



FOCAL Points ~ ~



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FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AND LITERATURE -- CENTRAL LIBRARY

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The FOCAL Award Committee: We Have a Winner **by Caroline Arnold, Chair**



Being on the FOCAL Award committee is a little like being in a book club. We read lots of books, talk about them—often with great passion—and then have the difficult task of choosing which one we like best. This year the winner is *One Crazy Summer* by Rita Garcia-Williams, a book full of memorable characters and universal themes, with a window onto a period of history—the turbulent 1960's and Black Panther movement—seen through the eyes of three spunky girls sent from Brooklyn to Oakland, California, for the summer. We are delighted with our choice and looking forward to meeting Rita Garcia-Williams at the Award Luncheon on December 7th.

This year's FOCAL Award committee consisted of myself, past chair Nancy Reich, FOCAL President Caroline Gill, and members Marcia Melkonian, Lisa Schloss, Barbara Stone, Annette Goldsmith, Rachel Kitzmann and Alexandra Stewart--representing school, public and university libraries, classroom teachers, and writers. Each year the committee is given the task of choosing from a list of nominees (this year there were eleven), that includes both fiction and nonfiction ranging from picture books to novels. It is not an easy job, as every book we review has elements that recommend it. To qualify, the book must exhibit high standards of excellence in literature for young people, literary and/or artistic merit, interest and readability, universality, and California enrichment content. *One Crazy Summer* certainly did.

One Crazy Summer is beautifully written. We care for eleven-year old Delphine, in charge of her younger sisters, Vonetta and Fern. The committee felt that readers will identify with them as they adjust to life in a new place and to a mother they are meeting for the first time. The story is fiction, but the setting is real--from the People's Center next to the library, to the park where the rally takes place at the end of the book. We felt that the book is a good introduction for kids to learn what it was like to live as a Black American in the 1960's. Most importantly, though, the book is simply a good story—a page turner.

Part of the FOCAL Award is an essay contest for kids about why they would like to meet the author. We think that readers of *One Crazy Summer* will find plenty to write about! Winners are invited to the luncheon and sit with the author. We hope to see you there too!

See www.focalonline.org for details about the luncheon and essay contest. Reservation form on p.7.

The Library, My Favorite Place

by Jolene Comenat

Chapter Two

So Many Books

Do you like books? Well, I know the best place for you. The library! In the library, there are so many books. There are many different types of books in the fiction and nonfiction sections. You can never run out of books there. The library is very relaxing and a place where you can calm down.

You can find all your favorite books at the library. You can find books from the *Harry Potter Series*, to *Little Red Riding Hood*. The librarians are very kind and will show you where the books are. There's a comfortable place where you can read books. The library is the best place to be if you love books!

Lots of Questions

Do you wonder about the librarian? Well, I did, too. That's why I interviewed a librarian. Her name is Mara Alpert.

Me: How do you remember where all the books are?

Ms. Alpert: I've worked here for a while and I use the Dewey Decimal System or go by the author's name.

Me: Do you like working at the Central Library?

Ms. Alpert: I love it and I was very excited when I got the job. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else and I love working with kids and other librarians.

Me: If you had to choose, what would your favorite book be?

Ms. Alpert: I think I would choose Alice in Wonderland.

Me: If you had to choose, who would your favorite author be?

Ms. Alpert: I think my favorite author is either Dr. Seuss or J. K. Rowling.

Me: Which book would you prefer a fourth grader to read?

Ms. Alpert: I would prefer a fourth grader read By the Great Horn Spoon, by Sid Fleishman.

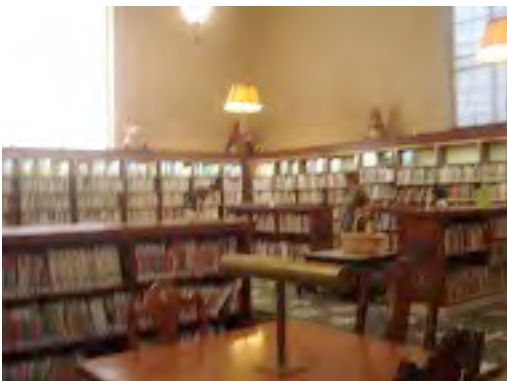
Me: In school was your favorite subject reading or writing?

Ms. Alpert: Yes and I also liked singing.

Me: If you were choosing, would you choose to read mystery, horror, or comic?

Ms. Alpert: I would prefer mystery, but I also like a combination.

That is my interview with the librarian.



Puppet Shows to the Rescue

by Mara Alpert, Children's Literature

Here's something you may not know about the World Famous (or at least Los Angeles Famous) Children's Literature Department at Central Library. If it weren't for a puppet show, it might not ever have existed. Okay, make that a lot of puppet shows. And a cadre of dedicated librarians and volunteers who fought for a library for the children of Los Angeles... especially downtown Los Angeles. Let's take a trip in the Way Back Machine with former Senior Librarian Renny Day, back to 1976...

