

THE LIGHT OF THE GRYPHON PRESS

BY MARY HOLMES

The Gryphon Press' mission statement is as follows: "Our mission is to publish beautifully illustrated children's picture books about the vital issues that animals – domestic, wild, and farmed – face, and to present those issues in such a way that children gain insights into and develop empathy for every animal life. All our books are intended to illuminate the struggles that non-human animals face in modern society and to strengthen the human-animal bond."

This mindful and beautifully written statement came from the hearts and souls of Emilie Buchwald and Dana Buchwald, publisher and associate publisher (and also mother and daughter) of The Gryphon Press. Emilie cofounded Milkweed Editions with R.W. Scholes in 1980, retired from Milkweed, and went on to found The Gryphon Press. Emilie is an accomplished publisher, author, poet, and editor, having won the following awards: the Minnesota Book Awards Kay Sexton Award, the McKnight Distinguished Artist award and the National Book Critics Circle Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement award, in addition to authoring two award-winning children's novels, *Gildaen* and *Flo-ramel and Esteban*.

Dana has worked as an attorney, as well as a producer, director, writer, and interviewer in theater and radio. She is a member of The Association of Professional Humane Educators and served on its board of directors. She also volunteers with local and national animal advocacy groups to lobby on behalf of all animals – domestic, wild, and farmed.

Emilie and Dana are passionate, committed, and knowledgeable publishers doing their best to fill a previously unfilled niche in children's literature. That niche was realized due to two events in Emilie's life; her husband announcing his retirement, which instigated her leaving Milkweed Editions, and adopting her dog, Sam. Thanks to both events, Emilie began reading animal blogs.

Much to her dismay, she discovered that even some young children were involved in torturing and abusing animals, which astounded her. After reviewing children's book sections she realized no publisher was speaking to children about their

responsibility toward animals or helping to create children's empathy toward animals.

As she put it, "...to my great surprise although there are wonderful books, novels mostly in the intermediate grades that all of us know because they're famous, in the picture book market almost all the books were animals that were cartoons that were just Disney-fied, that were really people dressed up in animal costumes. The issues that were being addressed were really people issues, not animal issues." Her answer was to found The Gryphon Press.

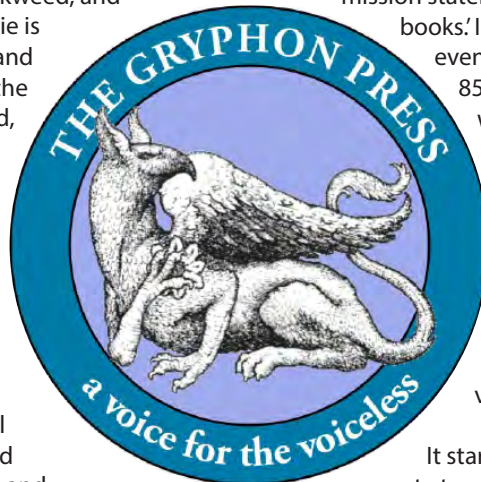
Remarking on the mission statement, she said, "The mission statement really in a way came out of Milkweed Edition's mission statement, which was 'good writing, beautiful books.' I have the same standards for Gryphon titles even though we're only talking about 750 to 850 words. Those words have to be the right words, the topic has to be easily graspable by young children and, of course, the art has to be first rate. A picture book without marvelous art is a failure, you know. Compelling art. And so those same standards of good writing and beautiful books were part of the mission but essentially the mission was to be a voice for animals, you know, a voice for the voiceless."

Dana came on board several years later.

It started when her mother asked her to help out at an HSUS Animal Care Expo. After that, "Really then I just started to learn about these issues. You know, I grew up with dogs and I loved animals, but I really wasn't aware of some of the larger issues, such as puppy mills. (I didn't know what a puppy mill was) After volunteering for Gryphon, I became interested in these issues and then started to educate myself. My interest and knowledge grew exponentially from there.

