

699 East Foothill Blvd.,
Altadena, California,
January 23, 1948

Elizabeth Rider Montgomery,
3209 Alki Avenue,
Seattle 6, Washington

Dear Miss Montgomery:

Your last letter of January 2 has just arrived via Boston, and has jolted me into startled realization of my negligence. Upon receipt of your first letter the filling out of your questionnaire was started (quite expansively as you will note - if you cannot decipher cuneiform please write and we will send "Holling's Handy Helper in Handling His Hen Scratches," complete with guide maps and instructions). Then my publisher hinted that, if my new book hopes to be born in '48 its author ought to hump himself with the illustrations. Everything else was dropped (it was already dropped before this, but the hint only dropped everything deeper), including another questionnaire for an anthology to be published in England, business letters in stacks, and the pleading missives of friends and relatives. Christmas and New Years saw me nailed to the drawing board. People have sometimes expatiated on the "effortless ease of creation" suggested by PADDLE-TO-THE-SEA and TREE IN THE TRAIL. At the time of creation of the idea, yes. But from then on - rolled sleeves, shovel and pick!

This new book, SEABIRD, has the same format as PADDLE. But the story takes in much more territory in space and time. The story thread hangs on a seagull carved in walrus ivory which sails with four seafaring generations, starting in an 1850 whaling ship off Greenland and ending in a plane. My illustrative struggle was a struggle only in the necessity for deletion. (I really love my work). For each page of pictures, data and sketches had been amassed, enough for a book. The finished material had to be axed unmercifully to emerge basic, concise, yet comprehensive.

Thus your questionnaire was laid aside for a day and was literally buried under hundreds of sketches. The completed illustrations have now been mailed. And now, coming out of a daze, your letter of January 2 is the first of many groups to be answered.

Your outline of subjects to be included in your book is appealing. It is flattering to find my simple PADDLE in such good company. Please put me on your sales list for an autographed, first edition copy!

Sincerely,

Holling C. Holling
Holling Clancy Holling

699 East Poothill Blvd.,
Altadena, California,
March 24, 1948

Mrs. Elizabeth Rider Montgomery,
3209 Alki Avenue,
Seattle 6, Washington

Dear Mrs. Montgomery:

You've done a swell job with the PADDLE story. It could go as is. However, because it is so darn good, I've nudged it here and there to sharpen facts in some places and broaden meanings in others; so that from here on out I can refer questioners to your anthology for the real dope on how PADDLE got under way.

Your title, I am afraid, may get me in wrong with some of my Indian friends. I can hear them now - "Huhl! So this guy knows more about us than we do? Ho! Wait till we see him again! Boy, will we pour it on!".... In other words, because I can change a car's tire doesn't mean I know the secrets of its motor. And really knowing Indians is akin to understanding atomic fission....

Perhaps you could snare a title which would, instead of being boastful, point a moral for the young reader. Nothing so trite as "Helping others we help ourselves" but with that general idea. Lucille and I helped the old woman with no thought of reward (our reward was in proving to ourselves that we were smart enough to remember certain designs), yet she gave us an extension on our original ideas which formed the book's character.... Or you might pick up a title from something like HOW BITS OF BIRCHBARK HELPED TO BUILD A BOOK.... (When I started on this title thing I really meant to help. Hope I haven't driven you into a bog).

We may have met. My jabberings have been listened to (and politely) at assorted gatherings all over this area. Though I am not partial to wearing buttons, my clubs include California Writers' Guild (not a union), P. E. N. International, Southwest Museum etc. I helped with training films at the Walt Disney Studios during the war, went with Walt and party to Mexico getting data for a health film series for Latin America, wrote and mouthed the narration for "Rite of Spring", taken from its Fantasia context for a school documentary which we tried out at a session of some three hundred audio-visual experts at the studio. Any of this in your territory? The Disney contact was not mentioned in data sent you, because I am not a Disney man and do not want to be known as such - and purposely keep the film angle separate from my books.

If I can help further, please let me know. (Or are you by this time saying "what does he mean 'further'?").

Sincerely,

H. C. Holling

699 E. Goothill Blvd.,
Altadena, Calif.,
July 25 - 1948

Dear Mrs. Montgomery:

Just returned from
the east, hence the delay in answering
your last letter.

The story on "PADDLE"
reads very well, and your title,
"RETURNED WITH INTEREST" is excellent.

It has been fun
working with you. Be sure to have
your publishers slip me a copy
of the book when it comes out.

Good luck, and
happy sale-ing!

Yours sincerely,
Halliday.

P.S. Am enclosing a few shots on
signatures to be used at will.
My preferences might be No. 1 or 4.



