

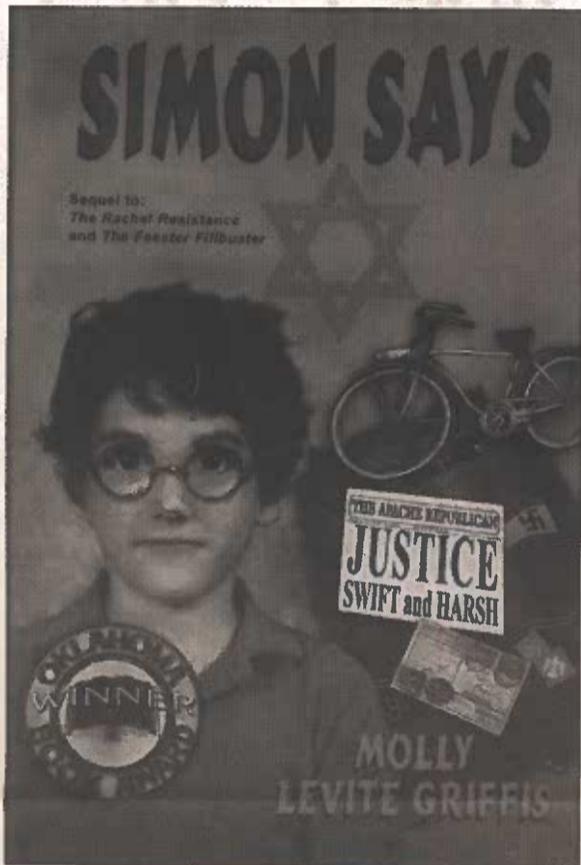
Metro Family

December 2006

Central Oklahoma's Monthly Celebration of Family

oklahoma reads

Simon Says by Molly Levite Griffis



When I first met Simon, he haunted my dreams," Molly said. "I woke up with my fingers moving like I was typing." Perhaps that's one reason why Oklahoma author Molly Levite Griffis was able to write the award-winning book *Simon Says* in just three months. Another contributing factor was the clamor from Ms. Molly's readership. But that's only part of the story.

The book begins when 11-year-old Simon discovers a postcard. Although Simon is a fictional character, the postcard is a tangible piece of history. It was sent in 1937 by Molly's Great Uncle in Warsaw, Poland to Molly's Grandfather in Apache, Oklahoma. Locked in the safe of his general store in Apache for over fifty years, the postcard's message was stark: "We are hungry. Please send us something of bread." When Simon discovers the card, he finds himself whispering

the two sentences because the words "were much too sorrowful to speak aloud." Simon's story reverberates with the thousands of orphans who fled Eastern Europe during WWII.

Ms. Molly's family was already inextricably tied to the ongoing conflicts in Europe—Molly's uncle fought in Germany during WWII. And about 100 years earlier Ms. Molly's very existence was secured by an agonizing decision made by her great-grandmother. It was in 1850s Poland that Great-Grandma placed her sons Peter and Bernard on a ship to England. She was later forced to live in a cave, where she died of pneumonia while seeking refuge from the advancing Russian army.

With such personal connections to WWII, it's not surprising that Molly's books are imbued with a palpable sense of history. What is surprising is the existence of two books in Levite Griffis' WWII trilogy, neither of which the author ever intended to write.

The response to Ms. Molly's first WWII-era book, *The Rachel Resistance*, was nothing less than a mandate. "Tell us what happened next, Ms. Molly," young readers demanded repeatedly. So Levite Griffis went on to write *The Feester Filibuster* and *Simon Says*. (The first and last books in the trilogy won Oklahoma Book Awards.) All three books are set in Molly's hometown of Apache, Oklahoma.

In Simon's character, Ms. Molly has achieved that rare but successful juxtaposition of the complex and the commonplace. Simon is a Jewish orphan adopted into an American family. He loves baseball, but plays the violin. His pet dog is named Zinziberi. He memorizes the encyclopedia as easily as he learns lines from

his favorite Sherlock Holmes movies. And he keeps friends as readily as secrets.

"In good writing, characters drive the plot," says Molly. But she insists that "writers don't need a good imagination, they just need a good memory. Everybody wants to be a writer, but not many people want to write," says Ms. Molly, who writes eight hours a day, five days a week. "I also set myself deadlines by picking dates that are easy to remember." Are there any other secrets to this author's success? "Well," Molly says, "I usually write the end of the story first."



Lori Williams is a freelance writer who specializes in writing about international adoption and the special needs child. Lori resides in Bethany with her husband Dean and daughter Aurelia.



Read Levite Griffis' trilogy of WWII books. You can read them in order, but it's also fun to read them in reverse. See MollyGriffis.com for a complete book listing, including Molly's newest release, *Paradise on the Prairie*.

Remember Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941, by visiting Oklahoma City's 45th Infantry Division Museum (405-424-5313). The museum houses artifacts owned by Adolf Hitler and a WWII gallery with Thunderbirds memorabilia. Admission is free.

Take a cue from Rachel (one of Simon's best friends) and learn a new word every day. Sign up at WordSmith.org/awad to receive a free word a day e-mail.

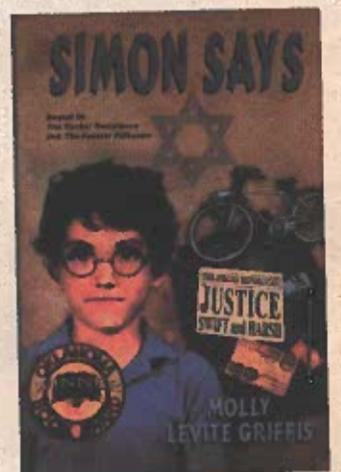
Your Holiday Gift Giving Headquarters!



Stationary • Journals • Art
Educational Games
Gift Certificates Available

the BEST of B

Locally owned and
Kickingbird Square • Downtown
Edmond • 340



34 OKLAHOMA AUTHOR
MAKES HISTORY
COME TO LIFE