

# Authors share their viewpoints

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

The luncheon program, sponsored by the Birmingham-Bloomfield Children's Book and Author Society, had its own aura about it.

Whether it is astute planning on the part of the committee or planning plus luck, each of these events, which brings leading writers and illustrators to this community, has had a strong individual color and mood about it.

Some have been lighthearted and humorous, others have focused on how to find, develop and use material.

This recent one was more concerned with the philosophy behind writing and illustrating than it was with the actual procedure.

The diversity is certainly one reason for the continuing success of these programs.

One of the guests for this one was Charles Ferry of Rochester, who writes for teens and young adult readers. His "Raspberry One," a World War II story, was selected by the School Library Journal as one of the best books of 1983. Next year Houghton Mifflin will publish "One More Time," a story set in the big band era of the 1940s.

Tom Feelings, another guest speaker, was the illustrator for two works by Muriel Feelings, "Moja Means One" and "Janbo Means Hello," which were named Caldecott Honor Books. His

most recent book, "Daydreamers," was written by Eloise Greenfield.

Margaret Mary Kimmel's first book, "Reading out Loud: a Guide to Sharing Books With Children," has generated interest across the country and Kimmel has been on a busy travel schedule sharing her enthusiasm for reading aloud.

KIMMEL had both emotional and statistical material to reinforce her claim to the beneficial effects of reading to children.

"Starved for story" is the way she described a group of youngsters who had little to no experience having stories read to them.

She backed up her claims about its importance by telling of two control groups of first graders — one was given book and literature-related activities over the summer and the other heard stories read aloud regularly. The latter group moved noticeably ahead in reading comprehension and vocabulary.

Then she said, "You may not make every child a reader, but by sharing a story, you make sure that they have something, that for the rest of their lives, makes it special."

Feelings grew up in Brooklyn and as he trained to be an illustrator he took his sketch pad to the street to draw the people in his neighborhood.

"I started drawing children because I

was shy . . . they put me at ease. Children give back what they feel coming from you."

When he went out to find work in the early 1960s, 99 percent of his portfolio was of black people, particularly children.

"I couldn't get any work in spite of the Civil Rights Movement."

Because he wanted to live somewhere where being black was normal, "where I was in the majority," he went to Ghana.

"The children in Ghana, West Africa, looked exactly like the children in my community. Yet, the effects of the environment made my pictures feel different."

WHEN HE came back to the United States, he found publishers looking for black illustrators.

He did books on Africa, saying, "I wanted children to see and feel what I felt."

In all of his books, particularly the ones he is working on, he strives to have the pain and struggle black people have experienced reflected in their faces.

Feelings said he is working on "a very important story, a very painful story and that's how black people came to America."

His life in Ghana gave him a valuable perspective, he said.

Ferry used Graham's law that bad money drives out good as a metaphor

for what is happening in American culture.

"Our best seller lists, which once were filled with literature of timeless value, are now sprinkled with titles formerly kept under the counter — in a brown wrapper."

But, in the midst of what he called "our cultural decline," Ferry found "little beacons" — The Birmingham-Bloomfield Children's Book and Author Society, for one, "The Horn Book Magazine" for another and teachers such as the one, Sister Joan Theresa, whom he had for eighth grade in Wisconsin.

He found other encouraging signs in things such as the improvement in schools, the presence of fine arts camps and the increase in the number of symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles.

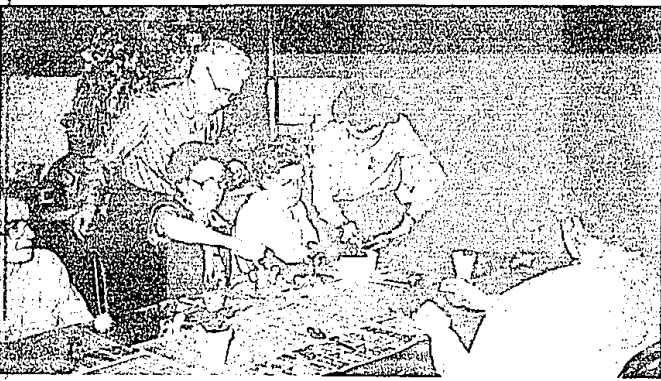
His book, "Raspberry One," he said, "is my effort to give young people a painfully honest glimpse of that war (World War II). If they read it carefully, they will learn that the war began the way all wars begin — through good people doing nothing."

In closing, he said, "The knowledge of mankind is found in our textbooks; the wisdom of mankind is found in good literature."



## Is the Hotel Really Haunted?

Farmington Hills resident Jamison Messerly has both authored and illustrated "Is the Hotel Really Haunted?" a children's book on its way to publication. The publication is made possible by Rita Heaven, a teacher at New Morning School, who was awarded a grant from Plymouth Community Arts Council which enables students to write, illustrate, print and bind two copies of their book. One will be a keepsake for Jamison; the other will become a permanent part of New Morning's library.



## Garden therapy for retirees

Proceeds from the rummage sale that runs today until 5 p.m. and tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in First Presbyterian Church barn, is earmarked to support the garden therapy classes given to residents of Farmington Hills Inn. This month Farmington Garden Club members Clara

Nelson (standing at left) and Mary Forshee teach how to make dish-gardens. Their students are Louise Schmidt (at left) Dorothy Schaeff, Estelle Haskins, Mary Wesley, and Wilma Bush in forefront. The church barn is at 26265 Farmington Road.



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