"Whoever gets this job must make it INCONCEIVABLE that the Children's Room would be closed!" That was the pronouncement from Loyce Pleasants, Director of Central Library, who was a tall, handsome woman with high cheekbones and a forceful personality. Across the desk was an extremely nervous children's librarian from one of the smallest branches in the system. The Board of Library Commissioners had already voted twice on the suggestion to close the department. The vote was 3 to keep the department, and 2 to close it and use the space for adult collections, since, as one Commissioner said, "There are no children in downtown Los Angeles."



The new Senior inaugurated a Saturday series of story times and puppet shows, contacted local schools to book walking trips to the Library for book talks and puppet shows, and set the puppet stage (built by her son) in a corner of the reading room, so that children could put on their own impromptu plays.

Soon, the halls were full of families on their way to the Children's Room, which was in a remote wing of the first floor. The Director of Central Library insisted that the hours of the department be extended to match all the open hours of Central. And the vote to close the Children's Room? That never came up again.

Today, the Children's Literature Department puts on an average of 40 puppet shows a year, usually in the fabulous KLOS Story Theatre. We have lighting, microphones, plenty of props and puppets (including some made especially for the library by artist Carol Onofrio, who also creates the puppets for the annual FOCAL Award), and a pretty amazing collection of puppet show scripts, some adapted from other sources, others original.

For many children, a library puppet show is as close to a live theatrical performance as they may ever get to experience. For librarians, it's a fun way to share stories. And for the Children's Literature Department of Central Library, puppet shows are one of the main reasons we are now able to do what we do in one of the most beautiful libraries in the world.

Baby Story & Playtime

[Linda Israelson](#), Children's Literature

In 2011, The Los Angeles Public Library incorporated a component into its Summer Reading Club to actively engage children under the age of five. The four-year-old and younger set, for the first time, received their own age-appropriate folder as encouragement to earn incentives for meeting specific literacy based goals. In the Children's Literature Department, we had 212 children in this age group sign up for the Summer Reading Club. This was great, but we thought we could do better, so in 2012, we took steps to get our youngest patrons to participate even more! In addition to year-round family storytimes each Saturday, year-round preschool storytimes each Tuesday, and summer craft programs for ages 5-11 each Thursday, we set aside a half-hour each Wednesday morning to present "Baby Story and Playtime" for children two years old and younger!

Having never focused so intently on children this young, we were all a bit nervous. We'd had plenty of experience with the slightly older preschool kids, but babies have their own requirements. We began honing presentations to enhance the development of pre-literacy and fine motor skills, while modeling fun activities that parents and caregivers could utilize away from the library setting. Our original intent was to provide a short, five program series, just for the summer. 20 babies and 17 adults showed up for the first program! Attendance peaked at program number four, with 26 babies and 31 adults in attendance. The average attendance was 43 people at each program! Our goal had been to get 75 zero to two-year-olds to join the Summer Reading Club, but the actual number of kids this age who joined was 109! It was evident from the enthusiastic response that this program merited a year-round commitment. After a brief breathing spell, we resumed the baby programs on Monday mornings in September of 2012 and have been going non-stop ever since!

As with all of our programs, the librarian staff takes turns selecting, preparing and presenting each week's content. The storytime segment generally includes two book readings and many action rhymes, musical activities, and flannel board stories. Studies have shown that repetition is essential for newly forming brains to make connections, so we will often repeat a rhyme several times, even adding tactile experiences such as touching a puppet or stuffed animal, to reinforce the verbal aspects. The planned portion lasts about 15 minutes, and is followed by about 15 minutes of free play. Studies have also revealed a strong connection between imaginative play and cognitive development. We provide an array of toys such as rubber balls, plastic rattles and bells, foam blocks, interlocking animal shapes, scarves for playing "peek-a-boo", puppets, and board books. (All toys are cleaned with disinfectant weekly!) Sometimes we even get out a parachute for fun teamwork oriented activities. It's been fascinating to see the range of abilities within this seemingly narrow age group. A few children have been regulars since the outset, so we have literally seen them growing up. At the initial sessions, the children seemed to stick pretty close to their adults, but with time, they've become much more social.

Baby Story and Playtime is free and occurs every Monday that the library is open at 11:00 a.m. in the Children's Literature Department. For more information, visit the Los Angeles Public Library website at www.lapl.org or call us at 213/228-7250. You can also like us on Facebook!

Editors' Note: The New York Public Library just unveiled its first-ever list of the top 100 children's books of the last 100 years, curated by librarians, called "100 Great Children's Books." One Crazy Summer is on the list. <http://www.nypl.org/childrens100>.

Fun for Kids

Children's Literature Department
Central Library

November – December, 2013

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

November

Baby Story & Playtime

Mondays, November 4, 18, and 25

Stories, songs, and rhymes, followed by playtime. For babies and toddlers (ages 0-2). Reservations required for groups of five or more. Call (213) 228-7250. (Children's Literature Department, 11 a.m.)

