past her house casually after school (as if on an errand), on the chance that she might be sitting on the porch. One day she was there, and waved to him. He waved in answer, and with thoughts and emotions soaring, he walked on and on. After about an hour, he saw an imposing building with "Brooklyn Public Library, Arlington Branch" on the door. He climbed the stairs to the Reference Room and found the Art section. He took out the first book on the shelf—an oversized beautiful tome on ancient Egyptian art. It was the first time he had seen a book on art. Since he could not take the book out, he spent many afternoons in that room, and read every book in the collection. He would tell his friends in school what he had learned. The collection ended with the Impressionists, and he thought that was the most recent school of art. Thus Ezra owed his earliest knowledge of art history and his first acquaintance with many works of art, albeit in reproduction, to the books in that library. Children who visit the children's room in the Arlington Branch nowadays find that it has been named the Ezra Jack Keats Room. As for Harriet, the motivating force for his visit to the library, she and Ezra went through high school together, and several years later she married a different classmate, who evidently had not been too shy to speak to her.

I join the people whom I have written of in thinking that I would like to give an award to librarians.

To return to my book which received your award: I have been asked where the idea came from and why I wrote the book at this time.

I wonder whether other writers would agree that ideas for books are buzzing around waiting to catch the future author at a time when writing them down is not only possible, but inescapable. I am reminded of a concept in Samuel Butler's Erewhon, a satire on utopias written in 1872. In the country named Erewhon (nowhere spelled backwards) no child can answer a parent's criticism by saying, "I didn't ask to be born." Indeed, in Erewhon children do not only ask to be born; each unborn soul selects a pair the camp they attended. Teaching, and a children's book which grew out of my research—Two Tickets to Freedom: The True Story of Ellen and William Craft, Fugitive Slaves, which was published by Simon and Schuster in 1972. Brothers was giving me a faint buzz from time to time. Then the time for it to be written arrived. Ezra Jack Keats, my high school student and dear friend, accepted my invitation to dedicate the library at my grandchildren's Hebrew Day School in Syracuse. On the way back to New York City, he said that he would like to do a book in the Jewish field.
my husband, my parents, my in-laws, and my two young daughters. As we rode home after the ceremony, my father turned to me, wiped away a tear and said, "This was the best day of my life." I'm so sad to say that my father died two years after that, and my mother died a year and a half ago. Life has its sad moments, but it has its joyous ones as well. My young daughters, whom you might have met that evening, and who along with my husband are here with me tonight, are now college women and my best friends. Amy, just graduated, will be going to graduate school for her Masters degree in early childhood education, and Lin is starting her second year in college. My husband Mike and I are very proud parents.

I'm a lot less nervous than I was in 1980. I remember wearing a yellow linen suit at the banquet and walking in to find that I perfectly matched the tablecloth and napkins. Everything in the room was yellow linen. All during the meal, I was never certain if I was wiping my hands on my napkin or on my skirt.

I've written eight more books since then and have given many talks. But the funniest question I've been asked was by a 2nd grade boy at Judy Greenblatt's Temple in Ohio. He asked me "How much do your books gross a year after taxes?" His father must be an accountant. But of everything I've ever written, this book, Ike and Mama and the Seven Surprises, is the most special to me. And as I told Judy Greenblatt on the phone when she called me, this award makes me extremely happy. You see, this book almost wasn't finished. Halfway through it, I was told more commercial books were wanted, and that my publisher wouldn't be able to publish it. It was me versus the bottom line, a key phrase in today's publishing companies.

However, I felt the need to express my artistic freedom, to write the book I needed to write, and that I felt needed to be written, and was already completed inside my head. I'd always envisioned the Ike and Mama series as five books about a boy growing up, taking him from his first pair of long pants to Bar-Mitzvah. Not writing the fifth book felt like writing two acts of a play and not being permitted to write the third act. Many tears were shed, and my family's encouragement and my daughter's typing got me past stages of grief and disappointment and back to challenge and creative excitement.

Tonight, my special thanks go to them and to my editor at Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, Dorothy Briley, for believing in me and my book, and for treating us both so well.

In this year of the Statue of Liberty celebration, and in this book, we welcome cousin Jake to our shores. There really was a cousin Jake, whose cigarettes would set his perina (quilt) on fire. He worked nights as a baker and sleet days, and my father, as a child, had the job to sit by him with a pail of water, as Ike does in my story, to put out the small blazes he started.

That story always fascinated me. I wonder if that's why my father, as an adult, was an honorary fire chief of the New York City fire department.

I thought you might be interested in hearing a bit of research I found while writing this book, but decided not to use. I loved the content, but it would almost become a story in itself when I tried to include it in my text. It seems that there was a munitions plant in New Jersey that had a terrible explosion. There also was, next door to this plant, a manufacturer of sheepskin coats. On Ellis Island, the newly arrived immigrants shouted with joy and amazement as sheepskin coats fell from the sky into their arms. Only in America! America Goniff [thief]!!

I've loved writing my books—The Great Con­dominium Rebellion, which I'm pleased to say was just optioned by ABC-Television for a two-part Saturday afternoon special; Memo: To Myself When I Have a Teenage Kid; and my newest book, The Leftover Kid.

I feel that my books that have contemporary Jewish kids as main characters and show Jewish values and family life are important. But the Ike and Mama Books, capturing the generation that is fast disappearing, will always be most special to me. They gave me great pleasure to write. The wonderful people I interviewed and grew to know so well and love—family and friends who shared their memories and who live on in my own and in my books—are survivors, all.

Yes, this award is very meaningful to me and would be to my mother and father as well. My father, Ike, Irving Glasberg, had to leave school in the 6th grade in order to earn a living for his family, because like the papa in this book, his was ill. For Ike, who grew up to be a self-educated, successful businessman and an avid reader, seeing me receive an award for having written a book, he said was "the happiest moment of his life." I thank you all for giving it to him and to all of us in my family. And somehow I feel as if my parents are here today, too, in the thoughts of my family and myself, and in their special place in my heart.

Thank you.