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## Round Robin

Dorothy E. Smith

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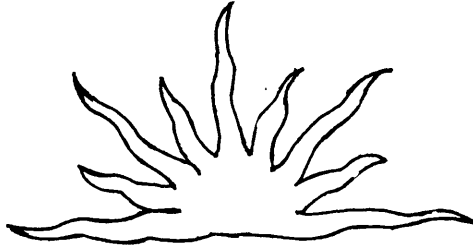
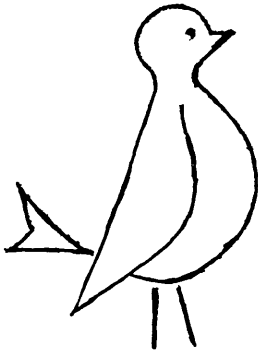
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## ROUND ROBIN

*Dorothy E. Smith, Editor*

It has become a tradition at The Western Michigan University Campus School to have an unusual kind of an annual book fair. The philosophy is not to have the typically commercial book fair but rather to give the youngsters a personal contact with a children's author. Each year they invite an author whom the children themselves have chosen. Long before the book fair is put on the children read the books of that particular author and each grade takes one character from the stories and constructs art exhibits pertaining to it. This year Jean Craighead George was the author chosen. She has written many books on both the child and adult levels. She has been published in such national magazines as *The Readers Digest*, and a book she wrote recently, *My Side of the Mountain*, is now being made into a movie. Miss George is a naturalist and most of her characters are bears, chipmunks and other kinds of animals.

The featured author each year has all of her books displayed at the book fair. The art exhibits pertain to her works specifically and the visitors may buy autographed copies. The book fair does include books by other authors. There are displays of these but they are not for sale. This book fair is perhaps unique and the Campus School has received many requests for information about it. Following are some letters that were written by visitors to this year's fair which perhaps will be of interest to teachers in other elementary schools.

Dear Editor,

In the course of pursuing a profession, one has periods of bewilderment when he doubts his directional goal. If one is in elemen-

tary education and such doubts occur, may I suggest a visit to a children's book fair to regain the motivation and enthusiasm. I arrived at the University Elementary School Book Fair around 11:15 a.m. to find children bustling around. The children were very excited and each seemed to be taking a personal pride in the book fair. Their interest and enthusiasm quickly captivates any visitor. They seem to have taken the attitude that this is their show and you are going to enjoy it and feel its importance.

I spoke with several children asking which books they liked or wanted to buy. One third grade boy named Mark told me that he had ordered the book, *The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle* (by Hugh Lofting). He had a copy on the display table in front of him, guarding it. When asked why he had chosen this particular book, he explained that it was thick and yet he could read it. I spoke with two fifth grade pupils who were managing a table. I asked the boy what type stories he enjoyed and he immediately answered space and adventure stories. Both the girl and the boy told me various things about the books on their table. I asked them if they had read all the books in class or at home. These two fifth graders laughed and informed me that they go through all the books while they were waiting for customers. They knew every picture and had figured out many of the stories by either reading parts of the books or putting various clues together. Both children were particularly interested in the book, *My Side of the Mountain*, by the visiting author Jean Craighead George. They explained the book to me in great length. In doing so other children gathered around to add comments which increased their excitement even more. Apparently this book is an adventure story about a 13 year old boy who runs away from home and lives on a mountain where he must capture his own food and build a shelter and a fire. There are illustrations in the book to show how the boy did these things and how the reader could also do them. The book was also written in first person singular which allows another means of close association.

I enjoyed extremely my visit to the book fair as well as talking with the children about the various books, the art work they had prepared and their excitement towards the author. One fourth grade child showed me a picture in the back of one of the author's books of the author. The child quickly added that Jean Craighead George was really prettier than that.

Brenda Kelly

Dear Editor,

I can't think of a more exciting way to interest children in books—to make books come alive for them—than this elementary book fair. The large cave (complete with hairy spiders!), the giant tree house, the delicate sea corner, these all depicted sections of different books. And, it wasn't merely something the children could see and associate with their reading, it was something which they had actually planned and created. Besides the construction and planning, children also served as salesmen. I feel the project is very worthwhile because the children can take an active part in relating their reading to other areas such as art, planning, or meeting an author.

Chris Alberti

Dear Editor,

As I looked at the attractive displays of books and art illustrations, I remembered something I had recently read. It stood so clearly in my mind that I had to find its source. Then in some church literature I found,

"I am the Printed Page. I can be made to speak any language, sing any song, show any picture. I have no barriers of race, color, or culture. I can do my work alone. I am available to both the rich and poor, for I cost very little. I can be used again and again by the same person or by many persons. I can attract and entertain, instruct and correct, guide and encourage, warn and reconcile."

These things were going through my mind as I admired the versatility and quality of books selected. I realized that this was more than selling and buying books, but this was also a means of influencing children to read through new experience. Meeting a "real live author," illustrating her books through displays and art, discussing stories, making out sales slips and other challenging experiences are helping children to see books not only as "school or study books," but also as a source of enjoyment and entertainment. I feel that the enthusiasm about the Book Fair will influence their reading in and outside the classroom.

It has extended and enriched experiences, broadened and improved tastes of reading, fostered personal-social activities, and provided uses of worthwhile recreational and art skills.

Geneva Silvernail