

Sydney Taylor Award Acceptance Speech
Jim Aylesworth

Jim Aylesworth was a first grade teacher for twenty-five years, earning professional recognition for his work with children. (Those Who Excel, Illinois Office of Education; Governor's Master Teacher, et al.) During that time, he read to his children nearly every single day and grew to love the books himself as much as the children did. Jim credits those years as a teacher and reader for gradually changing him into the author of more than thirty children's books. Now retired from the classroom, Jim travels widely - visiting with kids in their schools across America and telling the happy story of how it all came to be.

Thank you so much to all in AJL!

Thank you for your generous praises for **My Grandfather's Coat**, and thank you for honoring the book!

I'm very proud!

But I cannot accept without a few acknowledgments.

I need to acknowledge our editor, Dianne Hess, who conceived the project and so capably guided its development from start to finish. There would be no **My Grandfather's Coat** without her, and I wouldn't be standing here were it not for Dianne.

And I need to acknowledge Barbara McClintock whose stunning illustrations brought the grandfather and his loving family to life and depicted the passing years so accurately that most of us see our own lives reflected in the art. I wouldn't be standing here were it not for Barbara.

And as it came to be, the story is told in the voice of the granddaughter. But as the author, the granddaughter's voice is really my voice, of course. So when she describes her grandparent's first meeting as the luckiest day in the grandfather's life, the words, in reality, come from my life experience. And I need to acknowledge the inspiration for those words - my wife, Donna, who I met on the luckiest day of my life. I wouldn't be standing here, or anywhere, were it not for Donna.

So there you have it.

With thanks to Dianne and Barbara and Donna, and all of you with AJL, I accept this honor, this **Sydney Taylor Award**, and I will treasure it!