

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

AJL'S Sydney Taylor Awards for Children's Literature*

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Tonight we honor two fine books with the Sydney Taylor Book Award for juvenile literature. *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*, written by David A. Adler, with photographs by Rose Eichenbaum, published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; and *The Return* by Sonia Levitin, published by Atheneum, are the 1987 award winners.

The Committee read and reviewed over 40 books, and I want to thank Leni Allbaugh, Edie Salzman, Geraldine Powers, Jan Sherman, and Aileen Grossberg for their thoughtful consideration of all these books.

It's a pleasure to honor the winning books, but it is also useful and enjoyable to review the many books we considered for the award, to muse over the places and people that inspired the authors of juvenile books, and to mention some of the best books. We have again distributed a list of "Selected Jewish Children's Books Too Good To Miss."

Jerusalem always inspires, even in 1987 when the peace of Jerusalem is non-existent. *Jerusalem Shining Still*, published by Harper and Row, is an unusual and outstanding book, with handsome tinted woodcuts. The history of Jerusalem, compressed into this small book, is poetically related by Karla Kuskin.

Wonderful fictional characters inspired the authors and illustrators. In one of Kar-Ben Copies' best books, *Gittel and the Bell*, a sort of Jewish version of the "boy who cried wolf," impish Gittel springs to life, created by Roberta Goldschlag Cooks and drawn by Susan Martz. I hope we meet Gittel again in another tale.

**Remarks at the banquet of the 23rd annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries, held in Kansas City, Missouri, June 21, 1988.*



Jeff Altwies
Kansas City Jewish Chronicle

Author David Adler accepts the Sydney Taylor Book Award for the best Jewish children's illustrated book for 1987 from Merrily F. Hart, chairman of the awards. Adler received the honor for his book "The Number on My Grandfather's Arm" at a presentation held in Kansas City.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations published not only the prize-winning book, but several other fine books. Morris Schumsky is certainly a memorable fictional character. Last year, Steven Schnur wrote a humorous and meaningful Bar-Mitzvah story. This year he moved on to another life-cycle event, the wedding, and filled it with Jewish meaning and values, and also with humor, adventure, and delight. I hope to see more from Steven Schnur and illustrator Victor Lazzaro—and I hope the book, *The Return of Morris Schumsky*, is followed by yet another return of the "irrepressible" Morris Schumsky.

We sometimes find books laden with Jewish values and history, or books that are appealing to children because they are humorous, or adventurous. Rarely do we find books that combine values and appeal, and are well-written. These features characterize Sydney Taylor's books, and

they are what we search for when we award this prize in her name.

I have some wonderful news to share about old books as well as new books. Sydney Taylor's books about the All-Of-A-Kind Family have not been available as hardcover books for several years. Libraries especially miss the hardcover editions. (I know my library's copies are worn out.) Sydney Taylor's five All-Of-A-Kind Family books have just been reissued in a beautiful new hardcover edition and will be available shortly from Alpha.

Merrily F. Hart is the Librarian at the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies and Library Consultant for the Jewish Community Federation in Cleveland, Ohio. She also serves as Chairman of the AJL Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee for Children's Literature.