

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.

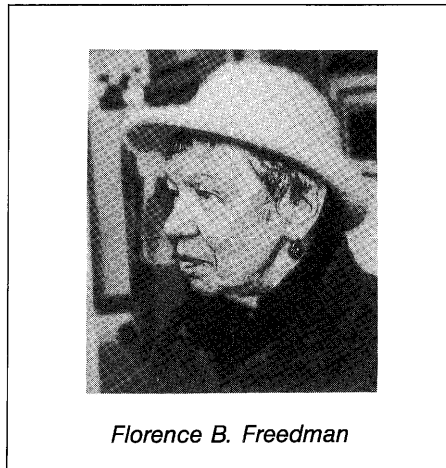
To return to my book which received *your* award: I have been asked where the idea came from and why I wrote the book at this time.

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 of people whom it would like as parents and pesters them without mercy until they reluctantly agree to have the child. So it was with me and *Brothers*, a story which I first read in Hebrew when I was about eight years old. It stayed with me. In time, it was one of the stories I told to my three sons, and later at the camp they attended.

Throughout the years, I wrote books connected with my Whitman studies and with 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 grandsons' 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.



Florence B. Freedman

**A writer's rewards
come in many
styles . . . a good
review to—rarest
of all, an award.**

"I have a story I want to write," I said. He liked the story, planned some sketches for it, and we presented it to Harper and Row. The editors liked it. I was about to go on a trip to Israel, where Keats had never been. He thought that this would be a good time to go—to get background material for his illustrations. There he photographed and sketched a model of the Old City of Jerusalem, old houses in Hebron, boys riding on donkeys, and other scenes of fields and hills. He loved Jerusalem and took trips away from the city only if he could return each day by sunset to go to the Western Wall. He hoped to return to Jerusalem some day.

That dream was never to be realized, nor were the sketches completed. Ezra died in May, 1983. Harper and Row searched a long time for an illustrator, and finally selected Robert Andrew Parker. That is how *Brothers* grew from idea to book.

What idea is pestering me now, asking to be made into a book? With a friend of Ezra's, Dean Louise Engel, I am planning to write a biography of Ezra Jack Keats for young readers. The buzzing is very insistent.

**Carol Snyder:
Children's Book Award Winner**
Introduction by
Judy Greenblatt

I categorized Ike and Mama and the Seven Surprises in the coming-of-age group, and as a book dealing with Bar-Mitzvah. At first, I wasn't going to count it as an immigrant story, because I knew Mama would no longer consider herself an immigrant, but then I remembered Uncle Jake. It is also a book concerned with Jewish values, and more than that, it has a universality of appeal that is a quality of all of our winners. Jewish values, such as the importance of saving a life, visiting the sick, helping others, family support, and the real meaning of Bar-Mitzvah are all part of this fifth in the Ike and Mama series. As it opens, Ike is preparing for his Bar-Mitzvah, and his father is hospitalized with tuberculosis. While Mama remains a powerful force in this book, as in previous ones, Ike matures, becoming more independent and more of a mensch.

Carol Snyder, the author of the Ike-and-Mama series, was born and raised in Brooklyn. She now lives in New Jersey with her husband and two daughters. She was graduated from Brooklyn College with a B.A. in education. In addition to writing, she teaches in a writers' workshop, and lectures for New Jersey young authors' conferences and elsewhere. Carol and her husband Michael Snyder shared the 1973 Hanna G. Solomon Award for Service to Children, given by the National Council of Jewish Women.

In addition to the earlier Ike and Mama books, one of which, Ike and Mama and the Block Wedding, won our book award in 1979, Ms. Snyder is also the author of *Memo: To Myself When I Have a Teenage Kid*; *The Great Condominium Rebellion*; and the forthcoming *The Left-Over Kid*. It gives me great pleasure to present the winner of the 1985 Sydney Taylor Best Book Award, Carol Snyder.

Remarks by Carol Snyder

Sydney Taylor was an inspiration. I loved her books and I'm so pleased to meet her husband Ralph today. I never got to speak to her. I wish I had.

It's a great pleasure for me to be here in Montreal with all of you. I feel as if I'm amongst good friends in this group—catching up on the news of the years since I last saw you.

A lot has happened to me and my family since that banquet in Philadelphia in June 1980 when my second book, *Ike and Mama and the Block Wedding* won the 1979 AJL award. That will always be a special memory in my life. My whole family was there—

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 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 slept 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-TV. 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.



Carol Snyder