

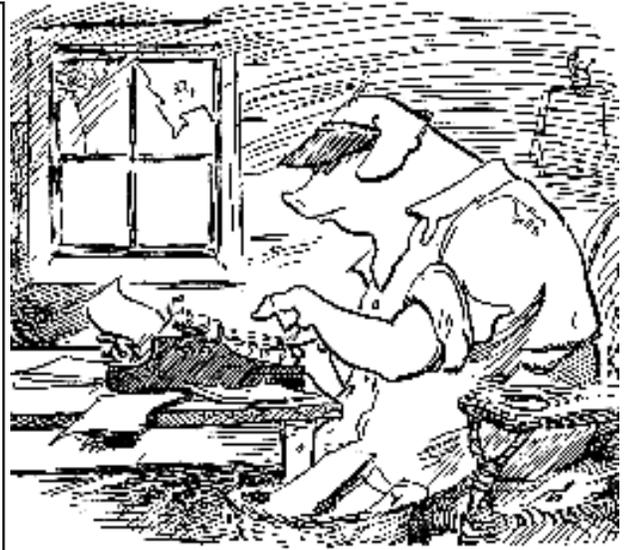
# THE BEAN HOME NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the memory of our friend, Walter R. Brooks

Vol. 24, No. 1

Fall 2016

From the Mailbag .....	2
From the New Prez .....	3
Mini-Con 2017 — in Canada! .....	3
From the Editor .....	4
From the Ex-Prez .....	5
Friends of Freddy Convention 2016 Minutes .....	5
They Talk, Too! Talking Animals Beyond the Bean Farm, by <i>Michael Cart</i> .....	8
Poetry Corner, by <i>John Chastain</i> .....	10



## Thirty years on, Freddyites still convening



# From the Mailbag

Thank you very much for the newsletter. My wife and I have been Freddy fans since elementary school. This fall I'll turn 70, and my enthusiasm for the works of Walter R. Brooks is undimmed. The Friends of Freddy group means a great deal to me, even though I never have been able to attend the convention.

Ron Keffer  
(Homer, AK)  
Member since June 1995

Once again my day is brightened by the entrance of our dear old friends from Beanlandia! WIGGINS FOR PRESIDENT—sounds so much sweeter than—well—nothing more needs to be said...!

Except: Keep on keeping on!  
Gratefully,

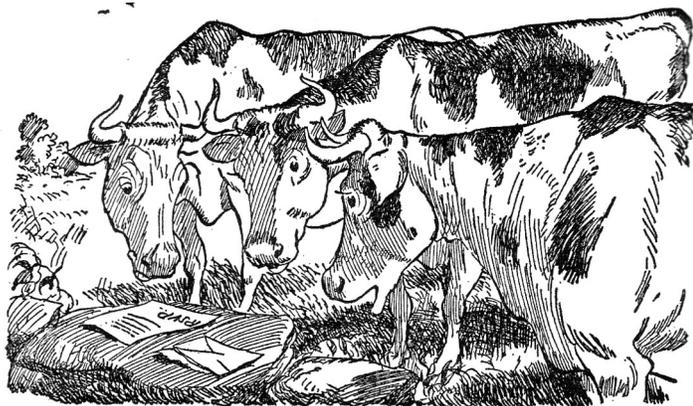
Jane Roosen  
(Mesa, AZ)  
Member since August 2004

These are carolers in Centerboro. Freddy took the picture for the *Bean Home News*. The dog is chasing Jinx. Mrs. Wiggins is singing lustily but off-key. Simon and his family have greedily eaten most of the peanut butter and sunflower seeds from the pine cone ornaments made by school children. Mrs. Bean and her friends have hot cocoa and cookies waiting for the carolers and others attending, on the tailgate of a pick-up truck at the edge of the green.

All is calm, all is bright! The bank has provided the little booklets of carols for the villagers. Old Whibley is happily ensconced on a branch deep within the Christmas tree, listening to the carolers (and also to local gossip). Mr. and Mrs. Webb decided to stay home in the Beans' parlor, as did Charles, wife Henrietta, and their numerous daughters. They are contentedly waiting for an extra scoop of cracked corn on Christmas morning from Mrs. Bean.

Mrs. Underdunk and her brothers have gone to the Plaza Hotel to enjoy the wonders of the season in Manhattan and no one misses them. Hank the Horse is waiting patiently just out of sight, hitched to the haywagon filled with hay bales and blankets ready to take all the animals home to the Bean Farm.

Betsy Tisdale  
(Potsdam, NY)  
Member since August 1997



## Join the Fun!

Have you come across this newsletter while not being a Friends of Freddy? Would you like to join? It's cheap and easy: print memberships are \$25 for two years (eight issues) or \$45 for four years (sixteen issues). You can also sign up for digital (PDF) copies mailed to you for \$9.50 or \$18 (ditto). Send your check or money order to: Friends of Freddy, PO Box 912, Greenbelt, MD 20768-0912. Or you can join online - just go to <http://www.friendsoffreddy.org>, click on "Join the Club!" and follow the instructions. 🐾



# From the New Prez

Let's put our trotters together one more time for all that outgoing President Connie Arnold did to make our 2016 convention such a rip-snorting success! Hip, hip, hooray!

