



# FOCAL Points~~



VOL. XXXII No. 1

Winter 2010

FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AND LITERATURE -- CENTRAL LIBRARY

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## **DIM SUM, SMART KIDS, AND A LOT MORE**

by Sandy Schuckett

"It is important to learn about the lives of those who came before us so that we can acknowledge them, then move on to live the lives they sought in America. We are a nation of immigrants, and I firmly believe that we are a greater nation because of it." So ended author Milly Lee's remarks as she received the 2009 (30<sup>th</sup> annual) FOCAL Award for her moving book, *Landed* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006.)

Almost 80 booklovers of all ages filled the banquet room at the historic Empress Pavilion Restaurant in Los Angeles' Chinatown on November 16, 2009 to honor Milly Lee, hear a bit about the history of FOCAL, and listen in awe to the four students who were the winners in the FOCAL Essay Contest. Before the formal program began, we enjoyed Dim Sum appetizers, tasty Chinese dishes and great conversations.

Renny Day presented a brief history of FOCAL, describing how a small group of intrepid teachers, school librarians, and other children's literature lovers gathered in 1978 to sort through hundreds of dusty withdrawn library books in 'Toad Hall' in the basement of the original Central Library building for an upcoming used book sale. These were the founding members of FOCAL, and now – 30 years later, FOCAL is stronger than ever. Congratulations!



Congratulations are also in order to the four student essay contest winners: Sabrina Cortez, Tess Gording, Isabelle Chiharu De Rego, and Brandon S. Soo Hoo. Their essays were well-thought out, articulate, heartfelt, and compelling. Each individual presentation was outstanding, and it was a pleasure to listen to them. As contest winners, they had the privilege of sitting with Milly Lee during lunch, and they were thrilled to be able to ask her some of the questions they had on their minds after reading *Landed*.

Huge thanks also go to FOCAL Essay Contest judges Teri Markson and Marilyn Robertson. As Chair of the judging committee my work was made easier by these two astute and careful readers, and our e-mail discussions as we selected the winners were gratifying and enlightening.

The highlight of the afternoon was, of course, listening to Milly Lee's honest and profound acceptance remarks. She began by honoring FOCAL founding member, the late Janet McOuat, who first came up with the idea for the FOCAL Award at one of our early Board meetings in 1978. She then introduced her family members who were in attendance: her husband Kearn (Sun Chor's son,) her daughter Linda (Sun Chor's granddaughter,) her grandsons Matthew and Nick to whom the book is dedicated, and Sun Chor's second son Al. She also introduced the "real" Hop Jeong, who provided her with transcripts of what transpired when he was incarcerated on Angel Island.

As Milly spoke about what inspired her to write *Landed*, she intertwined the information she had gleaned from her husband's family with brief historical facts about Chinese immigration to America during the early 1900s as a result of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. "We were a part of this country's history, we were much more than the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. We had a distinct culture and a different experience. We are at various stages of acculturation now and we are part of the continuing stream of immigrants to this country," Milly said.



She went on to speak about the difficult living conditions in Chinatown when she was growing up, the danger, the discrimination and persecution, and the bitter experiences of the many Chinese immigrants who had been detained at Angel Island at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. She described her own visit to Angel Island in preparation for writing the book, and spoke of the feelings that the sights there created in her. "Today we are trying to reclaim that history," she said. "I believe it's important to know this immigration story because immigration continues to be an issue in this country."

Luncheon attendees were deeply moved by Milly's remarks, and we all learned things we had not known before about "paper sons" and Chinese immigration. FOCAL again congratulates Milly Lee on her FOCAL Award for this important book for young people that brings us a little-known – but very important – segment of California history.



*Photos: Diana Arias, Madeline Bryant, Renny Day, Joanna Fabicon, Caroline Gill*

## *NEWBIE POINT OF VIEW*

Joanna Fabicon, Children's Literature

Joining FOCAL seemed part and parcel of working in the Children's Literature Department, so that's what I did when I transferred to Central Library over two years ago. It was not long before I learned about one of the Department's yearly traditions - placing the FOCAL puppets in the display cases so that the public could see award winners from years past. Other than this practice of putting up the beautifully crafted puppets during the time of the FOCAL luncheon (and taking them down when the event was over), I did not realize how each piece had its own special history.



