



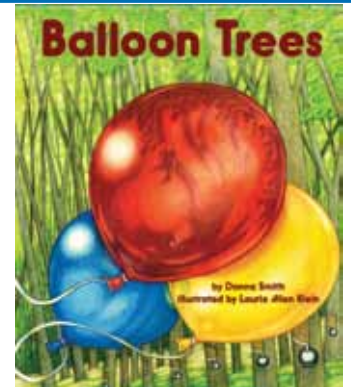
A Conversation with Balloon Trees author Danna Smith

How did you become interested in being a writer?

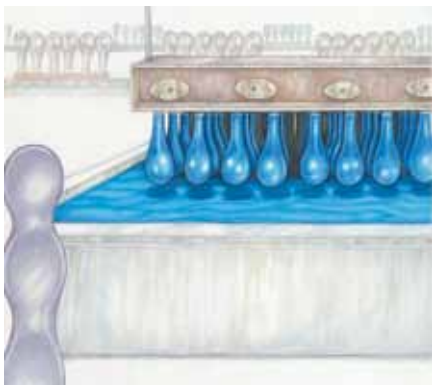
My interest in writing started early. As soon as I could read and write I was making up stories and writing poems. My favorite toy was a pen which I took with me everywhere I went. My mother saved many of my stories and drawings which are fun to see now that I am grown. When I was eight years old I scratched out the following poem on a scrap of green paper (misspellings and all) and plastered it with gold star stickers:

If I had a only wish
A only wish for me
Do you no what my only wish
My only wish would be?
That I could climb a tree.
Couse if I could climb a tree.
Do you know what I'd see?
I don't because I can't climb a tree.

This poem not only makes me laugh, but it shows my interests as a young child. It is evident that I had a love of poetry, an early knack for rhyme, and an imagination (I knew how to climb a tree). Later, when I was in high school, my creative writing teacher gave an assignment to write and illustrate a picture book. The teacher gave me a boost in confidence when she said I had talent and encouraged me to keep writing (teachers are awesome!) It was then when I decided I would write picture books one day.



What was the inspiration for Balloon trees?



My husband's line of work in the industrial rubber industry inspired me to write Balloon Trees. I had heard of rubber trees, but never really gave the rubber process much thought until hearing my husband explain it one day. I wanted to share what I had learned with children through my writing, so after much thought, I settled on balloons as the topic for my story and began researching the process. After all, balloons are a rubber product all children know and love.

What challenges did you face in writing *Balloon Trees*?

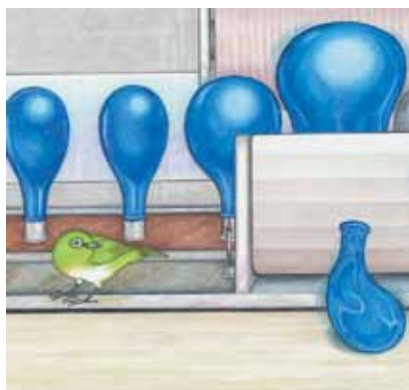
The process of making rubber usable and creating balloons from that rubber is fascinating, but quite technical. Creating picture book text for young children with the right balance of accurate information and a fun-to-read rhythm was a bit of a challenge. It took many months of research and writing to come up with a rough draft I was happy with. After that, I set to work at revising it many, many times. Laurie Allen Klein's amazing illustrations really bring my words to life!



When are you most creative?

I am most creative when my house is clean! It may sound odd, but I cannot concentrate in a messy house. I write at all times of the day, whenever I can. When I am not actually sitting at the computer writing, I am still plotting, planning, and rhyming everywhere I go (in the car, doctor appointments, sporting events etc.) Sometimes after writing and researching for hours, I get "stuck" and can't find that special word or a creative way to use an idea, most of the time a long walk will clear my mind and help with the creative process.

What piece of advice would you give to young aspiring authors?



My advice to young aspiring authors is to keep writing to keep improving, enter writing contests whenever you can, and surround yourself with others who like to write. Being an author isn't easy, you have to work hard and it involves a lot of rejection, but it is worth it and you can do it! When I was young I was a writer, but had no idea how to become an author. I had never met an author and didn't know anything about getting published. I visited my bookstore and read any book I could find about writing and later, when I got older I went to writing conferences. Young aspiring authors are fortunate today because they have the World Wide Web available to them which is full of information and inspiration for writers.

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