Those of us who were in Round Top NY (44 in all, including eight from Canada) know what a fine time we had celebrating our pig and enjoying each other's fine company. Our timing was superb, with leaves changing colors gloriously throughout the region. And as it has before, the Winter Clove Inn served our purposes quite well (despite occasional incursions by lost World War II re-enactors from an event just down the road!). Personally, I was able to check off a bucket list item I didn't even know I had when I got to play the role of Freddy himself in Dave Carley's outstanding theatrical adaptation of *Freddy and the Ignormus*.

Friends of Freddy who weren't there, well... you missed an excellent time and we hope you'll join the fun at our next convention, in fall 2018, as well as at a mini-convention north of the border in 2017.

I'm humbled and honored to have been selected to serve as President of Friends of Freddy for the next two years.

The hoofprints of my predecessors are large, indeed, and in many cases those very people continue to do much of the behind-the-scenes work that keeps us thriving. Some were among the founders of our group, back in the mid-1980s.

Me, I'm somewhat newer to the party. I devoured the Freddy books as a little boy in Rochester NY in the early 1960s. Late one night 40 or so years later, while Googling fond memories, I made a very happy discovery. Not only were there other folks who still celebrated Freddy, but the books were being reprinted and there was a group of kindred spirits called Friends of Freddy with a membership address in Greenbelt, MD – less than an hour from my home in Virginia! I joined immediately, of course. Since, I've participated in nearly a dozen conventions and mini-conventions, served as Editor of this august publication from 2004 through 2008, and counted our organization's beans as its Treasurer for the past two years (a hat I'll continue to wear for the next two).

Perhaps the most important part of the President's job is to plan the next convention and make sure it's an irresistible "must-do" for as many Friends as possible. With that in mind, I'd love to hear from you with any thoughts you might have on these questions:



- When might be the best time for our 2018 convention? (Typically we've met sometime between September and November.)
- Where should we meet? (Typically we've met in the Catskills but there have been mini-conventions in other locations ranging from Washington DC to Fresno CA.)
- What should we do? (Typically our agendas include lots of imaginative presentations based on the Freddy books, plus trivia contests, guest speakers, plays, readings, banquets, singalongs and field trips.)
- If you've attended previous conventions, what did you really enjoy (or... not)?

One of the best things about having an unusual name is that I'm easy to find. There's only one Randy Cepuch on the Internet (so far!). But let me make it even easier: **my email is [randycepuch@gmail.com](mailto:randycepuch@gmail.com).**

Also, I'm on Facebook and would be delighted to have any and all Friends of Freddy be Friends of mine, too. I hope to hear from many of you over the next two years. ☺

## Mini-Con 2017 in the Big Woods!

At our recent convention, good-byes came all too soon, and there was a groundswell of support for a gathering sooner than our next traditional even-numbered-years convention. Founder Dave Carley took it upon himself to arrange such a gathering and has done so:

November 10-12, 2017

Gananoque Inn, 550 Stone St. South, Gananoque, Ontario K7G 2A8 CANADA. 1.888.565.3101x398

We have booked the Cedar House as our get-together location and encourage members attending to ask for rooms in the adjacent Waterfront Building. Rates have not been set but be sure to mention the Friends of Freddy so they know you're part of our group and get the best rate. Note that cancellations are subject to a C\$50 fee.

Note also that as a mini-convention we are only planning one day

of activities (Saturday). The rest of the time we will spend on member-led outings or just getting better acquainted. Hope to see you! ☺



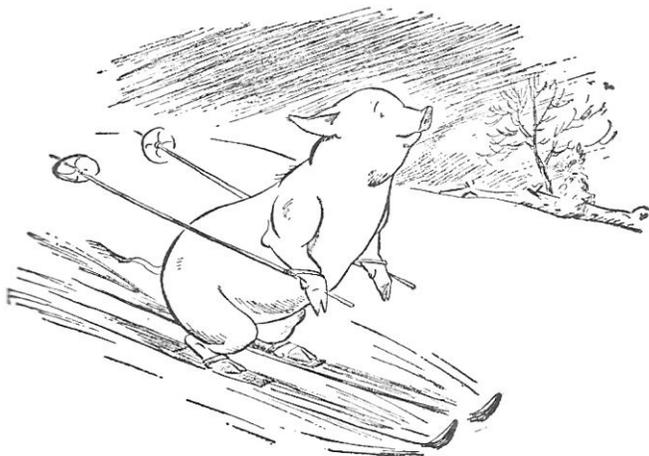
# From the Editor



Oh, what a time it was! I refer to our recent Freddy con, of course. Speaking as someone who has attended every con since the first ‘way back in 1986, I can say with some – um, authority that this was one of the very best, distinguished – as it was -- by spirited camaraderie, excellent programs, size of attendance, superiority of weather and setting: fall colors everywhere, blue, cloudless skies, crisp and cool days and nights – well, it doesn’t get any better than that. The only downside was the inevitable leave taking at con’s end and having to say “farewell” to so many friends, old and new.

