

Electronic Newsletter Supplement

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Libraries Change Lives - Illustrations from Children's Books

David and Jean Byer have an unusual hobby. They like to come to the library to browse through the children's picture book section to look at the illustrations. It all started just outside of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, at the Murray Library, which sits on the campus of Messiah College. In September of 2003, The Friends of the Murray Library held a 10th anniversary dinner. David and Jean Byer and son Glenn just happened to be in the area at the time, and being members of that Friends group, they attended the dinner. They were seated at a table with the widower of Ruth Engle and his secretary. Ruth had passed away the previous spring and had been very interested in children's literature and the illustrations that were part of the books. Because of this fondness, the Ruth E. Engle Memorial Collection of Children's Book Illustration was formed with a gift of ten original illustrations that formed the inaugural collection. Seven of the inaugural illustrations were gifts from the family and friends of Ruth E Engle; one was a gift from an illustrator and his wife; and one was sponsored by the Friends of Murray Library. Inspired by the idea, the Byer family sponsored the tenth illustration. In April 2004, the inaugural collection was opened with David and Jean in attendance.

E. B. Lewis illustrates up to four books a year and is booked out several years in advance. He

is an illustrator who had caught the eye of Jean and David in the book *Fire on the Mountain* written by Jane Kurtz. No illustrations were available from that book but David and Jean found a copy of the book *Talkin' About Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman* by Nikki Grimes in the Rochester Public Library Children's area. They suggested illustrations from that book to the selection committee of the then-forming Engle Collection. An illustration of Bessie looking out of a window, with the Eiffel Tower in the background, was available and agreed to by the committee. David, Jean and family agreed to sponsor the purchase. The book, by the way, is a delightful story about Bessie, a young woman

who wanted to train as a pilot. She was barred in the states as she was a woman and Black so she traveled to France to learn to fly.

David and Jean tell the selection committee some of the books and illustrations they would be interested in sponsoring and then leave the decision to the committee. When searching for new illustrations to sponsor, David and Jean are guided by their areas of interest: women, people of color, people overcoming obstacles, and Africa. They also have an interest in making sure the collection represents a global perspective and demonstrates a variety of methods of illustration.

