News Release: American Library Association

From: Peggy Barber, Director
Public Information Office

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The most important and prestigious awards for children's literature published in the U.S. during 1976 were announced February 3 by the Children's Services Division (CSD) of the American Library Association, during ALA's midwinter meeting in Washington, D.C.

Mildred D. Taylor, author of Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, published by Dial, is the winner of the 1977 Newbery Medal for the most distinguished contribution to literature for children.

Leo and Diane Dillon, illustrators of Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions by Margaret Musgrove and also published by Dial, are the recipients of the 1977 Caldecott Medal for the most distinguished picture book for children. The Dillons were also recipients of the 1976 Caldecott Medal--marking the first time the Caldecott Medal has been awarded in successive years to the same illustrator.

Roll of Thunder, set during the depression, is the moving story of one family's struggle against the hardships of the times. Inmates, grueling work, and hunger took a heavy toll on the family as they struggled to survive.

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of a Mississippi's family's struggle against the indignities of prejudice. Unforgettable scenes depict the family's grim determination to hold onto the land that's rightfully theirs and their warmth, love and pride as they struggle to survive.

Ms. Taylor's first novel, Song of the Trees (Dial) was a runner-up for the Coretta Scott King Award, as well as a New York Times Outstanding Book of the Year. The author, who grew up in Toledo, Ohio, spent two years in Ethiopia with the Peace Corps.

The Caldecott Medal winners have been collaborating on illustrations for the last twenty years. In Ashanti to Zulu, their extraordinary paintings illuminate the brief text, a description, alphabetically arranged, of some of the tribes of Africa. The illustrations depict sources of African pride—the home, the family, and traditional artifacts. Each is framed with a symbolic border.

The Dillons' 1976 Caldecott Medal book was Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears (Dial), retold by Verna Aardema. Other recent works include the illustrations for Songs and Stories from Uganda (Dial) a 1974 ALA Notable Book, The Hundred Penny Box (Viking), a 1976 Newbery Honor Book, and The Song of the Boat (Crowell), a 1976 ALA Notable Book.

The Dillons live and work in Brooklyn, New York.

Newbery Honor Books for 1977 are A String in the Harp by Nancy Bond (Atheneum/A Margaret McElderry Book) and Abel's Island by William Steig (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

A String in the Harp is Ms. Bond's first novel. It is a deftly
constructed blend of the Talisesin legend with the story of members of an American family trying to adjust simultaneously to a new home in Wales and to the death of their mother. Ms. Bond, who studied librarianship in Wales, lives outside Boston.

Abel’s Island is a fantasy about an urbane mouse, who is swept away from his beloved bride by a flood and who learns to survive on an island.

Steig, who won a 1970 Caldecott Medal, is also the illustrator/author of one of this year’s Caldecott Honor Books—a most unique occurrence. The five Caldecott Honor Books are: Fish for Supper by M.B. Goffstein, Dial; The Contest, An Armenian Folktale, Greenwillow, a division of Morrow; The Golem; A Jewish Legend, written and illustrated by Beverly Brodsky McDermott, Lippincott; Hawk, I'm Your Brother, illustrated by Peter Parnall and written by Byrd Baylor, Scribner's; The Amazing Bone, illustrated and written by William Steig, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Steig’s The Amazing Bone is a fresh picture book about the adventures of a pig and her new found friend, a talking bone. Spring-like colors add to the humor and sprightly joy of this tale.

The Golem is a retelling of a powerful story from Hebrew literature. The art work, which is equally powerful, is based on careful research and executed with great talent. Beverly Brodsky McDermott lives in upstate New York.

Parnall’s Hawk, I’m Your Brother is the poetic story, enhanced by fine drawings, of a boy who, through his relationship with a hawk, learns the meaning of freedom. Mr. Parnall was the illustrator of - more -
The medals will be presented to the winners at the Newbery-Caldecott Awards Banquet during ALA's Annual Conference in Detroit, June 17 - 23, 1977.

The John Newbery Medal has been awarded annually since 1922 to the author of the most distinguished contribution to literature for children published in the United States during the previous year.

The Randolph Caldecott Medal has been awarded annually since 1938 to the illustrator of the most distinguished picture book for children published in the United States during the previous year.

The medals, originally donated by Frederic G. Melcher, continue
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to be provided by his son, Daniel Melcher.

Selection of the medal winners and the honor books is made by a committee of 23 members of the Children's Services Division of the ALA from nominations submitted by children's and school librarians who are members of the Children's Services Division of ALA.

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