is my stock and trade. Writing it all down, on the other hand, came much later in my life. I didn't start writing until I was 41 years old. I started jotting down the various stories that were rolling around in my head, then I was encouraged to join the Society of Children's Book writers and Illustrators. It was a major step because it was there that I learned how to put together a [dummy](#) and get a story into the form of a children's picture book. Then my mother supported a trip to New York, where she and I visited 16 publishers in one week. I submitted everything I had to more than one house. By the time I got home the following week I had sold just about everything.

I would recommend that all new writers keep their stories concise and close to their hearts. Join the [S.C.B.W.I.](#) in your region and you are on your way!

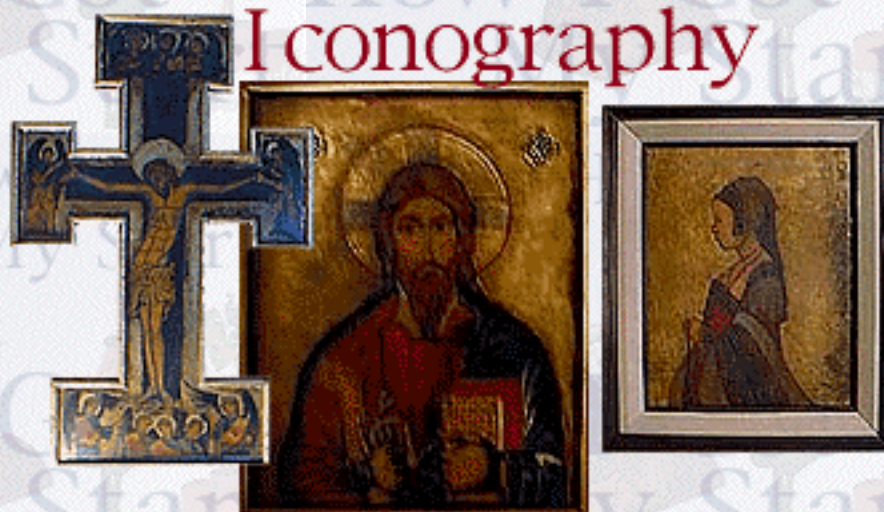
Books I wrote for my family



A Christmas Delivery for Traci and Steve is a hand drawn unpublished book based on the twelve days of Christmas . It was a gift for my children one Christmas. Unfortunately this book was destroyed in the fire and it was the only edition. Amazingly enough my son had uploaded these images before the fire...this is the only record we have of that book.



A Special Christmas was a book I made for my son Steven to illustrate a child dealing with diabetes during the holiday season. My son was diagnosed when he was a child and needed the special support to get through a time when all the other children were getting sweets and candy. Unfortunately this book was also destroyed in the fire.

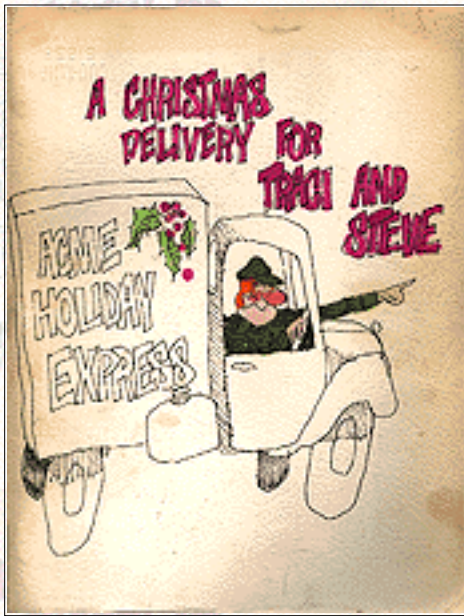


How I Got
My Start

How I Got
My Start

Early Work





A Christmas Delivery For Traci And Steve

This little book, drawn on 8 1/2 x11" typing paper, was given to my two children, Traci and Steven as a Christmas card back in 1983.

It tells the story of the Christmas carol "A Partridge In A Pear Tree".



