It is my pleasure to present once again the AJL Book Awards for the best children's books of the year. The field of Jewish children's literature continues to grow in quality and quantity, making the task and responsibility of our committee rewardingly difficult. During the past year we reviewed thirty books: some excellent, others less so. We became so enmeshed in Voyage by Adele Geras, that along with the Jewish immigrants making the Atlantic crossing to America, we reviewers felt seasick. We sympathized with little Molly in Molly's Pilgrim by Barbara Cohen when she tries to explain an American Thanksgiving to her immigrant mother. We were numbed by Gloria Miklowitz's Close to the Edge where a young and beautiful Jewish teenager who seemingly has everything, finds life so empty that she contemplates suicide. We cried over the photographs of children caught in the Holocaust and Chana'Abells' strikingly simple text in The Children We Remember. We learned from Malka Drucker's Shabbat: A Peaceful Island and Miriam Chaikin's Make Noise, Make Merry: The Story of Purim. We admired both the art and innovative adaptation of the Daniel story in Leon Garfield and Michael Bragg's The Writing on the Wall. We laughed over Ike's latest problems in Ike and Mama and Trouble at School by Carol Snyder, and devoured the pages of activities, stories and information in The Jewish Kids Catalog by Chaya Burstein. These and our other favorites are listed at the end of this article.

The committee noticed the increased number of submissions from small Jewish presses and self-published authors. Although neither their physical format nor literary quality measures up to the books chosen for our list, we are encouraged by their efforts. Several editors from these small, traditional houses reported to me in our phone conversations that they were trying to improve the quality of their publications, and i am sure they will.

The fact that both of our award books come from Jewish publishing houses this year, rather than from trade houses as in past years, is another sign of the improving quality of Judaica presses. Bubby, Me, and Memories by Barbara Pomerantz, published by the UAHC (Union of American Hebrew Congregations), is a departure from the curriculum-oriented books associated with this house; while publication of In the Mouth of the Wolf by Rose Zar by JPS (The Jewish Publication Society of America) represents a continuation of the fine juvenile book publishing of that house under the guidance of children's book editor, David Adler. We salute these two publishers and wish them much success in the future.

While we are saluting ... there is a children's book author familiar to all of us, Sadie Rose Weilerstein, author of many books, notably the famous K'tonton series. Mrs. Weilerstein celebrates her ninetieth birthday this July, 1984, and the Association of Jewish Libraries is sending her a special certificate to mark the occasion.

*Remarks made at the Banquet of the 19th Annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries held in Atlanta, Georgia, June 26, 1984, where awards were granted for the best children's picture book and the best book for older children.

Jewish Children's Books
Too Good To Miss:
Selected List of 1983 Contenders

ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LIBRARIES
BOOK AWARD COMMITTEE

I. For the Youngest - Early Elementary Grades


Ginsburg, Marvelli. The Tattooed Torah. UAHC. A true account of the seizure of Torahs by Nazis retold in an easy-to-read story.


*Pomerantz, Barbara. Bubby, Me, and Memories. UAHC. Our award winner, this photo-essay delicately explores the love between grandchild and grandparent, even after the grandmother's death.


Naylor, Phyllis. The Solomon System. Atheneum. The once happy home life of two brothers comes to an abrupt end when their parents decide to divorce.

Snyder, Carol. Ike and Mama and Trouble at School. Coward-McCann. Ike finds himself in lots of hot water in this fourth book of the nostalgic series.


II. For Middle Graders - Grades 3-6


Naylor, Phyllis. The Solomon System. Atheneum. The once happy home life of two brothers comes to an abrupt end when their parents decide to divorce.

Snyder, Carol. Ike and Mama and Trouble at School. Coward-McCann. Ike finds himself in lots of hot water in this fourth book of the nostalgic series.


*Zar, Rose. In the Mouth of the Wolf. JPS. Our award winner is a personal narrative of the author's successful attempts to survive during the Holocaust.

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