



Many of author Linda Oatman High's story ideas are derived from her own childhood and those of her sons'.

Author's New Book Captures Beekeeping Story

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BOWMANVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — When the word "bees" is mentioned, most children shiver with the memory of a bee sting. But when Linda Oatman High hears the word, she thinks of honey and beekeepers hanging tough, plugging away at their ancient art with grit and guts, spunk and pluck.

She wants others to share her concept of beekeepers.

"Beekeepers are some of the most dedicated folks I know," High said. "These gatherers of honey are zealous and committed. Beekeeping isn't just a profession; it's a way of life, requiring heaps of patience, devotion, and true love."

A much-loved writer of children's stories, High shares her perspective in a book she's written called "Beekeepers."

High has a sparse, poetic style that enables children and adults to feel part of the action. She writes, "Springtime sunshine pours like warm honey from the sky. . . ."

"Standing still, I hardly dare to breathe as the bees twirl down like a tornado, swirling and whirling every which way above Grandpa and me, the clustering on the branch of a tree."

With muted illustrations, artist Doug Chayka shows the beekeeper's garb and beehives to give readers a realistic picture of what happens when a swarm of bees is brought down from a tree limb and

moved into a hive.

High wrote the book from watching neighbor Bob Hughes who operates Rainbow Apiaries.

"I wrote a fiction book sprinkled with beekeeping facts, wishing to entertain and inform in a way that's easy for children to understand," High said. The book tells of a granddaughter who becomes "a fine keeper of bees," under his grandfather's watchful eye.

"It is my wish that the book will open the eyes of girls and boys to the many joys of putting in backyard beehives so that beekeeping doesn't fade away in the technocracy of the future."

Other books by High include "A Christmas Star," which was heralded by the "New York Times" as one of the 13 best Christmas books for children.

"Maizie," "Hound Heaven," and "The Summer of the Great Divide."

High has written a column for Tri-County newspaper for 15 years. A collection of those columns is published in book form as "Hogwash, History, and Horse Sense."

Although all her other books have had national publishers, the collection of columns was published by a fan of her columns. "Jake's View," is a wise, humorous column on local heritage and its people.

High has been published in numerous newspapers, magazines, and has had several children's

books published. Three more books are under contract. High said that it usually takes three years after a contract is signed until the book is in print.

High said her ideas for books are often sparked by memories of her childhood and from her own children. She, her husband and three sons live in Bowmanville where they are renovating a house from old barn wood. Her husband dismantles old barns. In fact, High has written a picture book about his vocation in her book, "Barn Savers."

High's interest in writing developed when her 11th grade teacher, Mrs. Susan Severs at Garden Spot High School, encouraged High's creative writing.

High married young and did not attend college, but her love for writing increased. She said, "I love writing so much, I don't need to discipline myself to set aside time to do it."

However, responsibilities of mothering and pursuing other interests often limit her writing time to when the children are in school.

As many mothers, High laments that her children do not read more books, but she said, "I tell the kids they must read my books."

They do. "My books usually have a theme that lift up values such as faith, love, and hope," High said.

Her first book "Maizie," is a novel for 8-14 years old and tells of



Linda Oatman High holds a copy of her new book, "Beekeepers," to add to the many delightful books she has written for children.

a girl and her wishes for a pony. "It's based on my observation of living near the people of Welsh Mountain and seeing how we're all the same inside, with wishes and hopes and dreams that may or may not come true," High said.

"Hound Heaven," about a girl who wants a dog, was nominated for state book awards in Illinois and Oklahoma.

"A Stone's Throw From Paradise" is a fictional setting of an Amish town called Pearly Gates, a stone's throw from Paradise. "The story is based on my husband's grandmother, who is Amish," High said.

"The Summer of the Great Divide," has a 1969 setting with the backdrop of the Vietnam War. It's the story of a young girl whose parents are getting a divorce, and she spends a summer at the farm with her cousin who she can't stand. "I try to incorporate some American history with the division caused by the Vietnam War between generations and man's first walk on the moon.

High would like to branch out into writing adult novels, non-fictional books, poetry, and song writing.

"I did some song writing as a kid

and now I'm getting back into it," she said. She is also learning to play the drums along with her teenage sons.

Every novel that she has written has been published. Breaking in the first time was the most difficult. High submitted her manuscript to 13 publishers before it was accepted.

With the release of several new books, High is asked more and more to cover public speaking events. "I like it, but it's draining from creativity," she said. She said some out-of-state appearances can be synchronized with family vacations.

"I love writing so much that I'd do it even if I wasn't paid. But it's exciting to do something creative that affects others' lives and make money doing it," High said.

Unlike many oft-published writers, High does not have an agent to represent her. She represents herself by making trips to New York to visit publishers. "My writing stands on its own," she said.

The hard-cover picture book, "Beekeepers," written for children from 5-8, is distributed by Boyds Mills Press and, along with High's other published books are available in bookstores nationwide.



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