

American Library Association honors top children's books

BY GREG TOPPO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON—A series of vignettes set in Depression-era rural Illinois about a 15-year-old girl and her scheming grandmother took top honors in children's literature Monday from the American Library Association.

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck won the association's 2000 John Newbery Medal.

David Small, illustrator of *So You Want To Be President?* won the Randolph Caldecott Medal for most distinguished picture book, the association's other top honor.

Small's illustrations, a mix of watercolor, ink and pastel chalk, suggest political cartoons, producing wry personal portraits of the presidents.

The book, called a "spiffy presidential history" by Booklist, is written by Judith St. George.

A Year Down Yonder, the sequel to Peck's Newbery Honor-winning *A Long Way from Chicago*, tells the story of 15-year-old Mary Alice, who is sent from Chicago to live for a year in 1937 with her grandmother after Mary Alice's father loses his job. Mary Alice soon finds herself involved in her grandmother's many oddball schemes.

The Horn Book, which reviews children's books, called the stories "wise, exuberant and slyly heartwarming."

Peck, 66, who lives in New York, has written more than 20 novels for teenagers. His first book, *Don't Look and it Won't Hurt*, published in 1972, was adapted into the 1992 film *Gas Food Lodging*.

He is also the author of four novels for adults.

In an interview Monday, Peck said, "My cause and my joy is writing for younger teens — middle school is the age at which we lose most people to reading. ... I want to write to encourage reading through that time, because neither

parents nor schools are doing the job. This is the age at which parents stop attending PTA meetings, and I want to be there, to encourage reading."

Peck said he makes sure all of his books include older characters.

"This is a generation of young people who no longer have to write thank-you notes for gifts from grandparents, and so they rob themselves of their own roots. I give them elders — an eccentric cast of strong grandparental figures."

In other honors announced at the ALA's midwinter meeting:

Four Newbery Honor Books also were named: *Hope Was Here*, by Joan Bauer; *The Wanderer* by Sharon Creech; *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo; and *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, by Jack Gantos.

Three Caldecott Honor Books also were named: *Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic Sung in the Year 1888*, illustrated by Christopher Bing, written by Ernest Lawrence Thayer; *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type*, illustrated by Betsy Lewin, written by Doreen Cronin; and *Olivia*, written and illustrated by Ian Falconer.

Jacqueline Woodson, author of *Miracle Boys*, and Bryan Collier, illustrator for *Uptown*, were named the 2001 winners of the Coretta Scott King Awards honoring black authors and illustrators of outstanding books for children and young adults.

The Newbery Medal was named for 18th-century British bookseller John Newbery. It is awarded annually to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

The Caldecott Medal was named in honor of 19th-century English illustrator Randolph Caldecott. It is awarded annually to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children.

HONG KONG

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Officials at Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport became suspicious that her Chinese passport was fake and began interrogating Lin.

Lin, now 18, told the court Monday that she was pressured into signing immigration documents as Chan Lai-na, the name of a schoolmate of hers.

Lin said the interpreter raised his voice and warned, "If you do not sign, you will be sent back to mainland China and face a firing squad or be put behind bars in Hong Kong for the rest of your life."

On the orders of the interpreter, Lin said, she wrote two statements in simplified Chinese characters, copying exactly what the interpreter had written on two other pieces of blank paper.

"I understand that my real name is Chan Lai-na. I was born on Sept. 24, 1983, in Fuzhou," Lin wrote, using a false birthday. She also wrote: "I do not have the

right of abode in Hong Kong. Please arrange for me to return to mainland China as soon as possible."

The Chinese-born Lin said she was told that if she used the wrong birthday, she would go immediately back to the United States.

Lin said she believed what the interpreter said because "he is also a native of Fuzhou."

Lin said she also believed the real Chan Lai-na, a good friend and schoolmate, would be coming through Hong Kong two days later after a visit to Fuzhou

and would be able to help prove her identity.

Lin said a plainclothes officer also talked of beatings as he ordered her to write down Chan's name as her own.

"If you were a male, I would have hit you," Lin quoted the officer as saying.

Hong Kong has been part of China since Britain relinquished its former colony in July 1997, but the capitalist bastion has a vastly different legal system from the communist mainland. Border controls remain in place.

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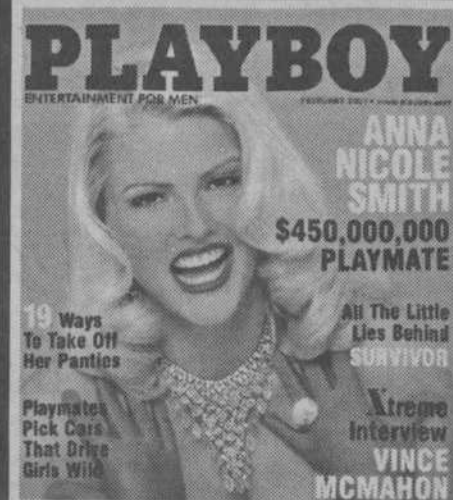
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