This changed when I went to my first FOCAL luncheon last November. From the moment I walked in through the private dining room of Empress Pavilion, I discovered exactly what it meant to celebrate the California experience through children's literature (besides feasting on really good food and talking with people with a shared love of books).

The FOCAL luncheon is an opportunity to experience firsthand the power of a well-told story and the sense of connectedness it can inspire. Everyone in the room found something in Milly Lee's Landed that resonated with them. From the centerpieces designed and constructed by the young art students to the heartfelt award-winning essays, it was apparent that Sun's story struck a chord with young readers. Hearing Milly Lee address this eager audience that included her friends and family tied everything together. Now whenever I look at the Department's display puppets, I will be reminded that each represents a special memory of the Luncheon and of the many voices expressing how much the book meant to them.



Working in the Children's Literature Department, I get to see directly the results of FOCAL members' efforts and generosity. What I did not know was how far back those efforts extended. After hearing Renny Day talk about FOCAL's early beginnings, I learned how integral having a friends group was to the survival of the Department. Truly being part of FOCAL means being amongst advocates of children and reading, and as I now have a sense of the group's history, I am more than honored and excited to be part of FOCAL's future. See you at the 2010 Luncheon!



## THE WINNING ESSAYS: 2009 FOCAL ESSAY CONTEST

When I read the book, Landed, I really felt sorry for the boy because he had to leave home and he was only twelve. I am ten. If this happened to me, I would feel very scared and nervous. I don't feel comfortable talking to people that I don't know, and Lee had to answer all these questions that had to be translated. I would feel weird knowing that the people questioning me might be talking about something in a language that I didn't understand.

The scene in the book that I found most memorable was when Lee got to see most of his family after he was questioned. It was very complicated when he had to memorize all that stuff. He was kept away from them a long time. I really like the part when he got to see the three older brothers who had also left home at the age of twelve.

I can relate to this story because I have a part of my family that immigrated to America from Portugal and the Azores Islands. My great-grandfather came over to join a Portuguese community that was already here. He died when my grandfather was ten. My relatives were also coming to a new country, and they probably also felt strange.



I would like to meet the author because I would like to talk to her about the things she discovered when she wrote the book. When we had an author come to our school before, she told us many things she found out when she wrote her books. I, for one, like books, and I would like to win a book that I would like to own. I think it is a great opportunity to see an author when you like the book she wrote.

Isabelle Chiharu De Rego  
Grade 5, Paseo Del Rey

Dear Mrs. Milly Lee,

Your book Landed reminds me a lot of my great-grandfather. My dad's grandfather emigrated from Russia when he was a young boy like Sun. He didn't speak any English. He spoke Yiddish. His first English words were, "Got match?" He wanted to seem more American, so he smoked cigarettes thinking Americans commonly did that.

Officials interrogated both Sun and my great-grandpa. My great-grandpa was questioned at Ellis Island unlike Sun who was questioned on Angel Island. One difference is that my great-grandpa changed his name a couple of times because he had diseases when he was inspected. Finally he passed the examination like Sun did and was allowed to come to America.

I found Sun's interrogation and his travels memorable because his story is so similar to my great-grandfather's experiences. I reacted to this book with a feeling of kinship even though we are from different cultures.

I would like to meet you because we have quite a few things in common. I would like to talk with you about our ancestors' journeys in more detail, and then I would like to write about it. I enjoy writing a lot. I would be honored to meet you and chat about the past and present.

Sincerely yours,  
Tess Gording  
Grade 5, Paseo Del Rey

Landed by Milly Lee is a good book. Not only was the information interesting, but it was also important. I am Chinese and I had no idea about what it meant to be a paper son and how difficult it was to immigrate to the United States. I also think it was descriptive because I could picture in my mind being Sun and taking the test. I felt a great deal of suspense, waiting to hear if Sun had landed, or faced the disappointment of being sent back to China when his father and brothers already lived in San Francisco.

I think when Sun finally left Angel Island to San Francisco was the most memorable part of the story because his problems were solved. Lee descriptively explained what immigrants had to do to be allowed into San Francisco. I learned that the interrogators scrutinized every answer. When Sun was being interrogated, I wasn't sure if he would ever be able to answer the questions on direction. They also discussed if it was legal to have a compass as well as they made sure there were no answers inside the compass. I was hoping they wouldn't ask Sun how he suddenly came up with a compass. Since Sun was challenged by the questions on his own family, I can imagine how Hop Jeong and Puy Gong felt answering questions about families they didn't know. The threat of being sent back to China was always in the minds of all three boys.