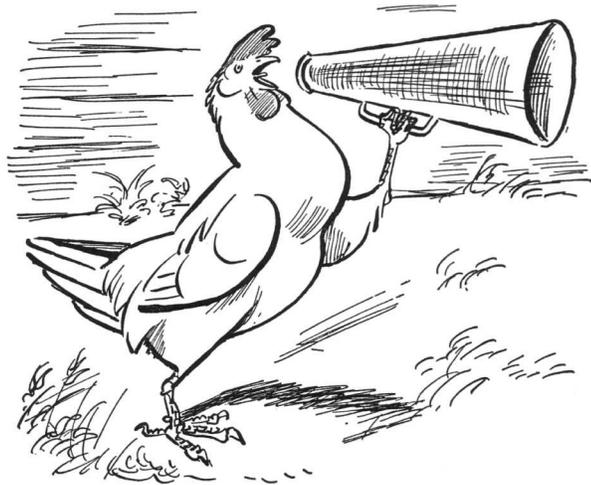
As for details of the con itself, see the minutes so scrupulously inscribed by our Immediate Past President Connie Arnold; you’ll find them elsewhere in this edition of the *Newsletter*. And while I’m at it, a tip of the editorial hat to our new President Randy Cepuch (a man for all seasons he will continue in his capacity as Treasurer, too).

This con had, it seems, a little bit of everything, including, on its last day, an invasion of swarming ladybugs in search of aphids. I’m not kidding. Certainly more salutary was a cunning dramatization of *Freddy and the Ignormus* by our resident playwright – and founding president -- Dave Carley. It was performed to stirring applause and scattered huzzahs by the Bean Farm Players, among them yours truly who undertook the role of Simon (yes, it’s good to be bad).



A host of other programs, presentations and entertainments included Nanette Fynan’s affectionate tribute to our favorite bovine: “The Wisdom of Mrs. Wiggins;” Aladdine Joroff’s musings about literary pigs other than Freddy in her “The Pigs They Wrote;” then there were my own thoughts – if I may dignify them with that word – about talking animals other than Freddy; Alice Tracy favored us with her sagacious remarks about Freddy’s sidekicks, which invited some spirited audience participation as we struggled to define exactly what a sidekick is and who among Brooks’ 650 characters might bear that mantle.

President-elect Randy Cepuch wowed us with a screening of his hilarious “2016 Squeal Reel;” then current prez Connie Arnold presented part deux of her fiendishly difficult Freddy Trivia Quiz. For the literati among us John Chastain hosted the poet’s corner; and speaking of culture, one mustn’t forget the biennial singalong led by our resident troubadours David Haas and Susan Lynch. I did an informal session on the life and times of our Walter that invited a number of thoughtful questions from the audience (more thoughtful than my prepared remarks!). Speaking of our audience, its members divided into smaller groups to conjure up a list of characters who should comprise Mrs. Wiggins cabinet (Freddy emerged as the people’s choice for Secretary of State and Jinx for Vice President). An even more spirited exercise involved the discussion groups’ attempts to compile a list of the top ten Freddy books based on (1) a dispassionate assessment of the critical best and (2) a passionate defense of personal, even sentimental favorites. No, blows were not exchanged but passions ran high, though there was near unanimous agreement that *Wiggins for President* should top the list. My problem — if that’s the right word — was that I didn’t read *Flying Saucer Plans* and *Dragon* until I was an adult and so couldn’t bring the same zeal to them that I could to the rest of the oeuvre. But no matter; it was all in fun. If all of this sounds like a rollicking good time, that’s because it was. Every minute of it. Which is why there was much talk of recapturing the rapture by convening an off-year 2017 gathering in the Big Woods; i.e., Canada, probably in the neighborhood of Niagara Falls. (And now more than talk — see page 3 for the just-resolved details.) In the meantime memories of past cons continue to crowd our respective personal spaces; do you have a favorite venue? In addition to Round Top (this year and several times in the past), we’ve convened in Walter’s hometown of Roxbury, in his nearby neighborhood of Fleischmanns; Walter’s birthplace of Rome (twice); Cooperstown (where we visited a haunted house), and the ski resort of Wyndham (quick: in which book does Freddy ski? Give up? It’s *Pied Piper*, my own sentimental favorite). So where should we gather two years hence? ☺



## From the Ex-Prez

As sad a sight as you shall see  
Is a FOF President bidding farewell to thee  
Mine own Freddy fans from our august group  
The end of it all quite makes my hen feathers droop  
Mourning the death of bonds so recently forged  
This now ex-President was happily gorged  
With happiness (and many cookies) at the Winter Clove Inn  
Now can only hope that in 2018 we'll meet again

By then you will know that your new president, Randy  
Is a Bean Farm worshipper all fine and dandy!  
He'll make the convention a stupendous celebration  
That will draw FOF members from all across the nation

But alas and alack, I return to my sad state of being  
Because weeping and wailing is what all are seeing  
My mournful visage will smile again, I'm sure  
But meanwhile, I'll just wallow in the pure  
Joy of sorrow, until we meet again  
When we can all gather to play in the old pigpen!

Your faithful ex-Prez  
Connie (Henrietta) Arnold 🐷



*Founding member Connie Arnold presiding over the convention*

# Friends of Freddy Convention 2016

by *Connie Arnold, Secretary*



## *New member Nanette Fynan introduces herself*

Friday, October 14, 2016, launched the 16th biennial convention of the Friends of Freddy - 30 years since our first historic meeting! We met at the Winter Clove Inn (Round Top, NY), and kicked off the festivities in true Freddy fashion - with a fine dinner! After dinner, we assembled to share memories of Freddy. Usually these were long-ago memories of discovering the books as children, but also recent memories of rekindling our love of this fabulous pig and his many friends on the Bean Farm. We closed our Friday evening with Randy Cepuch's witty compilation of pig videos, "The 2016 Squeal Reel."