"Paddle-to-the-Sea"

Published by Houghton Mifflin Co. Year 1941

Born Holling Alison Clancy, Father died in 1918. Because the Clancy line was

Real name

Pen name

extended by innumerable cousins, while the Holling line ended with my mother, I added

another 'Holling' to my name for books. To save confusion, the name was legalized and I am now known as Holling Clancy Holling, but old friends still recognize me as being the original Holling Clancy.
What do your family and friends call you? Holling

A. YOUR BACKGROUND

Date of birth Aug 2 - 1900 Place of birth Grandfather Holling's Farm, Henrietta Township, Jackson Co., Michigan. (Holling School Dist.)

Father's occupation School Supt. Number of Brothers 1 and sisters 1

Father's nationality Canadian Irish-French in Canada for 2 centuries Mother's nationality American English 3/4, mother's 1/4, direct father from England

Kind of home during childhood (farm, small town, city apt. etc.) childhood, north Mich. Small towns with fairly large high schools Where Westbranch, and AuSable, Mich. (2 yrs. after leaving AuS. it was destroyed by forest fire.)
Adolescence on the Holling Farm

Amount of schooling (high school, college, etc.) Graduate Leslie High Sch. Leslie Mich. Gnd. Art Institute, Chicago. Special tutoring Anthropology

Economic status during childhood (poor, middle class, wealthy) Middle

Special interests as a child (sports, books, games, etc.) Father was good horseman, learned to ride, young
Father inducted me into mysteries of natural sciences - hence love of woods, books, etc.
Mother was pianist, wrote verse, plays etc. locally. Hence love of art, music etc.

Childhood ambitions To own and control a circus
To write and illustrate books

When did you begin to write? First drawing, pig with litter, at 3. } ever anon!
First verse (local paper) at 5

Why? Natural expression. Each new experience, I documented in pictures.

Who encouraged you? Mother, Father, assorted relatives. Father's brothers & sisters were missionaries in India, Africa. Visits home gave me much food for imagination.

What and when was your first success or recognition? Difficult to determine as I 'grew' into it. Mother wrote & produced plays and musicals for Father's schools, and I was in them. First actual publications were in boys' magazine as youngster, verse in adult mag. etc. First books - see Oct. Supplement, 'Who's Who in Am.', 1942

How did you happen to write for children?
Grew into this phase also. An intense interest in hows and whys of life gave me an 'interpreter' complex! Suppose you could say that I wanted to know how a thing was done so that I could pass it on to others. Regard myself as an 'interpreter'.
Anything else about your background which has a bearing on your writing.

From small-town-farm environment graduated to big city env. (Chicago) but I was still the "wilderness-lover." A year in the deserts of New Mexico helped. Also working on scientific staff (Taxidermist asst.) of Field Museum of Nat. Hist. gave me great impetus. Field trips, Montana and British Columbia for specimens. One real turning point was meeting of Dr. Ralph Linton, head of American Ethnology Dept. at the museum. We struck a bargain and, after a day's work in Zoology, Dr. Linton (in his office) gave me from one to 3 hours lecture in Anthropology. He tried out his courses on me. (He was later at Columbia Un., now at Yale). A couple of years of this gave me a foundation in the study of Man - past, present and possible future, which acted as a key or an entire filing system in my brain for the correlation of scattered information. Hence, any information now gleaned has its pigeon-hole in my mind, and becomes part of a subconscious fund available for future books. (I plan to produce Bushels!)

Chicago

P.S. Look at designs on title, contents page, map etc. of "PADDLE" and you will see patterns in birch bark as related below - (though of course not in old Chippewa design).

B. THE WRITING OF THIS BOOK

Where did you get the idea for the book? Touring the Gulf states, Lovell Thompson of H.M.Co. wrote me about illustrating a book for them. At Boston I gave Lovell various ideas for books. He liked the idea of a story about a river. So Mrs. Holling and I started west again in our studio-trailer for the headwaters of the Missouri. En route, Wisconsin & Minn., idea shifted to a river in the Great Lakes!

When? (Season as well as year) Autumn 1938

On a fishing boat in Lake Superior I said "that's it - a chip floats along the river in the Lakes, clear to the sea." Later that month, Lucille (Mrs. H.) & I met a Chippewa woman selling birch bark baskets near Fort William Ont. She used hideous designs from magazines - flower pots, sunbambat babies, roses etc. We said "why not use the original Chippewa designs?"

Where were you living at the time? at a Fort William camp, from memory, cut out many birch-bark patterns of Chippewa and Cree designs. These I did on the orange-colored tree-side of the bark, traced with a point and all inside the outline scraped neatly. This gives a darker silhouette on the dark bark. The woman was astonished at the authentic designs and because we even cut them in bark patterns, like the old-time Chippeway. To show her gratitude and pleasure she gave us, among other things, a carving made by a 12-year old Chippewa friend. We still have it - a kneeling Indian with drawn bow. If a 12 yr. old could do this, I reasoned, then an Indian in a canoe would be easy. So there was my 'chip' to float thru the 'river in the Lakes' to the sea. My high school summer vacations had been spent (2 years) working on Great Lakes freighters. Lucille and I had camped all around the Lakes on long canoe trips, including Nipigon country.

