



Boston Authors Club

June - July 2021 Newsletter

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Interview with Cathy Stenquist: *Forever Home*



Cathy Stenquist is celebrating the forthcoming publication of her debut picture book, *Forever Home* via IngramSpark. She was the 2nd place winner in the BAC Discovery Award Competition last year for her unpublished ms. *I Wish I Were*.

In this interview, Cathy talks about the inspiration for both stories, her motivation for entering writing contests, and the experience of self-publishing her work.

Q: Congratulations on publishing *Forever Home*. What inspired this story?

A: Thank you! *Forever Home* is based on the true story of two cats rescued from a barn in Framingham and their journey to find a forever family. In September 2001, my daughter Erica and I went to Baypath Humane Society of Hopkinton in the hopes of finding a cat. Browsing the cages, we spied two small cats curled up in the corner. When we held them, we knew they were meant to be ours. Much like the characters in *Forever Home*, "We thought we'd come for just one cat...but were now going home with two!" Angel and Camille filled our lives with affection and mischief for 17 years. After they passed away within months of each other, I began thinking of sharing their story.

Q: Could you describe the path you and this book followed from concept to writing, submitting and production. How long did it take? What were some of the ups and downs along the way?

A: Three years ago, I entered my story about the adoption into Vivian Kirkfield's #50PreciousWords contest where writers are challenged to write a picture book in 50 words complete with characters, story arc, tension and resolution. A challenge, to be sure! After winning honorable mention, I began thinking I could expand these 50 words into a full picture book. Many critiques and revisions later, I submitted several times but never got a bite.

In 2020, my daughter, now an illustrator (ericaleighart.com), suggested we take one of my stories and self-publish it. With her encouragement, we ran a Kickstarter campaign to raise the funds needed. Erica got to work creating her amazing watercolor illustrations. One benefit to self-publishing was to be part of the illustration process and seeing each spread as it unfolded. Every week felt like Christmas! We are reviewing the first proof now, and working with IngramSpark to correct a few issues. We hope to have it available for sale at the end of June.

The “ups” were definitely working with my talented daughter. Her love of these cats shined through each page. The “downs” were managing my mother’s hospice care in Alabama during its development until she recently passed. Her image and that of her cat, Sugar are featured on the adoption day spread. She was very excited about that.

Q: How are you planning to promote *Forever Home* this summer and fall?

A: I hope to do a book launch with my local indie bookstore next month. IngramSpark will make it available to the larger retail stores and with POD. Unlike traditional publishing, most of the marketing will fall on me. I am currently researching and networking on social media and making a marketing plan. I will be partnering with Baypath to do a fundraiser for them and look forward to speaking with students about writing and adopting from shelters.

Q: Congratulations also on your 2nd place recognition in the BAC Discovery Award competition for your unpublished manuscript, *I Wish I Were*. What are your plans for that ms?

A: Thank you to the BAC for honoring *I Wish I Were*. I am thrilled to be in the company of such amazing authors. I highly recommend to writers to take a chance and submit to this year’s contest. It was a wonderful experience. *I Wish I Were* has always been close to my heart; inspired by a Buzza Motto poem that hung in our summer camp for 60 years, called “I Wish I Were a Little Rock.” I loved the format and rhythm and wondered if I could create a story using it. I began playing with the first line, “I wish I were...” and the story flowed from there, becoming a magical trip to the beach, where a child uses his imagination to actually be the things you find there, like a darting kite or a tall Ferris wheel.

I am eager to be traditionally published and am researching agents and submitting. I believe it has amazing illustration potential. The soothing lull of the text taking you through a day of imagination ending in the sun “painting a sweet goodnight” makes it a classic bedtime story kids will keep enjoying. I have also submitted it to the Ann Whitford Paul Discovery Award through SCBWI and will hear back in the Fall.

For more information on Cathy’s writing, visit her website: www.cathystenquist.com.

Interview by Mary J Cronin

Interview with Matt Robinson: *Lions, Tigers, and...Bulldogs?*

Matt Robinson, a former English teacher and boxing coach is now a professional writer, communications consultant, and BAC member with over 5,000 pieces in more than 250 international publications to his credit. In this interview, Matt shares his inspiration for writing about Ivy League mascots, surprising Ivy factoids, and his experiences in virtual book marketing.

Q: What originally inspired you to write *Lions, Tigers, and...Bulldogs? An unofficial guide to the legends and lore of the Ivy League*

A: My father had gone to Brown and had taken me to many football games there. As Ivy League football is not always riveting, I focused on the school’s mascot. The bear costume imbued its wearer with a freedom of anonymity that was so attractive that, when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would often say the Brown Bear!