I would like to meet the author because I like Landed a lot. Also, I like writing ideas into stories. I am also curious if she went through the same situation like she described in her book.

Brandon S. Soo Hoo  
Grade 6, Lawrence Middle School

The book Landed was a touching story that made me realize how lucky I am not to have experienced what Lee Sun Chor went through. I admire Sun's dedication and courage. He put a lot of effort into learning all the information to be able to pass into California by himself. Having to learn all the information Sun was responsible for would worry me to the point of illness. I would be terrified of getting a question wrong and having to be sent home. It was a lot of pressure for a boy my age to memorize so much and be questioned so closely.

The scene that I enjoyed the most was when Sun's father sent him the box of cookies with Ming's compass hidden inside. The feeling that Sun must have experienced after failing two of the interrogator's questions must have been pure terror. It must have been a giant weight lifted off his shoulders once he learned he could pass the interrogations.

I would like to meet the author in order to find out why she decided to write about her father-in-law. In addition, I would like to ask her if it felt strange learning about her father-in-law's past and how she would have felt going through the same experience all alone. I would love to discuss with her more about Chinese immigrants and the treatment they received when trying to enter the country.

Sabrina Cortez  
Grade 7, Fairgrove Academy





**FOCAL and CHILDREN'S BOOK WORLD**



*present*

## **Patricia Polacco**

*Author Talk and Book Signing*

**Saturday, January 30**

**2:00 – 4:00 p.m.**

**Los Angeles Central Library**

Mark Taper Auditorium

630 W. 5th St., Los Angeles 90071

(213) 228-7250 [www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org)

**J**oin award-winning author/illustrator **Patricia Polacco** as she discusses her latest book, *January's Sparrow* and other writings. The exquisitely illustrated *January's Sparrow* is a moving saga of the Crosswhites family's flight from slavery and efforts to find a safe home. *January's Sparrow* and other Patricia Polacco titles will be available for purchase at the event and in advance

at CHILDREN'S BOOK WORLD, 10580

1/2 Pico Boulevard,

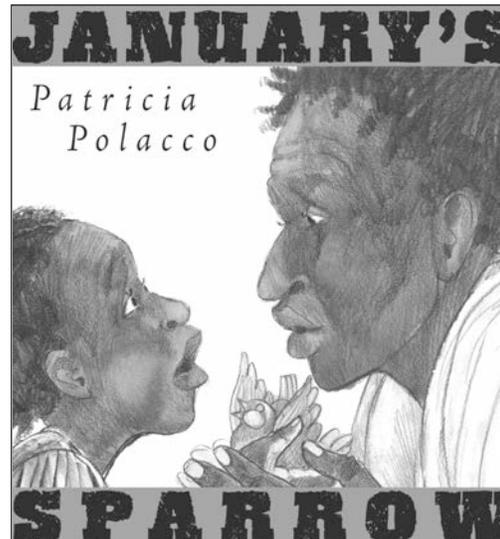
(310) 559-BOOK,

[www.childrensbookworld.com](http://www.childrensbookworld.com).



LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

*This is a ticketed event for ages 6 and up. Free tickets will be available starting at noon the day of the event in the Taper Auditorium Lobby on the first floor of the library.*



# Fun for Kids

Children's Literature Department  
Central Library

January-February, 2010

Programs are subject to change without notice.  
All programs are free.



## January

### Preschool Storytimes – Tuesdays, January 5, 12, 19 and 26

Stories and more for ages 3 - 5.

Reservations required for groups of five or more. Call (213) 228-7250.  
(Children's Literature Department, 11 a.m.)