Did you talk the book idea over with any of them? So the story virtually developed on its own, as naturally as a chip going downstream. The title came while we camped in Bryce Canyon, Utah. I thought of having the boy carve 'I am Paddle-to-the-sea'.

Where and how did you get the material? (library research, travel, personal experience, etc.)
I thought of having the boy carve 'I am Paddle-to-the-sea'. But the words were simple and direct, and the title was born as is.

When did you begin to write the book? 1939

Where? Sequoia Park, Calif., extending to Olympic Pen. (Nash Bay region) finished Altadena Calif.
My desert books are often written in canoes, canoeing books in deserts. Perspective, you see.

How much had you had published when you began it? (Give names of books)
See "Who's Who, Oct. Sup., 1942" - also "Story and Verse for Children" - page 813
Page 208 BY MIRIAM BLANTON HUBER

What was your purpose in writing this book? To give youngsters a taste of the North country I knew - to have fun making a book - and for cash!

How do you write? (typewriter, long hand, dictate)

Where? (study, office, etc.)

Do you keep regular office hours? If so, what are they? No

Do you revise much? Yes Write easily or laboriously? It all depends

Do you let your family or friends read your work, or try it out on children? Read it to my wife. Never to children.

Who makes your final copies? (yourself, ~~private secretary~~, ^{or, sometimes to save time,} public typist, etc.) _____

Did you make an outline before writing the book? No

Did you decide on the title first or last? First

How long did it take you to write the book? Problematical. Some paragraphs rewritten 60 times for simplicity and rythm.

Did you work on it steadily? At times.

Did it go fairly smoothly or did you hit rough spots? (Details of any particular difficulty and its solution would be appreciated.) _____

No rough spots in story proper. Sometimes difficult to choose which writing told story best. In PADDLE, TREE and new book SEABIRD, each page of some 300 words is a complete chapter. This necessitates work in framing all ideas for that page simply and yet without losing the plot, excitement, etc. (As against such writing, sonnets are a cinch!)

Was your book accepted immediately by a publisher? Yes

Was it immediately popular on publication? Thank Heaven!

Anything else about your writing that might be of interest, especially anything that concerns this book. The rests between spurts were swell!

C. ILLUSTRATIONS

How much did you have to do with the illustrations of your book? _____

Practically everything except making the plates.

If you did them yourself, which came first, the pictures or the text? Text.

What medium did you work in? Water color, pencil, pen.

How much experience had you had in illustrating? Years.

D. WHAT SORT OF PERSON YOU ARE

What did you look like when you wrote this book? Dark or fair? Dark
Tall or short? 5' 10 1/2" ^{Anthropologically - an Alpine-Nordic} Thin or plump? Slender
Color of eyes? Dark blue Wore glasses? No
Color of hair? Dark brown Kind of hair--long or short? Medium
Curly or straight? Straight How did you wear it? See picture.
Any special features of your appearance (square jaw, dimples, stoop, etc.) Would dearly love a square jaw but haven't one. No dimples. No stoop.
Are you quiet or talkative? It all depends. Friendly or reserved? Ditto.
Do you laugh a great deal or are you usually grave? ^{Not manic-depressive. However, can howl with glee or be sober as hell.}
Are you quick-tempered or calm and placid? Every alternate leap-year.
What sort of clothes do you wear most when writing? (sports, suits, slacks, etc.) Sometimes trunks only. Sometimes overcoats. Altitude and weather dictate.
Favorite occupations and hobbies? Too many.
What is your normal speech like? (Meticulously correct, colloquial, slangy, abrupt, rambling, etc.) Yes. And the shadings can be subtle.
What are some of your pet expressions and exclamations? I blush.
Profanity not habitual.
If strongly religious, give denomination. ^{Brought up a Methodist, but am very broad in view. Could still be called Christian.}
Any other details about yourself, no matter how trivial, which might help me to picture you in my own mind. Latin-Americans call me "simpatico". I become with no effort the age to which I am talking. Even some dogs seem to wonder why I have no tail. Cats regard me with favor. Also old people. Also my wife (this statement should be qualified at length).
Can you direct me to any articles or books which have been written about you? See Who's Who Supplement for Oct 1942. It contains most complete list of my books.
If you have a photograph or snapshot of yourself of about the vintage of your book, I would appreciate it. Of course I would return it promptly. Please keep the thing!