

Aileen Grossberg is chair of the Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Committee. She is the volunteer librarians at the Lampert Library of Congregation Shomrei Emunah, Montclair, NJ. In addition, she works as a public school media specialist and a parttime reference librarian at the Montclair Public Library and is active in the Essex County Association of School Librarian. She is a former chair of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee.

## Introduction: Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Aileen Grossberg, Chairperson

Good evening, everyone. It is with great pleasure and a bit of disappointment that I stand here today. The pleasure, of course, comes from our committee's having selected an outstanding manuscript as winner of this year's Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award. The disappointment arises from our winning author's inability to receive the award in person. Unexpectedly, family illness forced her to change her plans.

Before I tell you a bit about Margaret Chaiken, the author of *Stealing the Show*, I must thank the hard working committee whose thoughtful comments and dedication to our purpose was evident in every email: Shelley Feit, Sandy Gottesman Breger, Sonia Silva, Barbara Silverman and Barbara Sutton. Unfortunately, Sandy, Sonia and the Barbaras could not join us to see the fruits of their labor recognized. The eleven manuscripts that we read had plots that ranged from the realistic to ridiculous, silly to somber and weird to wonderful but each showed great effort, imagination, and love of writing.

In addition, I would like to give a special thanks to Barbara Sutton for her years on the committee. Her sense of professionalism and her cogent comments were always evident. Taking Barbara's place on the committee, I'd like to welcome Marcia Tatz Wallner, Director of School Services and Programs for the Agency for Jewish Education of San Diego.

And finally, no award ceremony would be complete without a thanks to Jo Taylor Marshall, Sydney Taylor's daughter, whose continuing support of the Sydney Taylor awards is so appreciated.

Now- for a bit about Margaret Chaiken. It is evident from reading *Stealing the Show*, a time travel historical fiction piece, that Margaret Chaiken is a teacher.

She knows how to capture a child's imagination through vivid description, kid friendly language, tense plotting , and an exciting narrative. In fact, Margaret got her inspiration for *Stealing the Show* from her students as her remarks will state.

Margaret has a strong interest in international cultures. While she was a student, she spent summers teaching in Nepal, Thailand, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya and the Ukraine. After receiving a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University, Margaret studied at the Sorbonne and later received a Masters Degree in International Relations from New York University. She spent a year at a think tank in Israel and then returned to New York where she worked as a teacher at Park East Day School. Margaret is temporarily retired from teaching and is taking care of her young daughter and writing. Margaret, her husband Rafi and daughter Aravah live in New York.

Every Sydney Taylor winner seems to have a connection to the beloved writer. Margaret grew up in a family of 4 girls so she naturally gravitated to the *All of A Kind* Family books.

Sydney Taylor might not recognize the modern 10 year old who is the focus of *Stealing the Show* but she would certainly applaud Margaret Chaiken for her ability to link both the Jewish character of Ana and the contemporary challenge that faces her: soccer or seder? Ana learns that her Judaism is central to her when she travels back to 16th century Antwerp and lives as Dona Gracia ha-Nasi's daughter Ana. One of the central charges of the manuscript committee is to find writing that integrates Judaism into the story while appealing to a broad audience. We congratulate Margaret Chaiken for having done this so successfully.

Now, please pretend with me that Margaret is by my side, receiving her certificate and award and the accolades which she well deserves. Her husband applauds as does the assembled audience. Now we quiet as Margaret reads her acceptance remarks.....