

# Kid's Korner

## Rabbit Fever

WESTMINSTER, Md. — Thirteen-year-old Shannon Szymanski watched rabbit judge, Dennis Holcomb intently, listening to his comments, hanging on every word. He was comparing the merits of the two top rabbits at the Maryland State Fair, chosen from more than 200 entries. One was a Netherland Dwarf doe owned by Kyla Fitzpatrick of Rockville, Maryland. The other was Shannon's French Lop doe, Szymanski's Slush. When the judge placed his hands on the French Lop and said, "This will be our Best in

Show rabbit", the crowd burst into applause and Shannon's face split into a grin!

Shannon has been raising French Lop rabbits at her Westminster, Maryland home for six years. This was her third "Best in Show" win. Last year her rabbit, Slush won Reserve Grand Champion at the Maryland State Fair. Prior to that Slush won a Best of Breed award at an open rabbit show in York County, Pennsylvania, a show with more than 1,000 rabbits from all over the country, including 93 French Lops.



Shannon poses her Best in Show Rabbit, Szymanski's Slush with some of the trophies she has won.



Shannon cradles her rabbit Snow Drifter.

"Everyone seems to like Slush," Shannon says. Maybe it is her color (chinchilla), because she isn't my friendliest rabbit!"

In 1991, Snow Drifter, Slush's sister from a different litter won Best in Show out of 523 rabbits at the Carroll County Youth Rabbit Show in Westminster, Maryland. But, Shannon's first Best in Show win, was with Daquiri, a French Lop buck who is the founding father in the Szymanski line. He won Best in Show at the Carroll County Fair in 1992.

"It all started when I got Daquiri," Shannon says. At the time Shannon and her sister, Ashley had a few French Lop does but no bucks. "We bought him for just five dollars from a friend who had too many bucks and wasn't sure how good he would be. As a senior rabbit he won almost everywhere we showed him. Then, someone offered us \$50 for him, but I couldn't sell him! He became a Grand Champion in no time and sired a lot of good rabbits for us. He is Slush and Drifter's father."

To become a Grand Champion, a rabbit must have at least three legs, earned by wins at an American Rabbit Breeders sanctioned

show, and there must be at least five animals in the class, owned by at least three different exhibitors. Slush has won eight legs and received her Grand Champion papers from the American Rabbit Breeders Association last year.

"I love the rabbits," Shannon says with passion in her voice. "Especially the French Lops!"

There are forty-two breeds of rabbits in the United States. Of them, the Netherland Dwarf is the smallest, weighing in at just two pounds. The Flemish Giant is the largest and can weigh as much as twenty pounds! There are five kinds of lop rabbits, (rabbits with ears that hang). The French Lop is the largest of the lops, weighing eleven pounds or more. All of Shannon's French Lops are

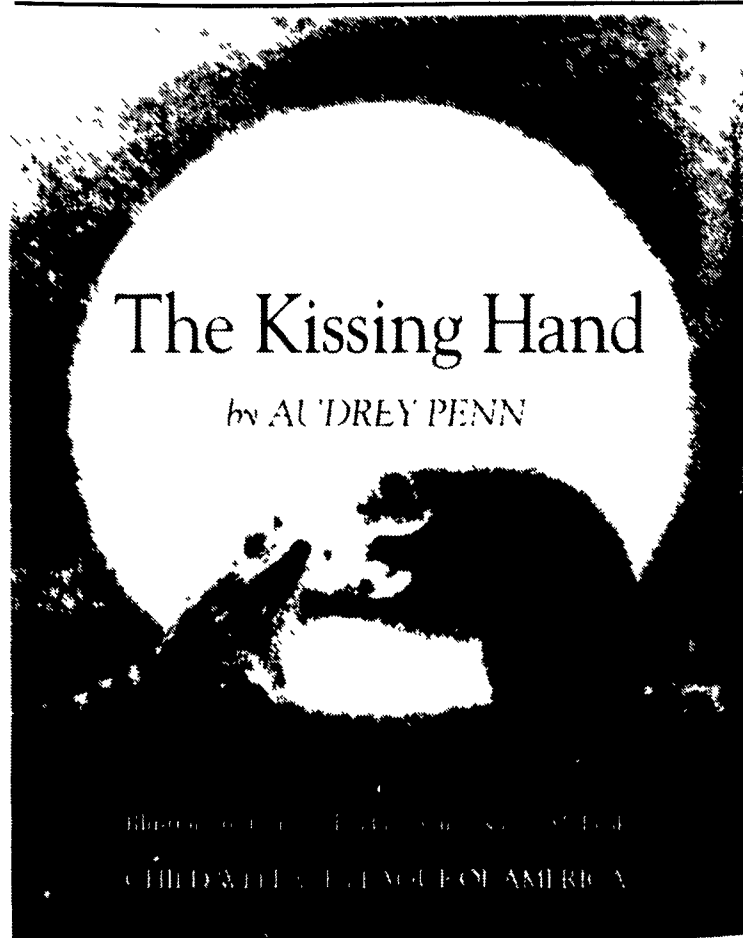
purebred with pedigrees.

Shannon's dad built a rabbitry which she shares with her sister Ashley. They keep 10 to 20 French Lops at a time, breeding rabbits to produce offspring that is as close to the American Rabbit Breeder's standard of perfection as they can get. Shannon is a member of The Carroll County 4-H Rabbit Club, The American Rabbit Breeders Association and The Lop Rabbit Club of America.

When asked what is next for her newest champion, Shannon replies, "I'm retiring Slush for breeding!" With a little luck Slush's offspring will follow its mother's footsteps to the Maryland State Fair in Timonium in 1995!



Shannon holds rabbit, Daquiri in front of their rabbitry, The Hopply Hotel. Her father built the rabbitry, which has slide-out trays under the top pens and worm beds under the bottom pens. Worms eat manure, so the beds control odor and manure build-up, while providing bait for fishing!



"The Kissing Hand" is a delightful story to help children feel loved and secure when facing new challenges.

The superb pictures of Chester Raccoon and his mother in the forest add interest to the tale of the raccoon mother helping Chester to face a scary situation.

The book is written by Audrey Penn and illustrated by Ruth E. Harper and Nancy M. Leak.

For a copy of the "Kissing Hand," send \$14.95 to CWLA c/o CSSC, P.O. Box 7816, 300 Raritan Center Parkway, Edison, NJ 08818 or call (908) 417-0482.