After a fine breakfast on Saturday, October 15, we began formal presentations. President Connie Arnold shared some memories of that first, historic convention at the Kass' Inn near Brooks's home in Roxbury, NY. There were 13 of us who met in 1986 — surely an auspicious number, as this is the same number of animals who went to Florida in the first book of the series, *To and Again* (later retitled *Freddy Goes to Florida*). It is remarkable that so many original members are still with us, and that most joined us for the 2016 convention — myself, founder Dave Carley, Michael Cart, Kevin Parker, Dusty Gres, Wray and Loni Rominger. We sadly missed the attendance of Lee Secrest, another founding member, and especially Dorothy Brooks, Walter's second wife, who regularly joined us at conventions until she passed away in 1994.

Then Michael Cart spoke about "Talking Animals Other Than Freddy." The phenomenon of talking animals is not at all new. In western civilization alone, we can trace it back to the *Bible* with Balaam's ass speaking to him. Both British and American literature have long traditions of talking animals - such well-known titles as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Wind in the Willows*, the *Oz* series, the *Dr. Dolittle* series - and more contemporary children's fiction such as E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*.

As we moved from one talk to the next, our Canadian troubadours David Haas and Susan Lynch entertained us with a variety of amusing songs based on famous American presidents, with introductory

*Continued on page 6*

## Friends of Freddy Convention 2016

*Continued from page 5*

remarks by Nancy Joroff. Not just famous presidents whom we all admire — yes, George Washington was so honoured — but also the nearly forgotten Franklin Pierce, for example!

Member Nanette Fynan then took the stage to regale us with the “Wisdom of Mrs. Wiggins,” as illustrated in at least a half-dozen books in the Freddy series. Common sense is the key, but you should also follow your curiosity, and celebrate life both with laughter and tears! Very sensible was Mrs. Wiggins, and we must all try to follow her example.

Next we had a short brainstorming session led by President-Designate Randy Cepuch, on the topic of how to spread Freddy’s fame. A variety of ideas were raised, and retired librarian Dusty Gres explained how we might be able to donate books to the “Little Free Libraries” program that’s literally sweeping the Earth now, though we’d probably limit our donations to the U.S. and Canada. (See further information later in the minutes on our Sunday business meeting.)

Additional ideas included Goodreads, which members can join as reviewers, and Kindle Unlimited, which accepts reviews as well. Note that any member can participate by reviewing the Overlook reissues.

John Chastain then had attendees chuckling and chortling with some fine original poems in the spirit of Freddy and his sometime collaborator, Mrs. Peppercorn, as well as other famous poets. Among his creations was a heartfelt “Ode to Mrs. Peppercorn” and “the Rooster” by Edgar Allen Pig.

Following a delightful lunch, members then suffered through another diabolically difficult Freddy Trivia Quiz developed by Connie Arnold. You can test yourself as the *Bean Home Newsletter* will [eventually—ed.] reproduce it. Prizes were tossed out to those who answered correctly. These were special prizes of the garishly tacky pig paraphernalia variety, but nonetheless treasured by their recipients! Amazingly, ALL the 13 questions were eventually answered correctly by at least one FOFer (and sometimes several) who obviously remain obsessed with mastering trivia from the 26 volume series!

Michael Cart then took the stage to present a brief overview of Brooks’ life and career, pointing out the parallels to Freddy’s life and career. For example, Freddy’s dirty window in his pigpen was a mirror reflection — ha ha! — of Walter’s dirty window in his cabin near Roxbury! Much of the charm of the series lies, of course, in its affectionate depiction of animals, and while anthropomorphic overall, the series does reflect Brooks’ own affinity for animals, which could be traced to his own childhood reading of the Lily Wesselhoft books



*It’s not a Freddy convention any more without David Lynch and Susan Haas (helped here by Nanette Fynan) leading us in song.*



*Aladdine Joroff and John Chastain engage in one of the weekend’s most popular activities*

from the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Freddy series gathered popularity quickly by the late 1930’s and during World War II. Publisher Knopf was supportive of Brooks, contracting him to a book a year, and in 1948 Brooks undertook a national tour when *Freddy Goes Camping* was published. By the time the series began to go out of print in the 1970’s, Knopf had published 250,000 copies of the 26 volumes. Most, of course, went to libraries.

However, while Brooks himself began to see the Freddy series as the most significant component of his literary legacy, series books did not enjoy much “professional” literary cachet during the decades he wrote. As a result, neither Brooks nor illustrator Kurt Wiese received the awards and recognition that went to less prolific children’s authors and illustrators. Brooks, however, was paid the then-princely sum of \$2500 per book, at least in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Frugal to a fault, despite his large inheritance from family members, Brooks remained a penny-pincher throughout his life, and his widow Dorothy Brooks recalled darning the darns on his socks!

FOF convention attendees then sang up a storm, courtesy of troubadour Susan Lynch and David Haas, accompanied by Nanette Fynan on her fiddle!

Then the events for Saturday started to draw to an end, with a highly competitive team game of ‘Name the members of President Wiggins’ cabinet,’ based on 21st century U.S. cabinet offices, so members were challenged to appoint not only a Secretary of State, but also the Director of Homeland Security, for example! Connie Arnold displayed a non-Whibley sense of judicial impartiality, basically going with her own instincts/prejudices as to which team chose the most logical character from the series to fit such cabinet posts. In the end, however, all teams were rewarded with a round of applause for their creativity!

