

**Book review**

**'Something Good' is a delight**

By ALLAN GOULD  
Thomson News Service

For more than a dozen years, your obedient servant has been reviewing children's books that have poured like Niagara Falls from this country's quite extraordinary publishers. But books are not only for Christmas, any more than good fellowship and cheer should be, and a surprising number of books for children are published - and too often overlooked - from January to June.

Possibly the finest, and now most prolific, house for exclusively children's books is Annick Press, and its cup overflowed once more. The much loved Robert Munsch (and his best illustrator, Michael Martchenko) has put out *Something Good* (hardcover, unpaginated, \$12.95), which is not top Munsch, but still a delight: Daddy takes his kids to the supermarket and the little troublemakers buy a lot more than he had expected, leading to quite hilarious results. The magnificent Kathy Stinson has *The Dressed Up Book* (hardcover, unpaginated, \$12.95), which should become as grand a classic as her inspired *Red is Best: A group of children play dress-up - in the exquisite drawings of Heather Collins - while the author asks question after question: "How do you shampoo ... Rainbow hair? Rapunzel hair? If-I-only-had-a-brain hair? Haunted hair?"* This book sounds and looks so right, your under eights should go wild with delight; it's close to perfection.

Annick has so many other superior books out, it's hard to choose, and we were thrilled to see the fabulous Bonnie McSmithers series of Sue Ann Alderson out in Annick's, its tiny, 99-cent little editions. But attention must be paid to Kim Fernandes' *Visiting Granny* (hardcover, unpaginated, \$12.95), which has platercine art that is utterly irresistible, along with a fine story. And - although we don't usually cite foreign matter, we just have to note Annick's publication of a German soon-to-

be-classic, *Now, Now Markus* (paperback, unpaginated, \$8.95). Surreal, eerie, hilarious and unbearably creative, this tale of the child who longs for a pet, threatening to drop dead, is one of the best books for children published in many a year.

**LAST KHALSA BOOK**

And speaking of magnificence, let us mourn, once again, the passing away (from cancer) of one of the giants of Canadian children's literature and art - Dayal Kaur Khalsa. Her final book - one must choke back the tears, for she must have had dozens more in her gifted mind and soul - is *Cowboy Dreams* (Tundra, 32 pages, hardcover, \$17.95), and like earlier, just-as-fabulous *Tales of a Gambling Grandma* and *I Want a Dog*, is nostalgic, poetic, hysterically funny, touching, witty and more. A little girl sits for hours on her "banister horse" and sings her cowboy songs, longing to ride "into the land of the cowboys." Khalsa's unbearably wise sensitivity and understanding of every child's longings are at their peak here. Don't miss this one.

Grey de Pencier Books continues to turn out extremely good oversized, colorful, reasonably priced and remarkably useful (yet highly entertaining) books for children. A recent series includes *Rainy Day Book*, *The Puzzler's Book*, *Family Car Book*, *Bee Hives* and *Bat Caves* and more. All are paperback, 49 pages and \$7.95, which is astonishingly generous. Each is overflowing with "fun, puzzles, super games and great facts," and the covers don't lie. These books, thoughtfully placed in the well of every family car that enjoys/suffers children over the age of six, will save many a trip. Good stuff!

Scholastic Books, another of Canada's solid publishers of books for children, has several new

gems. *Farmer Joe Goes to the City* (hardcover, 24 pages, \$12.95) is a charming and highly modern twist on the old city/country, what-shall-I-buy-my-wife? story. Seeing Farmer Joe sitting in a shopping mall surrounded by his chickens (and a pig leaning on him) is a scream. And *No Dinosaurs in the Park* (hardcover, 24 pages, \$11.95) is an excellent study of imagination, as a little girl and her granddad see all these wonderful dinosaurs on their walk - but mom sure doesn't. It's very well done, by author Dorothy Joan Harris and artist Sylvie Daigneault.