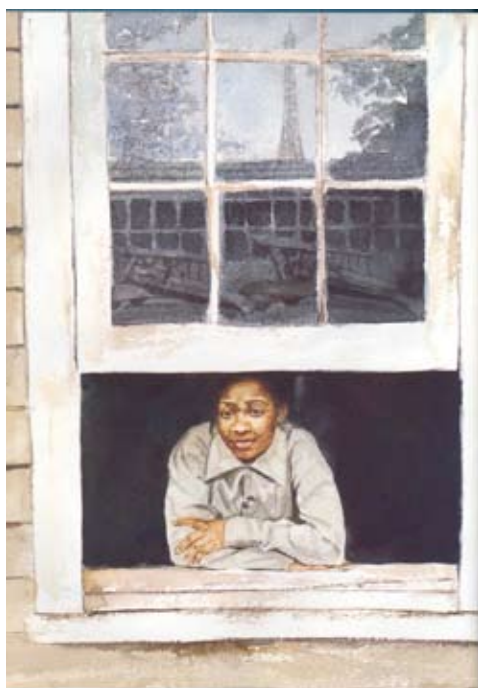
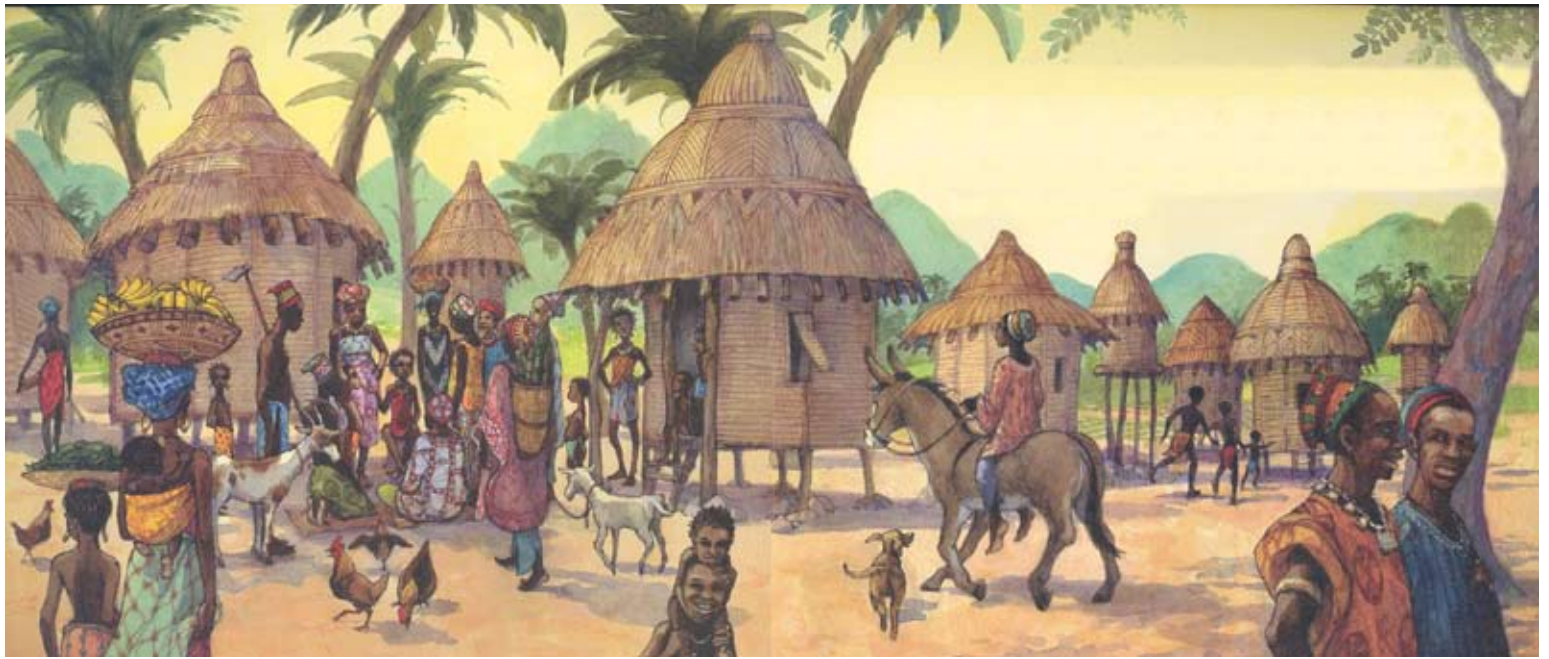


Illustration from *Talkin' About Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman*



David Byer reads *Sense Pass King* to children at Bulebo Village, Chief Macha area, Choma District, Zambia January 2004.



David and Jean first traveled to Africa in 1968. More recently, they volunteer their time every year at Macha Hospital in Africa. They were told about *Sense Pass King: A Story from Cameroon* by Katrin Tchana and illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. (Katrin Tchana is the daughter of the late Trina Schart Hyman.) They found a copy of the book at Rochester Public Library. Because it reminded them of the area where they volunteer, they offered to sponsor an illustration. They took along a copy of the book to share with the children where the hospital is located in order to see the children's reactions. The children were fascinated with the book! Since that time they have been taking 30 or so books with them when they travel to Africa. Some of the books they take with them are donated from the Friends of The Rochester Public Library.

