



FOCAL Points



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Friends Of Children And Literature – Central Library

The Winner is.... By Michelle Marot



After much deliberation by our committee of seven, we have chosen:

Paper Son

**The Inspiring Story of Tyrus Wong,
Immigrant and Artist**

By Julie Leung

Illustrated by Chris Sasaki,

As the 2022 FOCAL Award Book

This beautifully illustrated picture book tells a true story and fulfills all the requirements of our FOCAL Award (very strong in California content and is appropriate for children in grades 3 to 8).

Selecting an award book during the continuing pandemic has had its challenges. After Caroline Gill and I narrowed the list to 12, committee members had three months to read the contenders. Kristin Peers, our chair, set the date for a potluck in May to make the final determination. Unfortunately the date had to be postponed as one committee member got Covid-19, and Caroline had double-booked herself that day for a birthday celebration with her two sisters. Her death, three days later, made that decision a good one.

Meanwhile our chair got promoted, traveled to a conference and returned with Covid. "Out of family consideration and a sense of responsibility, and after much thought, I decided to step down," Kristin says. "It has been a tremendous privilege to serve as FOCAL Award Chair, and I am fortunate to have worked with so many wonderful librarians, educators and volunteers." That's when I stepped in to take charge and, through a sequence of lively emails back and forth, the committee made its choice.



The term "Paper Son/Daughter" refers to a child who was born in China and immigrated to the U.S. by purchasing documentation which stated that he/she was a blood relative to someone who had already received U.S. citizenship or residency. This book chronicles the immigration and life of Wong Geng Yeo, who became Look Tai Yow (as a paper son), and finally

Tyrus Wong (the Americanized name given to him in grade school).

During the long journey from China by ocean liner, Geng Yeo memorized facts about another, possibly fictitious, Chinese boy who was the son of a successful merchant. Once in America, Geng Yeo was detained at Angel Island but, after many days, he was released and reunited with his father.

From a young age Tyrus showed a genuine interest in art. His father saved money to send him to Otis Art School where he learned Western style art. Soon he was hired by Walt Disney as an in-betweeners, and was permitted to submit backgrounds for the movie Bambi. Disney loved the Eastern style, and Tyrus Wong's art set the mood for the movie. Even so, he was only credited as a background artist. After some studio disputes, Tyrus was wrongfully fired. He continued to paint all sorts of items, and in his golden years he created and painted colorful, whimsical kites.



Here are some well-chosen words from a few of our committee members describing "Paper Son, The Inspiring Story of Tyrus Wong, Immigrant and Artist":

"A beautifully written and illustrated story that is inspiring and illuminates the Asian American immigration experience beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act. Reading stories like Tyrus Wong's journey will no doubt give children a greater respect and appreciation of our collective immigrant experiences as a country." - Maya Peterpaul-Clennon

"I thought the story was touching and poetic in the simplicity of the writing....the story of his experience resonates with me." - Kristin Peers

"...the illustrations were incredibly beautiful and detailed, evoking Tyrus Wong's style while having their own flair." - Alice Schock

Keep your calendars open for November as we hope to hold our event, again via zoom, date to be determined. We will be posting details as soon as our plans are firmed up!

In closing I want to extend my personal thanks to the committee for their heroic and steadfast work: Jasmine Jones, Marie Marot, Kristin Peers, Maya Peterpaul-Clennon, Basya Samuels, Alice Schock, and Elizabeth Tracton. You ladies are top notch! Well done!

Serving with a Purpose Conference May 19, 2022 By Kathryn Wilcox

Welcome to the 9th Annual Serving with a Purpose Conference. This conference is for Friends Groups of libraries across Southern California. This year was a special conference—our second since the COVID epidemic. The theme was “Representation Matters: Building a Better Board.”

Shawn Thrasher, Library Director for Ontario City Library, welcomed us at the start. We listened to Greg Lucas, the California State Librarian, as he spoke to us about the state budget for libraries. He asked us all to write to our state senators and thank them for adding \$70 million to the budget for the libraries and to write to our state assemblymen asking them to support libraries. It is best to make sure our representatives realize that libraries are important to us.

CLA President Jene Brown from LAPL-Central gave us an African saying to remember: “A single bracelet does not jingle.” For us, this may mean that there is strength in numbers. It is important to leave your library better than you found it. That is the motivation for board members. Tess Wilson from “United for Libraries” described the data research that they study. She shared some facts about California 2020: There are 23.4 million library card holders, and 1,130 public libraries in California. She suggested we start using statistics such as census.gov to find more information about our town and libraries. She gave us some thoughtful questions: How does your board compare to the demographics of your town? Did you know that 39.5% of parents volunteer for things that their children are interested in? Where and how do you recruit? Try mentoring recruiting at storytime. Consider a teen advisory group. Audition people for the board. Hold Fireside chats about membership. Develop a board with intergenerational differences (she suggested reading “Sticking Points” by Haydn Shaw to address intergenerational differences).