In a truly ‘grand finale’ for our Saturday events, the Bean Farm Players presented Dave Carley’s original adaptation of *Freddy and the Ignormus*. As a theatre-in-the-round production, the audience was literally part of the action, as Freddy (new President Randy Cepuch) squared off against Simon (Michael Cart), with a range of supporting actors, including Rob Loud’s stentorian narration of the epic battle scene.

And then we ate. And ate some more. And washed it down with cookies later!

On Sunday, October 16, the gavel of porcine authority passed from Connie Arnold to new President Randy Cepuch.

Michael Cart then moderated a ‘ten best’ list of Freddy titles - both personal bests (the books that you, the reader, like best) and those



**President-elect Randy Cepuch (Freddy) and Glenda MacFarlane (Mrs. Wiggins) perform in Dave Carley's adaptation of Freddy and the Ignormus**

titles that deserve literary kudos. Teams then proposed their own 'ten best' titles, and we narrowed it down to five final titles that deserve the moniker of being "the best of the best." Leading was *Freddy the Politician (Wiggins for President)*, followed by *Freddy and the Ignormus*, *Freddy Goes Camping*, *Freddy and the Perilous Adventure*, and *Freddy and the Bean Home News*. Honorable mention went to the book that started it all, *To and Again (Freddy Goes to Florida)*.

Next, Alice Tracy regaled us with a discussion of "Freddy and His Sidekicks", but first pausing to invite group discussion of exactly what "sidekick" might mean. Freddy had many friends, and sometimes these were his "sidekicks," meaning that their role in the books was at least in part simply to move the action along, or to be Watson to his Sherlock - i.e., a secondary character who reinforces the primacy of the main character. This is actually not common in the Freddy series, as each main character (Jinx, Mrs. Wiggins, the Beans, etc.) is fleshed out independent of Freddy. However, in certain cases, a character is commandeered to be a sidekick. An example is *Detective*, in which Freddy and Jinx do serve as Holmes and Watson. Another occasional example is Mr. Boomschmidt and Leo, who often operate independently of each other, but sometimes Leo is Mr. Boom's sidekick. Perhaps the closest or steadiest pair of characters who function as main character/sidekick are Mr. Camphor and Bannister, his butler, who provides comic relief and an occasional puncture into Mr. Camphor's love of discussing the reliability of proverbs ("too many cooks spoil the broth," etc.)

Finally, the convention opened up our business meeting, with Randy presiding, and first offering his treasurer's report. Our nuts, acorns, and berries now total an impressive \$34,000, although this is deceptive, because most of our bank account is the result of one-time gifts/bequests rather than dues. If the costs of mailing newsletters and producing convention souvenirs (primarily t-shirts) are included, we are actually roughly breaking even.

Members suggested other ways to augment our treasury. For example, Amazon will permit customers to designate their own charity, and the Friends of Freddy is incorporated as a nonprofit 501(C)(3), so we qualify for such donations.

However, with so many acorns and berries in the First Animal Bank, members would like to find a good way to revive sales of the Freddy books and disseminate more books to children, libraries, and schools in particular. Discussion ensued among attendees, including ideas on animation via You Tube, sponsorship of live animals to ac-

company library and school readings, etc.

One idea that could work well, and will be further explored, is the aforementioned Little Free Libraries, with whom founding member Dusty Gres is active (though she's now a retired librarian!) This is an international movement, though our participation would be confined to the U.S. and Canada. Free books are distributed among the Little Free Libraries, which are a small shelf of books displayed in a reasonably public area, though some are actually installed near the borders of private yards. People take a book to read, and either return that book, or replace it with another book. There is no "check-out" system. It's totally free, and on an "honour" code.

A committee was formed to pursue this, hoping to use Overlook's remaining books (including books that might otherwise be remaindered through booksellers such as Daedalus) to put Freddy titles in Little Free Libraries across North America. Committee participants include Dusty Gres, Alice Tracy, Connie Arnold, Michael Cart, Michael Mendocha. If other FOF members are interested, please be in touch! We'd love to use our funds wisely to put the Freddy books into the hands of a new generation of readers. (It would be especially helpful if a Canadian is interested in serving on this committee.)

The business meeting was closed, and off we went to eat again!

Last but not never least, Aladdine Joroff spoke in the afternoon on "The Pigs They Wrote" - or "9000 years of pigs in human literary history". Not just for children, pigs in literature started off in the West with Aesop's "Ass and the Pig". Aladdine focused on English/American literature, pointing to many of the literary lights of their generation (for example, P.G. Wodehouse) as producing "PigLit." In the U.S., even John Steinbeck celebrated the porcine race in their literary oeuvre. Today, your local library might hold the young adult novel with the hopeful title, "A Day No Pigs Would Die," by Robert Newton Peck.

Having enjoyed two full days indoors at the Winter Clove Inn, members then split up on Sunday afternoon - many to enjoy the outdoors, whether with walks on the Inn's lovely grounds or nearby sites in this historic region of New York State. 🐷



**By the end of the weekend, even the waitstaff had been recruited: this is Kevin Parker with awesome waitress Hayley, who took care of us three meals a day the whole weekend.**

# Talking Animals Beyond the Bean Farm

by Michael Cart



*“Balaam and the Ass”, Pieter Lastman, 1622*

*(Here is a slightly edited copy of the speech I presented at the recent Freddy con.)*

Good morning, everybody.