Though I eventually ended up in Philadelphia instead of Providence, the affinity for mascots stuck with me. As a professional writer, I have published thousands of stories. Even so, many readers would ask me when I was going to publish a book, and I would explain that completing assignments for others was more of a priority than writing something for myself.

About 10 years ago, my father was diagnosed with dementia. As someone who makes a living with words, I realized that losing my vocabulary could be fatal in more ways than one and immediately began to look at my long list of book ideas, determined to have one published. In honor of my father, I decided to write about the Ivy League.

I set a deadline of my father’s 80th birthday and, while my dad did not live to see the first edition, I delivered it to him posthumously. Since then, I have presented and sold the book all over the world. I think Dad likes it too!



Q: You cover a lot of Ivy League traditions. What is the one story that you found most surprising?

A: Having grown up near Harvard, I was familiar with the so-called "Statue of Three Lies" (see the book for details), but my research revealed so many fun facts about each school that it was difficult to choose which to include! Fortunately, I have been able to put new ones on my website (www.lionstigersbulldogs.com) and in my Tr-IVY-a© game when I present the book to groups. When asked what facts I am proudest of, I would have to say, as a Quaker, that Franklin Field is not only the oldest double-decker stadium in the nation, but it has also hosted the longest uninterrupted track meet in the country (the Penn Relays), as well as the Liberty Classic (a competition among countries that boycotted the 1980 Olympics), and the first College GameDay broadcast on ESPN. It also boasts a "toast-boni" that is used to pick up toast that is tossed when we sing a school song that ends, "Here's a toast to Dear Old Penn!"

Q: Can you share some of your experiences in marketing this book, and what has worked best to attract readers and generate sales?

A: As I ended up publishing the book myself, I have also had to market it myself. Decades of communications experience and thousands of contacts have helped me craft promotional materials (e.g., flyers, postcards, etc.) and find people who are interested in the book and the process involved in publishing it. Thanks to online meetings, I have been able to engage people in places that I might otherwise not be able to go, including California, Alaska, and even Switzerland! In many ways, that has been the most rewarding part of the entire story.

Q: Do you have any plans to write a longer book?

A: Many people have asked when Volume 2 is coming. While I have plenty of material, I am enjoying the opportunities to engage with readers of the first book. I especially like hearing from parents who tell me it inspired their children to apply to these schools and even helped them connect with their college interviewers by sharing a little-known factoid they learned from the book.

Interview by Mary J Cronin

The Boston Authors Club
Discovery Award:
Picture Book Contest



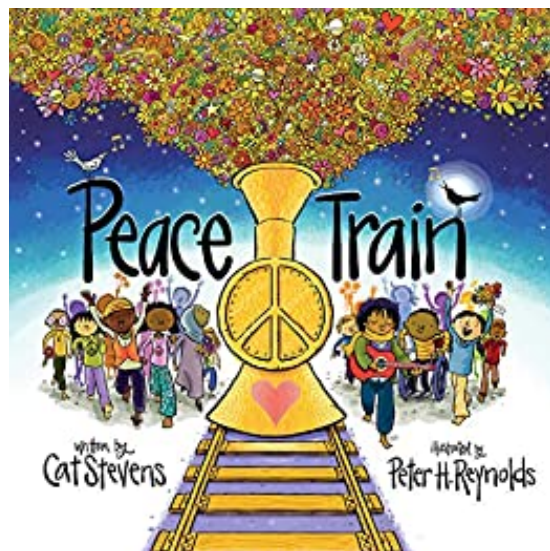
DISCOVERY AWARDS OPEN FOR SUBMISSION THROUGH JUNE 30

CALLING ALL UNPUBLISHED PICTURE BOOK AUTHORS within 100 miles of Boston! June is the month to submit your picture book ms (text only - no illustrations required) to the second annual BAC Discovery Award Competition. For competition rules, prizes, and a link to submit online, please visit:

<https://bostonauthorsclub.org/bac-discovery-award>

CATCH THE ILLUSTRATED PEACE TRAIN THIS SUMMER!

Just in time for a summer of new beginnings, Cat Stevens and BAC Board member Peter Reynolds have teamed up to publish an exuberantly illustrated picture book version of the classic song *Peace Train*, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary! This timeless ode to peace and love is already a New York Times #1 Bestseller. Order your copy of *Peace Train* from the source at <https://www.thedotcentral.com/>



Insider BAC tip -- the sequel to Peace Train, an illustrated version of If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out, is in the works. You heard it here first, thanks to Nancy Ling.

President's Note

Summer Reading

Summer's on the horizon, and I can hardly wait to tear into the stack of books that's piled up on my nightstand!