Ben Raines, author of “The Last Slave Ship”, spoke to us about his work to find the last slave ship which was burned and sunk somewhere outside of Mobile, Alabama. This was a fascinating story – a research adventure to find the possible location of the boat. His journey included meeting relatives from all sides of the story, finding written documents describing the journey, and researching the history at the time on both sides of the ocean. To continue this, Ben wrote about the lives of some of these freed slaves from the time they came to the United States through the rest of their lives. These freed slaves formed Africatown. By 1912, this was the fourth largest African town in the United States. Although this is not a happy story, it is a good book. Ben’s writing style is as excellent as his ability to share the story of his book with us at this conference. Lucky us – because we went to the conference and were given this book just for being there.

After a wonderful white tablecloth lunch, where we had a chance to meet and talk to others, we returned to take part in making a list of 10 steps to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. This helped to open us up to having fun and being creative, moderating our response style to meet the total message and using a different orientation. Yes, even though we thought there was just one way to make a PBJ sandwich, there was variety in the room. We realized that one obstacle we face, being on a board, is to get people to be open to trying new things. After that, we broke out into small groups to share ideas with different Friends groups from different libraries. I joined the group that did fundraising/program ideas that were successful at other libraries. My favorites were: Letters from Santa – buying a ticket that would include you in a drawing for a Santa visit, treat coupons to local stores, and a personalized mailed letter from Santa; Love your Library gift boxes geared up for the holidays; and Purse Palooza – purses, bags, and luggage collected for one month were cleaned up and priced and sold one Saturday in May.

We ended back together in the main room to share ideas we learned from others. Caroline Gill was there with me. A former awards book committee member, who has moved out of the area, stood up and told everyone that Caroline Gill was the reason she came to the “Serving with a Purpose Conference” and was happy she did. She talked about how wonderful Caroline was to the entire group. Thus ended another wonderful “Serving with a Purpose Conference.” Sadly, this was the last conference that Caroline Gill would attend. She passed away on May 25, 2022. My thanks to all the sponsors, speakers, and library staff that worked on this wonderful conference.

Volunteer Opportunity:

Volunteer opportunity! Volunteer to help with our monthly book sales, the third Saturday of each month, 9:30 - noon.

If interested please call Tina at
213-228-7252

A tribute Caroline Gill

“Caroline was an encourager, was enthusiastic about children’s literature and always took delight in others’ aspirations and accomplishments.” So begins a beautiful tribute from one of our FOCAL Board Members. There were many.

Not that Caroline was lacking in her own accomplishments. She was President of FOCAL (Friends of Children and Literature). She served as the choir librarian on the staff of Westwood Presbyterian Church and was a choir member for 35 years. She also mentored students as librarian in the Los Angeles Unified School District and earned the title of National Board Certified Teacher.

She supported the accomplishments of others, repeatedly attending concerts of fellow musicians as well as launchings of authors’ books. She invited award-winning local and other authors, to visit her school library to meet the students, an experience that must have been memorable for students, staff and the authors. She promoted the

books of her friends and relatives, including the award-winning one by her own sister, Suzanne Muchnic, *LACMA So Far: A Portrait of a Museum in the Making*. She continued to read adult books in the Westwood Presbyterian Women’s Reading Group and was a stalwart contributor.



As people around her could attest, she was often frequently heard to say, “I can do that,” whatever “that” was, and it was in fact done on time and well. For FOCAL, she frequently communicated with publishers, bought authors’ plane tickets and even picked them up at the airport.

Most often, her friends all heard about her family—her sisters Suzanne Muchnic and Janet Crowther and her brother Jon Ely, her two sons Mark and Jay and their wives as well as her two grandsons, Benjamin Gardner-Gill and Jack Gill. At her memorial, family members had to repeatedly contend with comments such as, “Oh, YOU’RE the famous grandson (or other relation).”



Caroline loved going to the movies, especially the ones produced by her son, Mark. In her pocketbook, she kept a list of movies that she wanted to see each year and tried to see as many contenders for the Academy Awards as she could before the awards show. She was the best person to consult about motion pictures.

Caroline was at the "Serving with a Purpose" conference on May 19, 2022, with our FOCAL treasurer. At the closing session, where people shared their favorite thing about the conference, one happy attendee got up and personally thanked Caroline Gill for her contributions to FOCAL. She said that she had heard about the conference from Caroline and had attended because she had read

about the previous conference in FocalPoints. Caroline Gill was unassuming but quite powerful and effective, though she would never admit to that. She did a lot. She was so admired by both colleagues and family members.

As FOCAL Board member, Michele Marot said, "I learned a lot from Caroline, but mostly I learned to stay positive and to value others' accomplishments. FOCAL and the Library staff will miss Caroline's bright outlook as well as her delicious lemon bars, both made with kindness and TLC.

Thank you Caroline



If you have not renewed your membership yet for 2022, this is the time to do it! FOCAL Membership has been restructured! Join or Renew today as Gold or Silver member.

Visit our website at <https://www.focalcentral.org/membership.php> and use PayPal to renew your membership or make a donation. Or, if you prefer, mail the form in the back of this FOCAL points with your check.

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Children's Literature Department/ FOCAL
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Membership is for the calendar year, January through December.
Dues are tax deductible.

Silver \$25 New Renewal
 Gold \$50 Additional Donation

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