I know this will shock you all to the core of your beings, but Freddy isn't the first animal to talk. In fact, talking animals are as old as Aesop. Even older, for there is one in the Bible, believe it or not. Anybody know who or what it is? It's Balaam's donkey. His story is to be found in the Old Testament book of *Numbers*. Here it is in part: (*Numbers* 22:21-31)

Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road.

Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between two vineyards with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again.

Then the angel of the Lord moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam and he was angry and beat her with his staff. Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me. If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now.

The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?"

"No," he said.

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown."

And that's the story.

It's interesting that Balaam doesn't seem to be particularly surprised or disquieted that his donkey has spoken to him; instead, they chat for a bit swapping recriminations before Balaam's eyes are opened and he falls on his face. Now at the risk of blasphemy, this reminds me of Mr. Ed. You all know, I'm sure, that our Walter created not only Freddy but also the talking horse Ed, who became television's famous Mr. Ed, of course, of course. Like Balaam, Ed's owner, Wilbur Pope, discovers his mount can talk while he's astride. Wilbur's reaction, though, is a tad . . . different. Wilbur, Walter tells us, enjoys riding Ed around the countryside on weekends as he looks for a magic leaf he has read about that, when eaten, is supposed to give you the ability to understand the speech of animals. One Sunday, Walter continues, Mr. Pope, after having downed a goodly number of highballs, takes Ed out for a ride and, feeling unusually merry, starts to sing. Listen as Walter tells us what happens next:

Ed looked around at him a couple of times but Mr. Pope just smiled and patted his neck and said, "You're a good scout, Ed, and if you die, I promise I'll have you stuffed and stuck up whole over the mantelpiece. And then he went on singing.

And that's when it happens:

Ed turned around again and said, O, for Pete's sake, Wilb, shut up.

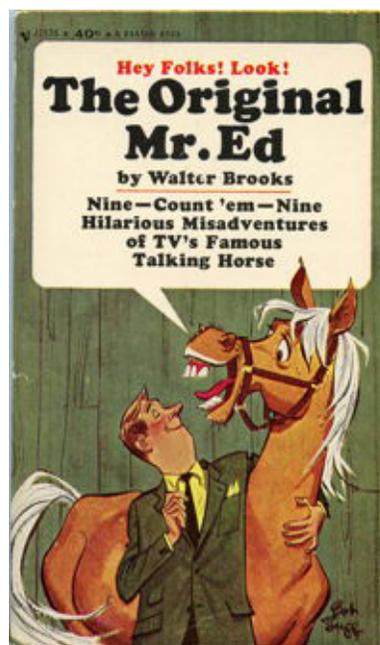
Well, Mr. Pope's seat almost failed him," Walter writes, "and he grabbed at Ed's mane and held on and said in a shaky voice, Ed, why I must have found that magic leaf and eaten it without knowing it!

O, can that magic stuff, said Ed and don't be such a sap! Judas, you'd believe anything!"

This is made even funnier because Walter has already established that because Wilbur is an advertising man, "he had immense powers of belief."

As he has in previous stories, Walter treats this element of magic as matter-of-factly as Ed does, simply having the horse explain to Wilbur that, of course, all animals can talk, "only they almost never let humans know it," Ed says, "because they'd just get a lot of extra work shoved on them. And anyway, what does talk get you? Just trouble, that's all."

Naturally, Wilbur wants to know why, then, Ed has chosen to speak to him. Ed's

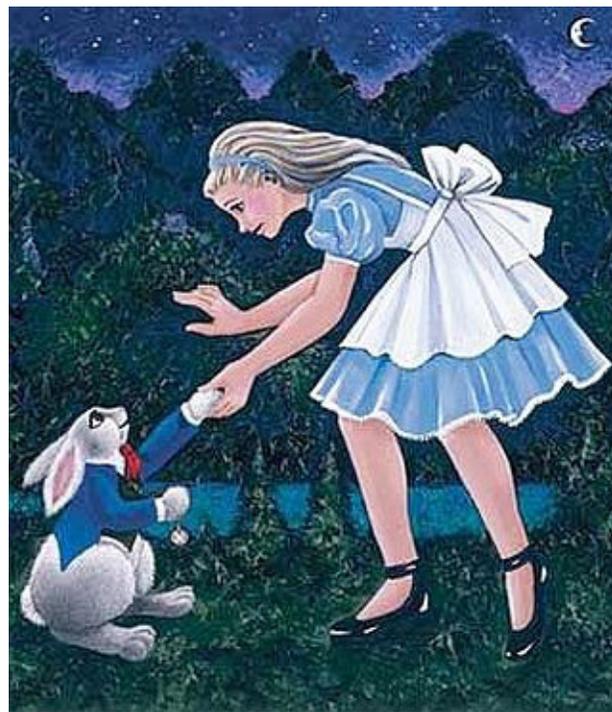


answer is characteristic: "Because I couldn't stand any more of that singing."

Of course, not everybody is as startled to hear an animal talk as Wilbur. We've already encountered Balaam, now how about Alice and that white rabbit? I'm talking about *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, of course. Here's how *she* handles the revelation:

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do; once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading but it had no pictures or conversations in it "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"

So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid) whether the pleasure of making a daisy chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a white rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.