### 2 Sat Family Storytime - "Dinosaur ROAR!"

Start 2010 off in a really BIG way, with stories, poems, songs, and a puppet show starring dinosaurs of all kinds! (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

### 9 Sat Family Storytime - "Soup Stories"

Celebrate National Soup Month with mouth-watering stories, songs, poems, and a puppet show. (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

### 16 Sat Used Book Sale

Find bargain children's books for sale. Sponsored by FOCAL, Friends of Children and Literature. (Rotunda, 10 a.m. to 12 noon)

### 16 Sat Family Storytime - "Heroes and Superheroes"

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. Join us for stories, poems, songs, and a puppet show starring some amazing heroes!  
(KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

### 23 Sat Family Program - "Performing Books Presents OPERA CAT by Tess Weaver."

When opera diva Madame Soso loses her voice, Alma the cat steps in to save the day! (Mark Taper Auditorium, 2 and 3 p.m.)

### 30 Sat Author Presentation – Patricia Polacco

Join award-winning author/illustrator **Patricia Polacco** as she discusses her latest book, "January's Sparrow" and other writings. The exquisitely illustrated "January's Sparrow" is a moving saga of the Crosswhites family's flight from slavery and efforts to find a safe home. "January's Sparrow" and other Patricia Polacco titles will be available for purchase at the event and in advance at Children's Book World, 10580 1/2 Pico Blvd., (310 559-BOOK, [www.childrensbookworld.com](http://www.childrensbookworld.com).) This is a ticketed event for ages 6 and up. Free tickets will be available starting at noon in the Taper Auditorium Lobby on the first floor of the library. Sponsored by Children's Book World and FOCAL (Friends of Children and Literature). (Mark Taper Auditorium, 2 p.m.)

### 30 Sat Preschool Storytime

There will be a special Preschool Storytime presented at 2 p.m. in the Children's Literature Department for children ages 5 and younger during Patricia Polacco's presentation. A parent or caretaker must accompany all children. (Children's Literature Department, 2 p.m.)

## February

### Preschool Storytimes

Tuesdays, February 2, 9, 16, and 23

Stories and more for ages 3 - 5. Reservations required for groups of five or more. Call (213) 228-7250. (Children's Literature Department, 11 a.m.)

### 6 Sat Family Storytime - "Year of the Tiger"

Chinese New Year is February 14<sup>th</sup>, and we're celebrating with stories, songs, poems, and a puppet show all about tigers. (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

### 13 Sat Family Storytime - "Super Sweet Storytime"

Bring your sweetheart to the library for super sweet stories, songs, poems, and a really delicious puppet show. (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

### 20 Sat Used Book Sale

Find bargain children's books for sale. Sponsored by FOCAL, Friends of Children and Literature. (Rotunda, 10 a.m. to 12 noon)

### 20 Sat Family Storytime - "Moose on the Loose"

Oh no! Watch out! Moose will be stomping and tromping through stories, songs, and a very silly puppet show. (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

### 21 Sun Sundays at Central Author Series for Children – Kathryn Fitzmaurice

FOCAL (Friends of Children and Literature) presents **Kathryn Fitzmaurice**, author of the acclaimed middle-grade novel **THE YEAR THE SWALLOWS CAME EARLY**.

(Children's Literature Department, 2 p.m.)

### 27 Sat Family Program - "Michael D. McCarty"

Storyteller Michael D. McCarty will share tales of and from Africa and stories of the struggles and triumphs of black people throughout the history of the Americas, in honor of Black History Month.

(Mark Taper Auditorium, 2 p.m.)



CHILDREN'S LITERATURE DEPARTMENT  
CENTRAL LIBRARY

Los Angeles Public Library  
630 W. Fifth St. Los Angeles, 90071  
(213) 228-7250  
[www.lapl.org](http://www.lapl.org)

#### HOURS

Monday – Thursday 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.  
Friday, Saturday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Sunday 1 – 5 p.m.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF 2009**

### **REPORT FROM CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

The staff of Children's Literature has just compiled the annual statistics for the past year. During the year, there were **438 class visits** to the Department, comprising **9,411 students**. There were **131 programs**, with **8,100 in attendance**. Truly amazing !!!

### **SUNDAYS AT CENTRAL**

Visits with children and parents by authors **Debbie Bertram, Denise Doyen, Kathryn Hewitt, Deborah Nourse Lattimore, Michelle Markel, Alexis O'Neill, Zachary Shapiro, Erica Silverman, and Kim Wayans and Kevin Knotts**.

### **"SCIENCE TREASURES"**

Included hands-on science experiments, crafts, and a presentation by "Mad Science of Los Angeles". Students from Valley College, under the direction of Lauren Okayama and Debby Pourroy, participated to create a memorable day for children and parents. Lara Clardy conducted science experiments.

