

(From Heidi Estrin to Jo Taylor Marshall)

Dear Jo,

It was lovely to see you in Montreal for the AJL Convention! Your speech at the awards banquet was enjoyed by all, and I've been asked by our Proceedings Chair to follow up with you about exactly that. If you have a written version of that speech that you'd like to have included in our official Convention Proceedings, we would love to have it.

(Ms. Marshall's response)

Dear Heidi,

Thank you for your email about my "speech". Actually, I never write speeches, I just say what comes into my heart and head at any given moment. However, I do remember being very honored to be amongst so many librarians at once, especially since the "Library Lady" figured so prominently in my Mother's books. Also, since (according to the speaker before me) librarians are "artists, engineers, teachers, counselors, spiritualists, magicians and weightlifters".

To be honest, with my double knee and hip replacements, I could have used a couple of those weightlifters to get me to the podium. However, I guess a floor microphone sufficed if everybody heard me enough to like what I said.

I know I commented that my Aunts Ella, Henny, Charlotte, and Gertie would also be very proud and that in case anybody noticed I had left one person out-Sarah (whom not everybody knows) was actually my mother Sydney – the sensitive shy one called "Little Meisalah" (spelling?) or mouse by family who never dreamed she would write about them, much less win an award for doing so.

She changed to the "ambisextrous" Sydney because it was still difficult for female writers to get published in the 50's. She was also an ardent feminist in her day before it was fashionable. She still had her maiden name on the doorbell to their apartment which I discovered after she passed away in "78".

I continue to get fan letters from children addressed to "Mr." Sydney Taylor like the 8 year old who wrote:

"Dear Mr. Taylor,  
I love your books but I would have written them different."

(I told him I'd really love to have a copy of his version.)

Or my two favorites:

"Dear Mr. Taylor,  
I've got 5 brothers. Could you make the girls 5 boys instead?"

And

"Dear Mr. Taylor,  
How did you ever know so much about the Lower East Side? Were there roads back then?"

I am hopeful that I will get more such fun letters now that Random House has reissued the books after 60 odd years.

I am also always so pleased to be part of the AJL and the Sydney Taylor Awards which we've recently expanded to include works for teens as well.

This honor and the wonderful, creative extraordinarily talented winners - many of whom by now are multiple award recipients - help keep my mother and her memory alive. I am also constantly amazed by the incredible job of the selection committee. This year alone they had to plow through 127 books each - I can't imagine that much eye strain even.

So thank you all for being part of the Sydney Taylor Legacy. You are a very special "ALL-OF-A-KIND" group to me.

Warmly,

Jo Taylor Marshall

PS. Heidi-feel free to use this as is in its entirety if you wish.