I've never been much of a beach sitter and therefore never much of a "beach novel" reader, but I do have several novels and books of short stories waiting for me. There are also several biographies – no surprise – and a number of random works of non-fiction. I'm thinking about re-reading some plays that I read long ago, too.

Summer reading always feels like an indulgence, but a needed and welcome one after all the reading I normally do during the academic year for my teaching and for my own writing. There's nothing quite like a summer day that starts early and goes late, sitting on my screen porch, engrossed in a book.

And speaking of reading good books, look for the announcement of the 2020 Julia Ward Howe prize winners coming soon! Our reading committees are close to their decisions, and we will soon have a list of some excellent choices for our fellow writers, readers and book lovers, in fiction, non-fiction, poetry and young reader categories. Stay tuned, as well, for information about the BAC Awards ceremony in the fall; at this writing we do not yet know whether we'll be allowed to have it in person at our home away from home, the Boston Public Library, or if it will have to be virtual. But we will be honoring our 2019 winners, as well as the 2020 winners soon to be announced.

In the meantime, wishing you all a good start to your reading and lots of wonderful books to go with it!



Julie Dobrow
BAC President

Yesteryear at the BAC by Scott Guthery From Amherst to Japan with Mabel Loomis Todd

Mabel Loomis Todd was one of the founders of the Boston Authors Club. Todd is probably best known in literary circles for her involvement with the Dickinson family, as engagingly told in After Emily by Julie Dobrow, current president of the Boston Authors Club. But in scientific circles, Mabel Loomis Todd is best known as the author of multiple books encouraging interest in astronomy. In writing about Todd's publications in astronomy, the New England Historical Society notes, "It was [David Todd's] wife who is still remembered as a first-rate science writer – though she is better known as Austin Dickinson's lover."

David Peck Todd was a somewhat troubled professor of astronomy and director of the observatory at Amherst College from 1881 to 1917. Mabel Todd's first book, published when she was 25, was a collection of short stories, *Footprints*, 127 copies of which were privately printed in 1883.

Her first astronomy book was *Total Eclipses of the Sun*, published 1894 by Roberts Brothers, Boston. In the Prefatory Note, Todd writes, "The present volume is not written for astronomers, much less for



eclipse experts, but to give very un-professional information to those without technical knowledge, who are yet curious as to these strangely impressive phenomena, — and with the hope, too, of creating farther intelligent interest."

Total Eclipses was followed by *Corona and Coronet: being a narrative of the Amherst eclipse expedition to Japan, in Mr. James's schooner-yacht Coronet, to observe the sun's total obscuration, 9th August, 1986*. It was on this excursion that Mabel became the first Western woman to walk up Mount Fuji. Her third astronomy book was *A Cycle of Sunsets*, published in 1910. The title is an echo of Todd's book of poetry, *A Cycle of Sonnets*, that she published in 1896. Between *Corona* and *Cycle*, Todd also found time to edit an update of *Steele's Popular Astronomy, being the New Descriptive Astronomy*.

One of the most fascinating chapters in *Total Eclipses*, from my point of view, is Chapter X, Eclipses and the Electric Telegraph. Introduced by an epigraph by Emily Dickinson ("Eclipses suns imply"), the chapter describes the use of the electric telegraph to synchronize the remote tracking of an eclipse. Todd writes, "If the astronomers near both ends of the shadow-track are in telegraphic communication, these may become moments of supreme significance." Fittingly in some obscure sense, the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel Morse, was also disparately known in the domains of art and science. Portraits painted by Morse of nineteenth century luminaries and landscapes are on display at the Boston Athenaeum as well as museums around the world.

Lin-Manuel Miranda Virtual Book Launch on JUNE 15 at An Unlikely Story

Live on Zoom Tuesday, June 15th at 8pm ET Tickets are \$45+ and include a copy of the book Before Hamilton became a global phenomenon, before Lin-Manuel Miranda became a household name, a little show called *In the Heights* shook up Broadway with its hip-hop and salsa soundtrack and big, bilingual heart. In their new book *In the Heights: Finding Home*, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Quiara Alegria Hudes, and Jeremy McCarter tell the story of the show's humble beginnings, from rehearsals in a bookstore basement to the Broadway smash (and soon-to-be feature film!) that created an unbreakable community and a new kind of family for everyone involved. Join Miranda, Hudes, and McCarter for a very special *In the Heights* Virtual Book Launch on Tuesday, June 15 from 8:00 to 9:00pm ET on Zoom. **Purchase your tickets at anunlikelystory.com/in-the-heights**

NOTE: The BAC News welcomes virtual author event listings from Boston-area independent bookstores. Send AUGUST AND FALL author event highlights and registration information to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com

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