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# AJL Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Competition, 1993

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Introduction by

**Lillian Schwartz**

*Just as I was deeply thrilled to expect Ralph Taylor to be here with us to participate in this evening's awards, I am deeply disappointed and saddened that he is not here. He established this program as a pathway to encourage unpublished fiction writers in the field of children's literature. He knew they were out there ... struggling, disappointed, creative people aching to know that their talents ... what they have to say ... could be appreciated. [As noted in JL vol. 7, p. 87, Ralph Taylor died on June 24, 1993.—Ed.]*

*The Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition has found its own special niche in this maze of publishing. This year I received 258 letters requesting the rules; 21 manuscripts were accepted. At least that number were returned as ineligible. The criteria are clearly outlined, but the writers send along their work regardless...desperate to find a sympathetic heart. The award winner this year is Lillian Fox Ducharme, who presents an adventure from a rarely mined locale...the Galveston Project.*

*Ms. Ducharme is known by the nickname Dede. She lives in The Woodlands, Texas, and has devoted her professional life to teaching. She is currently in the Language Arts For the Gifted Program for grades 3 to 5. Her special interest is, of course, writing, and she has won several awards: a Rice University Workshop Scholarship, Honorable Mention by the Golden Triangle Writers Guild Writers Conference, and the Southwest Writers Conference Golden Pen Award.*

*In a letter to me she wrote, "The Treasure in the Tiny Blue Tin' is not my family's story, but creating this story gave me an opportunity to express my love for my family and my pride in being a Jewish Texan. I tried to tell this story in a way that all children could understand and appreciate."*

*Lillian Schwartz, Librarian of Temple Emanu-El in Providence, Rhode Island, for the past 20 years, is a past president of the New England Jewish Library Association, and has been Coordinator of the AJL Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition since its inception in 1985.*

*Dede, you have succeeded. I am delighted to present to you the Association of Jewish Libraries' Eighth Annual Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition Award.*

**Acceptance Remarks by Lillian "Dede" Fox Ducharme**

One day when my great-uncle was fishing on Pelican Island near Galveston, his friend turned to him and said, "Did you know this island used to be a detention center for immigrants?" My uncle just baited his hook and said, "You don't say!" What my uncle didn't say was that in 1914 he had spent his very first night in America on that very island.

From 1900 until 1917, the Jewish population of Texas more than doubled, from 15,000 to over 31,000. Many who immigrated through the Port of Galveston had an opportunity to bypass the difficult tene-ment experiences of the East, but a new life in the American West offered its own challenges.

My story, "The Treasure in the Tiny Blue Tin," is about a fictional character, Max Miller, a recent Texas immigrant whose family lives above his uncle's store. When Max's father, a peddler, fails to return home in time for their first American Passover, Max takes a bike and runs away from Houston to find him.

Max is not your typical Texas hero. He'd rather go to school than fish. He doesn't know how to swim, and he's afraid of horses. He's completely different from his enemy Joe, the blacksmith's son, who follows him out of town and joins him on his journey.

Together the boys face Texas at its worst. They encounter thieves, storms, floods, snakes, and even death. Along the route north, however, Max finds more than his father. He finds himself, new friends, and a lot about what it means to be an American Jew.

"The Treasure in the Tiny Blue Tin" is not my family's story, but creating it gave me an opportunity to express my love for my grandparents—my grandma, who grew up in an All-of-a-Kind New York family, and my grandpa, who as part of the Galveston Plan became a Jewish Texan at age 22.

Thank you so much for this award. As one of only a handful of Jews in my community, it means a lot to me that this award comes from the Association of Jewish Libraries and that the award honors one of my favorite children's authors, Sydney Taylor.

A special thank you to Lillian Schwartz, contest coordinator, who is consistently kind and helpful, and to my husband Chuck, who always reads what I write even when he'd rather be reading a computer manual.

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*\*Remarks at the Banquet of the Association of Jewish Libraries' 28th Annual Convention, New York Hilton, June 22, 1993.*

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**GILMAN**

*(Continued from p. 113)*

ive action in a visually interesting way. It allowed me to move the people around, creating mini-picture stories while remaining consistent with the form of the text. By doing this I was also able to create a panorama of shtetl life.

At this point, two questions began to concern me: (1) Was my story becoming too somber and adult for its intended audience, and (2) Where was the wonderful button? I guess the child in me was not completely satisfied with the story's solution of turning it all into a wonderful story. I wanted to know where the button went!

The solution to that mystery was the creation of a family of mice under the floorboards of the house. They became the ones to find the button, which their father then turned into the cushion of a little mouse chair. The last page shows Joseph reading to his family. Down at the bottom, a little mouse is sitting on the button chair reading his story to his family. If you want to hear and see the story they wrote, you must turn back to the beginning of the book and begin again.

A good story can be reused and recycled by generations of readers as long as there are generations of good listeners. Thank you for honoring me with this award.