Oxford and Macmillan are hard-ly kids-only-publishers, but both can be counted on for excellence. Oxford's *The Tinder Box* (hardcover, 28 pages, \$16.95) is a retelling of the Hans Christian Anderson tale about a greedy but crafty soldier who - surprise! - ends up with both the money and the princess. Regolo Ricci's illustrations are haunting and make the book especially memorable. And Macmillan's *The Look Out! Book* (paperback, unpaginated, \$7.95), subtitled *A Child's Guide to Water Safety*, is a bit earnest, but Barbara Klunder's witty drawings (of waterskiing moose and fishing frogs) makes it all worthwhile. And if this book saves the life of one child - and it will - then it is invaluable.

Poetry is always a mixed blessing in children's books, especially when tried by over-serious adults. McClelland and Stewart had *Old Mrs. Schmatterbug and Other Friends*, by Charles Wilkins, illustrated quite grotesquely by Victor Gad (hardcover, 32 pages, \$9.95). It's highly uneven, but sometimes wonderfully lunatic, as in *The Vaseline Cheer*: "Vaseline for breakfast!/Vaseline for lunch!/Vaseline with mayonnaise!/Vaseline crunch!" Strange, but often good.

But one cannot praise too highly Lois Simmie's *Who Greased the Shoelaces?*, illustrated by her daughter, Anne Simmie (Stoddart, paperback, 64 pages, \$9.95). If the drawings recall Shel Silverstein, who cares? He's a darned good artist to imitate. Ditto the poems, which are usually strikingly good, and disarmingly funny, and also have strong - but very favorable -

echoes of great Silverstein. The poem about the kid who falls in love with a thesaurus, and won't stop using synonyms around the house ("Is Mom nervous, timid, irritable, hysterical, shaky, agghast!") is uproarious, and the ending is as daring as it is inexorable: "And he led little Jimmy out in the yard/ Father heard her say.../ Kill. Butcher. Slaughter. Dispatch./ Assassinate. Massacre. Slay." Brilliant!

Once again, whether the kids are three or 13, at home or at camp, your greatest gift to them this summer would be to share some - or all! - of the above books with them. Ditto your nieces, nephews, cousins and grandkids. They sure beat Ninja Turtle toys.

- Allan Gould, a Toronto writer, is the author of 14 books, including the political satire, *The Great Wiped Out North*. He has two children himself, on whom he tried out all of the above books.

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 Program Listings for Halton Community Television Cable 4  
**MONDAY, JULY 2ND**  
 5:30 - Star Studed Celebration  
 6:38 - Ontario Canada  
 7:00 - Wetland News  
 7:30 - Anatomy of the Human Mind No. 1  
 8:30 - Halton Hills Health Spot "Diabetes"  
 9:00 - Glimpses into Medicine  
**TUESDAY, JULY 3RD**  
 5:30 - April Dawne Sings Country Gospel  
 6:00 - TV Bingo  
 7:00 - I.B.A.  
 7:30 - Canadian Farming On The Go  
 8:00 - Hot Seat Sports Program  
 8:30 - George's Country Jamboree  
**WEDNESDAY, JULY 4TH**  
 5:30 - Vocational Training  
 6:00 - TV Storytime  
 6:30 - Playsafe II  
 7:00 - The Wilderness Wilt Show No. 2  
 7:30 - Don Lewis Keyboard Player  
 8:33 - Living With Cancer  
 9:00 - Fishing In Ontario  
**THURSDAY, JULY 5TH**  
 5:30 - Growing Up  
 6:30 - Split Seconds  
 7:00 - April Dawne Sings Country Gospel  
 7:30 - Earth News (Water Issue at Elmira)  
 8:00 - Hot Seat Sports Program  
 8:30 - Welcome to Cameroon  
**FRIDAY, JULY 6TH**  
 5:30 - Money in the Bank  
 6:00 - Region Council  
 7:00 - "Alice" a play put on by Centennial Public School

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