First the kids are delighted to see the delivery man who comes with "a present"...

"Lets see here...one partridge in a pear tree"...



As the delivery man brings more gifts...





...the kids get nervous about the mess that the "presants" are making.

As Steve exclaims, "Mom and dad are going to **KILL** us"

The eight maids a milkin' make quite a mess indeed!





By the time the twelve drummers drumming arrive, things have gotten quite out of hand!!!

As the book ends, the kids are not exactly comforted by the "complementary sprig of holly" offered by the friendly delivery man!



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A Very Special Christmas

I wrote this book in 1982 as a special Christmas present for my son Steven to celebrate his first Christmas

as a diabetic.

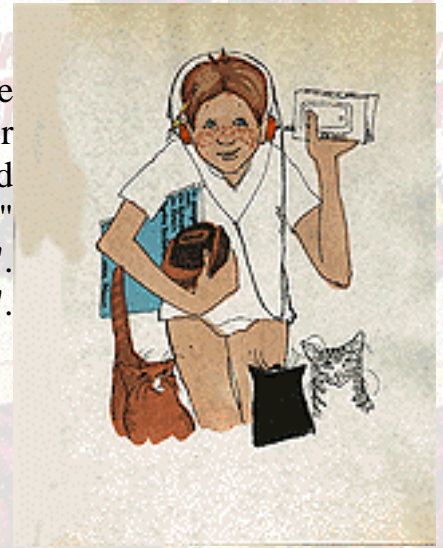
The book is based on "A Visit From Santa" by Clement Moore

Here is a sample.



'Twas the holiday season when all things bring joy
in the house was a stirring by one sleepy boy.

Down the hall he came
with a clatter
I sprang from my bed and called
"what's the matter?"
"Just me mom, got to void, then I'll test".
"Steven, you're too loud, don't be such a pest".



He reached for his kit, feeling no dread
while visions of Christmas danced in his head
he sang as he drew back the syringe with glee
while viles and swabs sat perched on his knee.

He painted his leg
like Martha had shown him
and injected himself
that life giving potion

He wrote in his book
all he had done
washed his face, combed his hair,
and 'round he spun

He ate his breakfast and drank his juice
then off to the tree lot to get a blue spruce

At home all was ready...the tree goes right there
the stockings were hung by the chimney with care

The day was spent trimming, baking, and cooking
then we sat by the fire, all of us looking.

The moon had risen high in the sky,
we knew that Christmas soon would be neigh.
Steve wrote in his notebook all he ate...
his dosage, his testing, and even his weight.

We put on our night clothes,
and put out the cats...
and all settled down for a long winters nap.



When in the night sky there was such a light
we sprang from our beds in fear and in fright
When what to our wondering eyes should appear
But a tiny red sly and flying reindeer
With a little old driver so lively and quick
We all exclaimed, " my God it's St. Nick"
So up to the house top swiftly he flew
A sleigh full of toys and Santa Clause too.

And then in a twinkling, we heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
We drew in our heads and then turned around
And down the chimney he came with a bound.





And then in a twinkling, we heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
We drew in our heads and then turned around
And down the chimney he came with a bound.

He smiled when he saw us and set down his pack
The bundle of toys flung down from his back.



" So you must be Steve", he said with great joy,
" I heard that you are a nice, special boy."
His eyes how they twinkled, his dimples how merry
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cheery.
"Come talk to me boy, 'bout things wondrous and dandy
'cause I know for you there are no sweets and candy."

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
He said, " you'll have a good life, nothing to dread."
"You've had to learn early, sooner than most,
That your health is a guest, your body the host."
"With exercise, diet and your doctors care,
all you can be child, is there,just there."

"You'll have a broad face full of kindness and caring,
And your chest will be full from loving and sharing."

" You'll be strong and healthy, gentle, and kind,
And that is the best gift that I leave behind."

