

# Carnegie Award Acceptance Speeches Bringing Lucille to Life

*Melissa Reilly Ellard and  
Paul R. Gagne*



**Paul R. Gagne and Melissa Reilly Ellard** of Weston Woods Studios, producers of *Children Make Terrible Pets*, are the 2012 recipients of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for excellence in children's video. They delivered their acceptance remarks at the American Library Association Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif. on June 25, 2012.

## Melissa Reilly Ellard

Good morning. First let me say thank you to [chair] Martha [Seif Simpson] and members of the 2012 Andrew Carnegie committee. We can't imagine the hours you spent this past year viewing all the films you received, and we are so honored that you chose ours.

I think many of us can relate to the story *Children Make Terrible Pets*. At one time or another everyone probably has tried to convince their parents that they *really* deserve that cat, dog, rabbit, etc., and will promise to take care of it.

Dutifully, the parents explain you have to be responsible and walk the new dog every day, feed the cat, and clean up after your special new friend in all weather conditions. All the kids swear they'll take care of it and do everything themselves.

Then reality sets in. I am a dog person, and for those who know me personally, my Boston Terrier Sadie is my baby girl. To paraphrase [the book's character] Lucille, "She is the cutest critter in the whole world." But like most pet owners, I have my limits; I don't like to take her out if it's pouring rain or bitter cold outside. Fortunately for me and her, I can get my husband to do that.

This is the second Carnegie medal for a Peter Brown book that we have had the privilege to adapt, and I just want to say thank you to Peter. I really admire you for continuing to push yourself and work in different media. You create stories that touch us all. It has been fun to be part of this experience with you.

I also want to thank the animation producer David Trexler and his amazing team at Soup2Nuts. We continue to be surprised at their ability to capture that one moment that you know everyone can relate to. In this film, the manner in which they were able to capture the look on Lucille's face, particularly her eyes during Squeaker's temper tantrums. I am sure that made every parent chuckle.

In addition, I want to thank them for their dedication and patience with

the multiple changes we requested while working on our sixth production together, which in the end paid off, and this award is proof of that.

We may be a small group at Weston Woods, but we have a big heart and all of us love working on these films. Linda, Paul, and I have been working at Weston Woods for more than twenty years now, and we are committed to bringing children the best.

I'd like to thank Steve Syarto, our sound engineer, for creating another brilliant soundtrack, and Linda Lee, our general manager and VP, who paves the way for our films to shine brightly.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my wonderful husband and our girl, Sadie. We both agree: "You are the best pet ever!"

## Paul R. Gagne

SQUEAK!

That's the entire text of my speech. I worked on it for *hours*. But perhaps I should translate.

Good morning. Thank you, Martha, members of the 2012 Carnegie Medal selection committee, ALA and ALSC for choosing *Children Make Terrible Pets* to receive the 2012 Andrew Carnegie Medal. As some of you may be aware, a few of our films have received this honor in the past—this is our eleventh, but who's counting?—and I may have said this before, but it's worth saying again, it never gets old.

I'd like to continue along the lines of Melissa's remarks by sharing a few more details about the amazing team behind this production, starting with our remarkable narrator, Emily Eiden. We are very pleased to have Emily joining us today. (*Emily, please stand!*)

When Emily first contacted me looking for voiceover work, her samples and the fact that she had the starring role in an LA stage production of *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* caught my attention. But, being a bit of a backyard telescope nerd,

I was particularly impressed to learn that she's one of the narrators of the planetarium show up at Griffith Observatory.

The planets must have been in some kind of alignment when she came down to the Midwinter conference in San Diego last year and we met in person. We had just learned that we'd won the Carnegie Medal for our adaptation of another Peter Brown book *The Curious Garden*.

There were two things about Emily that kind of stuck in my head. The first is that she walks with a distinct, bouncy skip in her step, almost like she's dancing. The second is that during any lulls in conversation, I'd notice that she was quietly singing to herself.

A few weeks after the Midwinter conference, a copy of *Children Make Terrible Pets* had found its way into the hands of our editorial committee. We instantly fell in love with Lucille Beatrice Bear, and Melissa proceeded to go to work negotiating an agreement for the rights while I went through the process of estimating a budget.

One of the first things we need to figure out is how long the production will be. I read the book aloud—usually very badly—trying to mentally imagine the book's illustrations as a movie while I time myself with a stopwatch. So, here I am looking at Peter's first illustration in the book, a bear walking through the forest. Well, she's wearing a pink ballet tutu, so she's *dancing* through the forest. Picturing that movie image in my head, I started to read, "One morning, Lucy was practicing her twirls." And as I was imagining her dancing, skipping, and singing to herself, I suddenly froze: dancing, skipping, and singing to herself? OH MY GOSH! Lucy is Emily Eiden in a bear suit and a pink tutu!

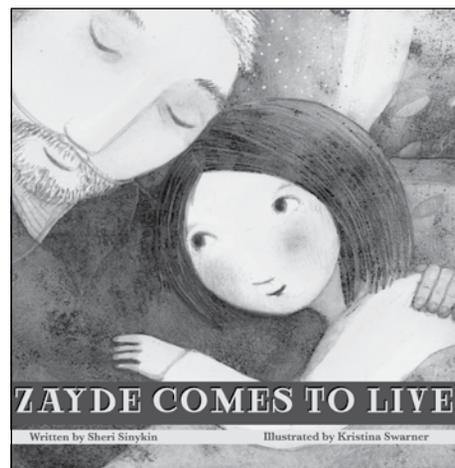
As I continued to read the story, I vividly imagined Emily's voice reading the story. I went into work the next day and played some of Emily's samples for Melissa, who in turn shared them with Peter; we all agreed that we'd found the perfect voice for Lucy, and here we are today.

Thank you, Emily, for doing such a great job with the narration and voices for this project. As a side note, during Jack Gantos's Newbery acceptance speech last night, Emily was very relieved that he didn't name Carol Ryrie Brink, author of the 1936 Newbery award-winning book *Caddie Woodlawn*, in his listing of Newbery winners with checkered pasts. Carol Ryrie Brink was Emily's great-grandma.

I'd also like to thank our composers, Jack Sundrud and Rusty Young, for their wonderful musical score. Jack and Rusty are members of Poco, one of my all-time favorite bands from my college days, and it has been such a pleasure to be able to work with them on a number of our productions. We loved the little theme song they did for the end credits so much that we asked them to turn that into the main melody for the rest of the score, and we even booked Emily for a second recording session just so "Lucy" could be the one to sing it!

I'd also like to thank all of our coworkers at Weston Woods, who make it a pleasure to come to work every day, and the Scholastic family for giving us such a good home. And once more, a big thank you to our vice president, Linda Lee, for her patience and support—and I think we do try her patience at times!—and most of all for fostering the kind of environment that makes it possible for us to put a lot of tender loving care into our productions.

And last, but never least, thank you to my wife, Lynn, and our daughters, Melanie and Brianna, for their tender loving care. 🐻



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