*Alice and the White Rabbit in "Trust", by Grace Slick*

The *Bean Home Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Friends of Freddy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of the writings of Walter R. Brooks and his literary alter ego, Freddy the Pig. Print memberships are \$25 for two years or \$45 for four. Electronic memberships are \$9.50 for two years or \$18 for four. (US funds only, please.) Overseas members please add \$12 additional for airmail delivery. Please make your check or money order payable to Friends of Freddy and send it to the official address given below.

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There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the rabbit say to itself, "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall be too late." (When she thought about it afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this but at the time it all seemed quite natural). But when the rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat pocket and looked at it and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat pocket or a watch to take out of it and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

Still to be seen are more talking animals, because classic British children's literature is fairly packed with them. Consider, next, another rabbit; this one is called Peter and he is the creation of, yes, Beatrix Potter. Published in 1902, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* became one of the most famous children's books of all time, translated into ten languages and selling untold millions of copies. In fact, for years it was the best-selling children's book of all time until a certain young wizard named Harry Potter came along and there went the record.

Peter Rabbit brings us to another kind of talking animal book, one in which the animals talk not to humans but only amongst themselves. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* is a very slender book so there's not a lot of talk in it. Consider:

Once upon a time there were four little rabbits, and their names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter. They lived with their mother in a sandbank underneath the root of a very big fir tree.

*Continued on page 12*

# Poetry Corner



*We have more than one bard in our midst: John Chastain astounded us at a convention many years ago with his ground-breaking “Bean Farm Rap”, which alas does not translate well to print. But here are some of his other efforts that do.*

## Stopping by Florida on a Snowy Evening

From The Uncollectible Poems of Freddy Frost

Whose pig this is, I think I know  
His house is somewhere upstate though  
I never thought I’d see him here  
Down south, while Bean Farm fills with snow.

Old Hank the horse must think it queer  
(Which has nothing to do with orientation, dear)  
That Jinx sees smoke going in, not out  
Of the chimney on this log house, here.

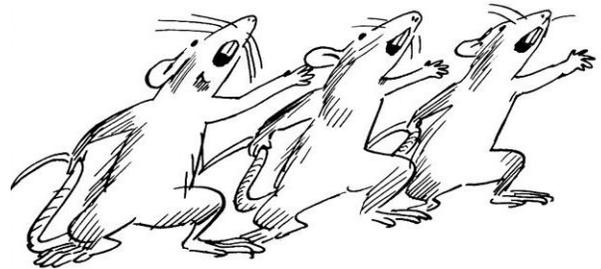
Hank gives the pilfered phaeton a shake  
The gold coins jingle, make no mistake  
The only other sound the noise  
Of burglar gangs and zebras fake.

Oh, Florida’s lovely, though dirt-faced boys  
And Grandfather’s alligators work their ploys.  
But Robert has cadged a clock he’s keepin’  
So every sunrise Charles can sleep in.  
Now there’s miles to go before we’re home.  
So go some miles and end this pome.

## The Rats [fragment]

By Edgar Allan Pig [attrib.]

Hear the claws upon the rats  
Sneaky rats!  
What world of troublement their melody begats!  
How they scuttle, scuttle, scuttle,  
In the gloomy air of night!  
While the creatures on local farms sprinkl’d  
Their brows by Simon’s speeches crinkl’d  
With his revolution’ry delight;  
Throwing humans out, out, out  
In a Jacobinian rout  
To the discombobulation that so chaotically splats  
From the rats, rats, rats, rats  
Rats, rats, rats--  
From the scheming and the scamming of the [here the manuscript  
breaks off]



## The Nap Not Taken

Two thoughts diverged in a yellow noon  
And sorry I could not follow both  
And be one pig, I started to swoon  
And nearly napped, but woke real soon  
To spend the hour in poetic growth.

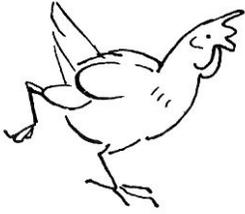
Then dozed again, feeling just as smart  
And having perhaps just finished lunch  
Which, during a nap, was liable to start  
To bubble and whine and burn my heart  
Though what awoke me was more a hunch

That if I, that noontime, didn’t restfully lay  
Myself in my hammock upon my back  
And keep that nap for another day,  
I doubted I’d ever inscribe my wordplay--  
Meaning poetry, just to keep you on track.

I shall be reading this rhyme with a sigh  
Somewhere, whenever: weeks or years hence  
Two thoughts diverged after lunch, and I...  
I thought I needed no nap to let fly  
With this verse...but you can hear the difference.

# The Rooster

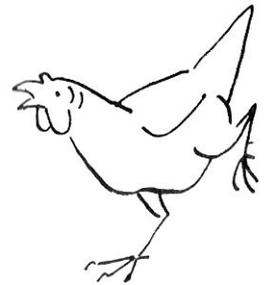
By Freddy, writing as Edgar Allan Pig



Once upon a noontime hazy, while I rested (though I'm not lazy)  
After many a quaint and uncompleted, half-forgotten chore,  
While I nodded, never napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
Rapping, clapping, slapping, flapping, snapping at my pigpen door—  
“Tis some animal,” I muttered, “Tapping at my pigpen door—  
Probably Jinx and nothing more.”