Preschool Storytime

Tuesdays, November 5, 12, 19 and 26

Stories, songs, fingerplays, and more for ages 2 - 5. Reservations required for groups of five or more. Call (213) 228-7250. (Children's Literature Department, 11 a.m.)

2 Sat Family Storytime: "This Little Piggy Went to Storytime"

We'll have way more than just three little pigs in our perfectly porky stories, songs, poems, and puppet show. (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

9 Sat Family Storytime: "Counting Sheep"

Count on the Children's Literature Department for warm and fuzzy 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: "Royal Romp"

Bring all your little princesses and princes for a royally good time, with stories, songs, poems, and a regal puppet show. (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

23 Sat Family Program: "The American Cowboy"

Cowboy Ken Frawley presents a lively stage show filled with old cowboy songs, tall tales, true stories, historical facts, trick roping, and more! (Mark Taper Auditorium, 2 p.m.)

30 Sat Family Storytime: "Baby Bear's Just-Right Storytime"

Not too big, not too small. Just the right combination of stories, songs, poems, and a puppet show, all about bears! (KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.)

December

Baby Story & Playtime

Mondays, December 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30

Stories, songs, and rhymes, followed by playtime. For babies and toddlers (ages 0-2). Reservations required for groups of five or more. Call (213) 228-7250. (Children's Literature Department, 11 a.m.)

Preschool Storytime

Tuesdays, October 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31

Stories, songs, fingerplays, and more for ages 2 - 5. Reservations required for groups of five or more. Call (213) 228-7250. (*Children's Literature Department, 11 a.m.*)

7 Sat Family Program: "Padraic Keohane: Folktale From Around the World"

Join us in the Children's Literature Department for stories from near and far, told by a wonderful storyteller, Padraic Keohane. (*KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.*)

14 Sat Family Storytime: "Naughty or Nice?"

Please come to our storytime about manners good and bad, with stories, poems, songs, and a puppet show. Thank you. (*KLOS Theater, 2 p.m.*)

21 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*)

21 Sat Family Program: "Holiday Music with Dave Winstone"

Dave Winstone shares a wide selection of traditions and holiday music from around the world with instruments like the guitar, mandolin, recorder, penny whistle, and harmonica. (*Mark Taper Auditorium, 2 p.m.*)

26 Thu Arts & Crafts: "Winter Break Stories and Crafts"

We share stories and more, then create cool crafts! Recommended for ages 5 and up. (*Children's Literature Department, 2-3 p.m.*)

28 Sat Family Storytime: "3-2-1... Happy New Year!"

Count down to 2014 with stories, songs, poems, noisemakers, and a puppet show. (*KLOS Theater, 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

Like us on Facebook !

HOURS

Monday - Thursday 10 am – 8 pm

Friday, Saturday 10 am – 5:30 pm

THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL FOCAL AWARD LUNCHEON
and
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

HONORING
The 2013 FOCAL Award Winner
ONE CRAZY SUMMER
by
Rita Williams-Garcia

Saturday, December 7, 2013

at
Border Grill

445 South Figueroa Street #100 • Los Angeles CA 90071

PARKING

Westlawn Garage • 524 S. Flower St. (\$1.00 with library validation)

Union Bank Garage • 445 S. Figueroa St. (\$5.00 with restaurant validation)

11:00 A.M. Social Hour

No-Host Bar

12:00 Noon Luncheon

Reservation Form

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Email _____

Reservation Options	Number	x	Price	Amount
Luncheon FOCAL Members @ \$40 ea.		x	\$40.00	
Luncheon Non-Members @ \$45 ea.		x	\$45.00	
Lunch + \$20 Basic Membership @ \$60 ea.		x	\$60.00	
Lunch + \$30 Associate Membership @ \$70 ea.		x	\$70.00	
Lunch + \$60 Contributing Membership @ \$100 ea.		x	\$100.00	
Lunch + \$100 Sustaining Membership @ \$140 ea.		x	\$140.00	
TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED				\$

Please send this completed form and checks, made payable to FOCAL and postmarked no later than Monday, December 2, to: Renny Day, 15221 Via de las Olas, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

TICKETS WILL BE HELD AT THE DOOR

For questions, contact Renny at [310-454-3667](tel:310-454-3667) or rennyday@msn.com

*******MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION *******

Please send renewals to Renny Day / 15221 Via de la Olas / Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Membership is for Calendar year, January through December

New _____ Renewal _____ Basic \$20 _____ Associate \$30 _____

Contributing \$60 _____ Sustaining \$ 100 _____ Lifetime \$1,000 _____
(Free autographed book) (Seat at Head Table) (Book and Head Table)

**Selena Terrazas, Department Manager
Madeline Bryant, Senior Librarian, Children's Literature
Helene Mochedlover, FOCAL Points Editor**

**FOCAL
Children's Literature Department
Los Angeles Public Library
630 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071**