The Magic Gourd written and illustrated by Baba Wague Diakite fulfilled a dream of the Byer family. They wanted an African-born illustrator to be included in the Engle Collection. Baba Wague fit the bill perfectly with an intriguing twist to illustrations. She lives in

Illustration from *Sense Pass King: A Story from Cameroon*

the United States but was born in Timbuktu, Mali. Baba wrote the book and illustrated it not with paper and pen or watercolor illustrations but by the use of ceramics. One of the illustrations is a 21" tall chameleon. Another is a ceramic bowl representing a bowl full on insects. Baba Wague received a Children's Africana Book Award (CABA) Honor 2004. David read about the award. He visited the

Rochester Public Library to read and review the book. David talked with the Engle's selection committee and offered to sponsor the bowl and the chameleon. The committee accepted the offer.

Below: Ceramic bowl and chameleon sculpture used as illustrations for *The Magic Gourd*.



Peter Pan and Wendy by J.M.Barrie is a title familiar to most readers thanks in part to Walt Disney. The Great Ormond Street Hospital in London owns the rights to the story. The hospital decided to do a 100th anniversary edition of the book and contracted with Australian artist/illustrator Robert Ingpen to do the art for it. Ingpen is a world-renowned artist who is represented by Melaleuca Galleries of Australia. In 1968 Robert became the only Australian to receive the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for his international contributions to book illustration. David did all of his initial research on-line. The family agreed to sponsor "Jane Flies for Peter."

David and Jean sponsored the illustration from *The Hello, Goodbye Window* written by Norton Juster and illustrated by Chris Raschka in memory of Chua Her and their times together. In February of 1984 they had a relationship with a family of Hmong who had come to Rochester. Boun Xou, a twelve-year-old girl became like a second sister to their daughter Elaine and spent many weekends with them. They have many fond memories of the hello-goodbye window at Boun Xou's apartment. Boun Xou's great uncle Chua Her was an un-sung Hmong hero

who led his family from Laos to freedom. By the time he reached Rochester he was suffering from cancer. Despite his pain and the language barrier he always came to the window to wave goodbye. The Hello, Goodbye Window won the 2006 Caldecott Award and is the first Caldecott winner in the Engle collection.

This past April, David was in Harrisburg on business and stopped

at the Murray to see the collection (these visits are the first time he actually sees first-hand some of the pieces the family has sponsored).

Walking around the library he saw the book *Hush: a Thai Lullaby* in a display case as a part of an exhibit on Asia. The book is a 1996 Caldecott Honor book illustrated by Holly Meade. David suggested to the Engle collection that they



Illustration from *The Hello, Goodbye Window*



Illustration from *Sky Sweeper*



David Byer reads *Peter Pan and Wendy* near the illustration he and his wife Jean sponsored for the Engle Collection.

might be interested as the illustrations for the book are all cut-paper collages with ink. *Sky Sweeper*, a Buddhist parable, again illustrated by Holly Meade with cut Japanese paper collages, was also sponsored by the Byer family.

The Engle collection now numbers 26 and is running out of wall space to show the entire collection at one time. They will begin a rotation process to allow some of the illustrations a resting period.



David Byer looking at “Muddy Pig,” an illustration from *Hush: A Thai Lullaby*.

Not only do David and Jean sponsor illustrations for the Engle collection, but they also purchase illustrations for their grandchildren. They now have three grandchildren and have found original illustrations for the first two. They are still looking for the perfect illustration for their newest grandchild. The illustrations hang in the grandchildren’s bedrooms. “In Bed Dumping the Stars” by David McPhail for *Wynken Blynken and Nod* and “Lonely Leopard” by Julia Cairns from *We All Went On Safari: A Counting Journey Through Tanzania* are two of the illustrations.

After looking at the Children’s picture book collection at the Rochester Public Library, David noted that our library is unusually current in its collections. He has either found every book he wishes to see or has noticed that the book is on order. He has high praise for the library staff and says the Rochester Public Library has been important to him and his family for reviewing and finding illustrations to sponsor.

For more information about the Ruth E. Engle Memorial Collection of Children’s Book Illustration visit: www.messiah.edu/murraylibrary/resources/Engle_Memorial_Collection.pdf. 📖



Vanessa Caffrey and “In Bed Dumping the Stars” from *Wynken Blynken and Nod*.