Indistinctly I remember: maybe April or September--  
Or October or November—or maybe after or before.  
Eagerly I wished for quiet—vainly had I tried to buy it  
With a dab of ‘tween-meal diet—apples, corncobs, three or four—  
And Mrs. Bean’s fresh-baked bread and pies and maybe more—  
NOW what’s that racket at the door?

Presently my ire grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,  
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your withdrawal I implore.  
See, the fact is I was napping, and so loudly thou came rapping,  
And so noisily came tapping, flapping at my pigpen door,  
That I scarce could keep on napping”—here I opened wide the door:  
Barnyard there and nothing more.

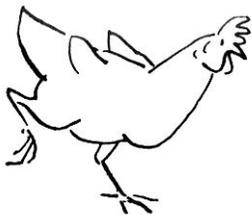


Back into the chamber turning, all my lunch within me burning,  
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.  
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice!  
Though I could have seen, if I had washed the glass before...  
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore—  
I’ll see who’s making me so sore!”

Open here I flung the shutter, when with lots of squawk and flutter,  
In there fell a lordly Rooster whose name you’ve heard before.  
Not the least obeisance made he; not a Hi or Hello say’d he;  
But, puffed up like lord or lady, staggered on my pigpen floor—  
Perched upon a pile of papers strewn upon my pigpen floor—  
Perched and swayed and nothing more.

Then the stunned bird took to prating, my anger further irritating  
By the sneering, snooty decorum of the countenance it wore.  
“Though thy plumage be a rump, Charles,” I said, “I’ll bust thy hump—I’ll  
Give thee some lumps and send thee back where thou wast perched before!  
Tell me why I shouldn’t kick thy feathered butt right out the door?”  
Quoth the Rooster: “... and furthermore...”

“Shut up!” said I, “bird of blather! Or I’ll shut thee up—I’d rather!  
Whether Henrietta sent, or tempest tossed, thee through my door—  
Well, window, really... though, undaunted, I will not see my naptime flaunted  
Or this home by Blather haunted—so tell me truly, I implore:  
Wilt take thy beak from out my home, or shall I chuck thee out the door?”  
Quoth the Rooster: “... and furthermore...”



And the Rooster, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
Babbling on the heap of papers strewn about my pigpen floor;  
And his eyes are brightly gleaming though they’re kind of empty-seeming  
And the talk from out him streaming makes me weep, it’s such a bore.  
My trotter grabs some feathers, out a window heaves—and then he is no more!  
Quoth the Pig, “Snore....”



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## **Talking Animals Beyond the Bean Farm**

*Continued from page 9*

“Now, my dears,” said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, “you may go into the fields or down the lane but don’t go into Mr. MacGregor’s garden: your father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. MacGregor.” [Horrors! This woman is clearly no Mrs. Bean, who wouldn’t hurt a fly. Well, there is one fly she might have hurt given the opportunity— what was his name?!) [Zero] But I digress. Back to old Mrs. Rabbit.]

“Now run along,” she tells her children and don’t get into mischief. I am going out.”

Well, Peter, “who was very naughty, ran straight away to Mr. MacGregor’s garden and squeezed under the gate.” And the rest is history. Like Mrs. MacGregor, Mr. MacGregor is no Mr. Bean. He doesn’t take kindly to Peter’s being in his garden and chases the rabbit, “waving a rake and calling out, “Stop, thief.”

I can’t imagine Mr. Bean doing that, can you? And yet . . . Mr. B. could be a disciplinarian when the occasion demanded it, notably when he discovers two rabbits (neither of them Peter) raiding his garden and gives them a good spanking. (What Freddy book does this occur in?) [*Simon the Dictator*]

Obviously even in a talk like this one that is supposed to be focused on other books, the Freddy’s have a tendency to sneak in, don’t they? The same is true of the next book I want to talk about: *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, next to the Freddy books my

favorite children’s book of them all. Interestingly, Grahame was not only an author, he was – of all things -- a banker like Mr. Weezer, who appears in the Freddy books, or Walter’s own grandfather, the honorable banker Samuel B. Stevens. But there the resemblance ends, for I cannot imagine either Henry Weezer or Sam Stevens ever writing a classic children’s book.

Because *The Wind in the Willows* also features animals and animals, at that, who can talk like Freddy, Walter has occasionally been called “the American Kenneth Grahame.” And there *are* similarities, one of them being both authors’ talent for creating memorable characters. We fans know all of the Freddy books’ characters (there are 650 of them – I’ve counted) but there are only four that matter in *The Wind in the Willows*: the water rat, the mole, the badger and the toad. The wealthy, vainglorious, conceited Mr. Toad – the Donald Trump of toads – is, perhaps, the most memorable, he is certainly the most outrageous. Importantly, while the other animals talk only amongst themselves, Mr. Toad is the only one who talks with humans. Obsessed with shiny motor cars (the book was published in 1908), Toad steals one and winds up in jail where the jailer’s daughter takes pity on him disguising him and helping him to escape. Alas, Toad – disguised now as, of all things, a washerwoman – (one wonders if Freddy later borrowed the costume) has no money and so is unable to buy a train ticket for home.

*(Continued in the next issue, when Michael turns to some talking animals in American literature. In the meantime, perhaps you can try to guess who those might be!) ☺*