### **BOOK SALES**

Lara Clardy and her hardy band of volunteers sold hundreds of used and new books on the third Saturday of each month to eager children, parents, and teachers.

### **FOCAL POINTS**

Photos, as well as several new columns by guest authors, such as "A Day in the Life of", in which various librarians tell about their jobs; topical booklists; and a description of the process by which a FOCAL Award author is chosen enhanced the quarterly newsletter.

FOCAL also provided funding for Children's Literature to buy plastic book covers; a new paper cutter; new puppets (about \$300); purchase of Newbery Honor Books; and other supplies and books as needed. Severe budget cuts (30% in book budget alone) necessitated this.

### **NOTE FROM THE EDITORS**

Liz Maury, a Los Angeles doctor, retired to Maryland to be closer to her family, especially her young grandchildren, and kept in touch with Renny Day with notes and pictures of those grandchildren. Included with her 2010 dues was a gift two-year membership for the children's librarian in Takoma Park, Maryland, in gratitude for the joy and love of children's literature that Karen McPherson had inspired in her grandchildren. We think this is a wonderful example of the impact that teachers and librarians can have on future generations.

**WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE  
(Holiday 2009 Edition)**

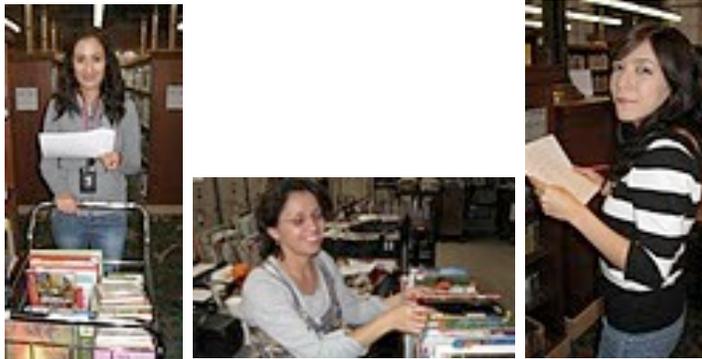


**STORY AND PICTURES BY THE  
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE DE-  
PARTMENT**

**THE WILD THINGS ARE SHELVING.**



**THE WILD THINGS ARE DOING THE  
ROUTER (AND THE TRACERS).**



**THE WILD THINGS ARE ANSWERING  
REFERENCE QUESTIONS.**



**THE WILD THINGS ARE PROCESSING  
BOOKS.**



**THE WILD THINGS ARE DOING STORY  
TIMES.**



**THE WILD THINGS ARE MAKING SCHED-  
ULES, DOING SWEEPS, SHELF-READING,  
WORKING THE COMPUTER DESK, PUTTING  
UP DISPLAYS, ASKING PEOPLE TO "PLEASE  
USE YOUR QUIET INDOOR LIBRARY VOICE",  
SHIFTING BOOKS, PUSHING IN CHAIRS,  
STRAIGHTENING DESKS, FILLING OUT RE-  
PORTS, WRITING QUARTERLY NARRATIVES,  
TURNING ON LIGHTS, WEEDING, MAKING  
NEW...**

**LET THE WILD RUMPUS  
START!!!**

*Happy Holidays from  
The Children's Literature Depart-  
ment*

*Madeline - Mara - Joanna - Linda - Di-  
ane - Maritza - Alesha - Joyce - Evelyn -  
Kyle - Lisa B. Elsa - Elizabeth - Lizette -  
Denise - Nina*

\*\*\*\*\* MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION \*\*\*\*\*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Membership is for calendar year, January through December.

New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Basic \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ Associate \$25 \_\_\_\_\_

Contributing \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ Lifetime \$1,000 \_\_\_\_\_

(Free autographed book)

(Seat at Head Table)

(Book and Head Table)

Judy Sanchez Moorhead, Central Library Management  
Madeline Bryant, Senior Librarian, Children's Literature  
Helene Mochedlover, FOCAL Points Editor

Send renewals to: Renny Day

15221 Via de las Olas  
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

**2010 MEMBERSHIPS NOW DUE!**

**FOCAL**

**Children's Literature Department**

**Los Angeles Public Library**

**630 West Fifth Street**

**Los Angeles, CA 90071**