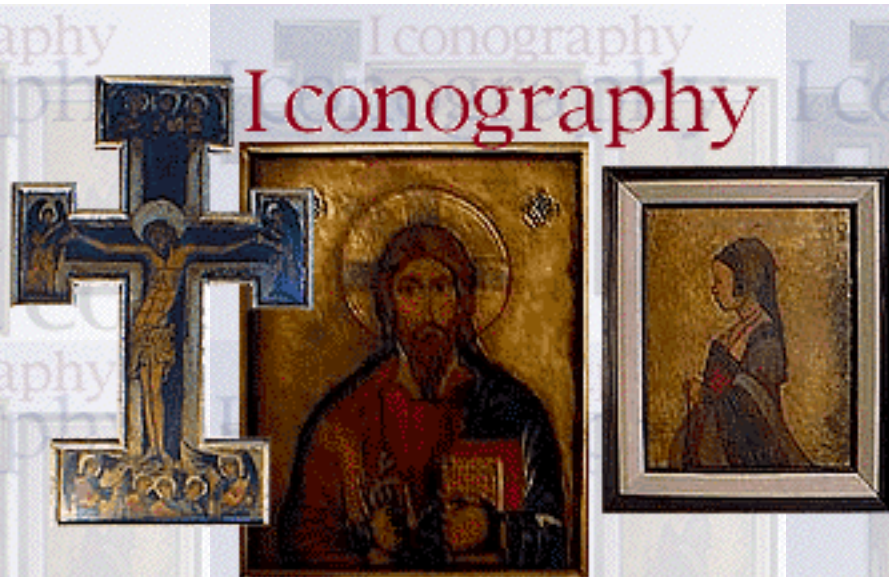
He spoke no more, but went straight to his work,
He filled all the stockings then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
He gave a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle
We heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight
" Merry Christmas to all , and to all a good night."



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Before I was an author and illustrator I used to restore Icons for museums.

In fact that is what I have my graduate degree in. I have always loved icons as works of narrative art. I am lucky enough to own several of them that have been passed along in my family as well as the many I have created for my education and family .



Early Work



These are some early works that I made for my family and myself.





More Images Coming!





Inspirations



So many people have asked what inspired me to begin writing and illustrating children's books.

Here are some answers!

My favorite stories!

Naturally there are few children of my era that didn't love Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit.





I would have to say that one of my all time favorite picture books is The Tall Mother Goose by Fedor Rojankovsky. The illustrations are fantastic and the stories are truly classics!

Much of my inspiration for Babushka's Mother Goose came from this wonderful childhood book as well as Grim's Fairy Tales (in particular Fritz Kredel's version) and The Calico Jungle by D.Ipcar. The end pages in both are so lush and filled with life!



Wanda Ga'g's Millions Of Cats and The Funny Thing were very important to me both as a mother and as a child.

The Five Chinese Brothers by Claire Huchet Bishop and Illustrated by Kurt Wiese is a wonderful tale.



And of course there's Horton Hatches The Egg by Dr. Seuss. Of all of Dr. Seuss' books this one is such a heart warming tale. I was once inspired me as a child to climb my grandpa's cherry tree and sit on the skinniest branch as Horton did!



My greatest artistic hero is Norman Rockwell. I don't believe that any living illustrator did not at one time or another scrutinize and emulate his style and vision.



An Image that has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember is a little book called For the Love of Mary Ellen. I love the illustrations and especially adore this book because this is my mother's name.

My modern day heroes who are fine illustrators and writers include Jerry and Gloria Jean Pickney, Tommie De Paolo, Mitsumasa Anno, Bob San Souci and his brother Dan, Ruthy Heller, Alan Say, James Ransome, Pattie Mc Kissick, and Patricia Lee Gouch (who also happens to be my editor) Rafe Martin, Jane Yolen, Virginia Hamilton, Paul and Sid Fleischman, Lois Lowery, The Dillons, Jan Brett, and so many many more (please excuse me if I misspelled any names).





I love the classical artists as well and believe that they have a great deal to teach any artist today.

