

Children's writers discuss their work

By Corinne Abell
Staff writer

The three guest speakers for the fall Birmingham Bloomfield Children's Book and Author Luncheon — Joan Blos, Carls Conover and Nicole Rubel — brought interesting viewpoints about children's books.

Blos writes fiction for youngsters as well as teenagers; Conover, an illustrator, retells and

illustrates tales for children; and Rubel is both artist and author.

Each presented her ideas in the way that came most naturally. Conover used some of her illustrations on art board to trace the development of her characters.

She first tried to depict Simple Simon, for her newest book, as a bear cub. But in spite of being cuddly and adorable, "he didn't quite work" and neither did several other animals, she said.

One day, on a walk, she spotted a scarecrow and she knew she had her basic Simple Simon. Since it was a Halloween story, she gave him a pumpkin face and with an expression that was somewhere between naive and wise.

ONCE CONOVER HAS established her basic character and done research on the country and period in which the story is set, she works like a mature, skilled paper doll artist, creating outfits which she can put on and take off the figure (character) on the board.

"Art is truly one of life's great pleasures and everyone should be able to enjoy it . . . I really enjoy making use of these artistic traditions which I love so much. I hope when they (children) see a painting by Gainsborough or Fragonard, it's no big deal to them because they see so much good art in their books."

Blos' talk, well-constructed and to the point, had a pleasing, professorial tone. But what else can you expect from Blos, a member of the University of Michigan faculty for many years as well as being an author.

"There is no sort of trick to writing. It is a great

deal of hard work. There is also some sort of mystery — how something that was not there, at some point, becomes there in our lives."

She said her new book, "Lotti's Circus," took 13 drafts before it became what she wanted.

She said she has always loved books "about the olden days" and still reads lots of them. "I'm looking for a story."

She told the audience that she spends lots of time reading old letters, town records and school records.

She compared writing to the imaginary play of children. "One becomes that other person — that character you know you created."

Rubel said very quietly after her talk that she hadn't told anyone before some of the things she told the Book and Author Luncheon audience.

She said that when she is asked where she gets her ideas, she answers that she draws on her own early experiences.

"I am not afraid to express my hopes and fears," she said. "Looking to your inner self will give birth to a really creative piece of work."

review

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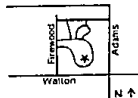
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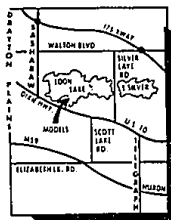
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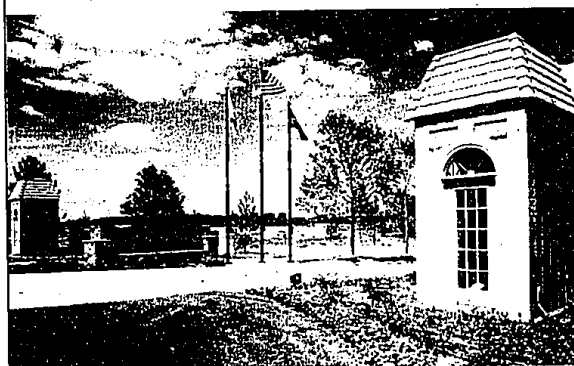
Club House - Pool area in Spring of '87. Artists conception only - not exactly as pictured.

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