

ELIZABETHTOWN CHRONICLE

Week of October 25 - 31, 2001

Vol. 132 No. 43

RIP: Children's book series places a premium on virtue as well as an enticing storyline

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think (that) in any kind of team effort, somebody has to lie down shop rules. For the most part, Susan handles the writing and the all of the things that come with (business manager) Bada (Schmidthues) handles the business thing.

"We share opinions," Yost-Filigate said. "We don't keep our mouths shut when we think somebody is doing something wrong."

That being said, the team has learned to foster a spirit of cooperation which seems to bolster the appeal of their work.

And, oddly enough, it's that same spirit of tolerance and understanding which is a central theme to Yost-Filigate's magical plots.

Both members of the team readily say that one of their primary motivations for creating Rip Squeak, as well as fellow characters Jesse, Abbey and Euripides, was to show children that adventure does not necessarily have to include violence.

Four other motivations for undertaking the process made their way into the Filigates' motivational materials: to portray friendship that overcomes prejudice and reminds us that we should appreciate differences; to bring a smile to a face and joy to a heart; to highlight the achievements and not the struggles and to remind each of us that there is a child inside and we should allow it to come out.

This past weekend, Oct. 19-20, the Filigates brought their message and their art to Elizabethtown for a special exhibit and series of children's events at Lancaster Galleries West.

Children milled about the gallery's display floor, drawing pictures and thumbing through books, as the author and illustrator busily signed autographs on everything from books and prints to children's scribbles.

Schmidthues, a long-time friend of the Filigates as well as a partner in Rip Squeak, Inc., provided the highlights for each session as he read aloud, with much bravado, from *The Roaring Adventures of Rip Squeak*.

The Filigates trip to Central Pennsylvania was scheduled to continue this week with trips to local public libraries, including the library in Columbia.

A portion of the proceeds from the event at Lancaster Galleries West went to benefit the Library System of Lancaster.

"We're just kind of blown away by the positive comments that we're getting," Yost-Filigate said. "We feel very fortunate that it's been received so well. I found that I handle the artwork, and Bada (business manager) Bada (Schmidthues) handles the business thing."

"I think that we, as adults, underestimate children and their learning ability," he added. "Children will see the subtleties that I do put into the art, but they'll also remember that it's supposed to be fun. Kids get that; adults, often, don't."

The couple, who make their home in Carmel, Ca., are currently spending large chunks of time on the road, promoting their work. Earlier this year, they traveled to the ArtExpo in New York and the Children's International BookFair in Bologna, Italy.

"It's sometimes stressing, especially when we have to leave our daughter," Yost-Filigate said. "(But) we love to travel.

"It's really important for us to be here," she added. "I think (people) appreciate the fact that we came to them."

Her husband agreed.

"The more kids that you can expose it to, the better," he said. "I think sharing (this book) with them is of tremendous value."

A value that Susan Yost-Filigate knows exactly how to measure.

"One of main things that keeps us going is the smiles," she said. "When people look at Leonard's art, they often get a tear in their eye because it reminds them of something nostalgic in their life. Then, you see them smile."

A 'Rip roarin' good story

Husband and wife team visit Elizabethtown in order to promote their gentle, new adventure hero mouse.

D.E. Kern
Editor

So far, the project has resulted in the publication of the *The Roaring Adventures of Rip Squeak* as well as *Rip Squeak and His Friends, an introduction together*.

Together with his wife, Susan Yost-Filigate, the accomplished artist continues to tackle his newest project, the creation of a series of children's adventure books based on the character Rip Squeak, an anxious and lovable



Story-teller Bada Schmidthues reads portions of the *The Roaring Adventures of Rip Squeak* to parents and children who visited him at Lancaster Galleries West on Saturday, Oct. 20. (Photo by D.E. Kern)