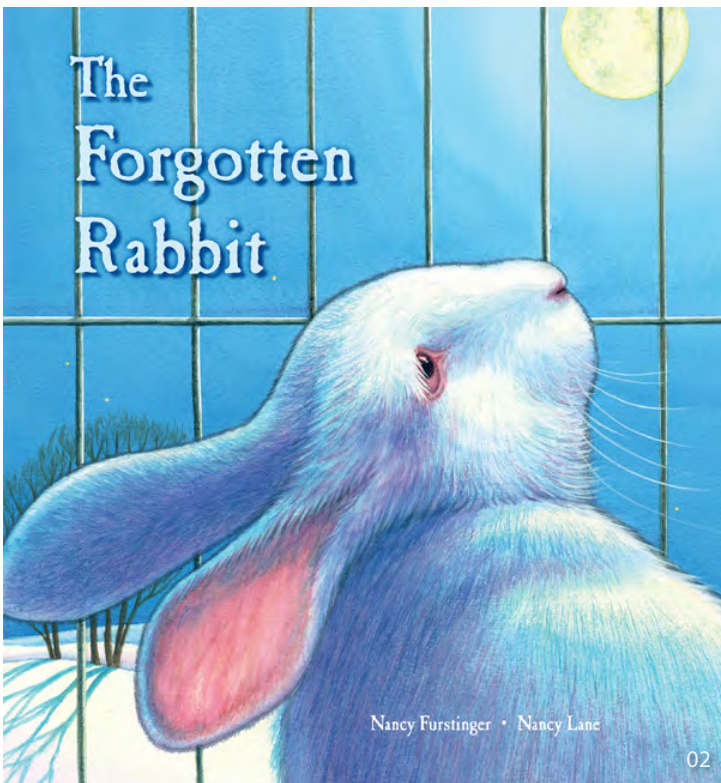
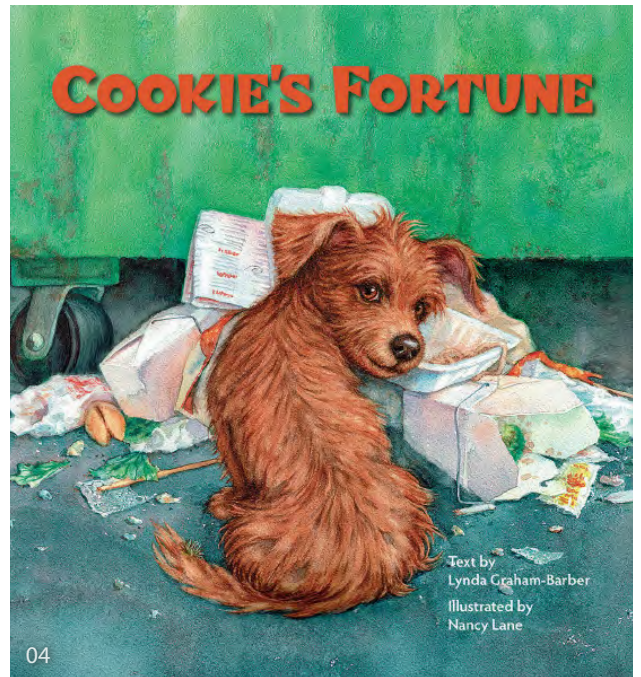
I became very passionate about animal welfare/animal rights, and then Emilie said, 'You know I'm going to have someone work with me part time; would you like to do this?'"

Dana has become quite interested in animal law issues as well, and expressed her admiration for the work of Joyce Tischler, founder of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, and Steven





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1 *Emilie Buchwald and Sam* | Photo © Milkweed Editions

2 *The Forgotten Rabbit* Cover

3 *Always Blue for Chicu* Cover

4 *Cookie's Fortune* Cover



The little lost dog sniffed
and sniffed
and sniffed.
But nothing smelled like home.

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Wise, founder of the Nonhuman Rights Project.

Both Buchwalds commented on the challenge of creating books in this genre for the mostly pre-school set. Not only do they have to walk a fine line between fostering a child's empathy toward animals by educating them without horrifying them, but also they are dependent upon the manuscripts that are submitted to them to amplify the issues they cover. The reading period for new submissions is each year from the beginning of October to the end of November. Emilie has written a couple of titles for Gryphon. One of them, *Buddy Unchained*, is their most successful title to date. It's also available in Spanish under the

animal-human bond, such as (in alphabetical order):

- The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
- Best Friends Animal Society
- HEART (Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers)
- The Humane Society of the United States
- Institute for Humane Education
- RedRover Readers
- Humane Education Coalition"

In addition, the Press offers 50% discounts to non-profit organizations ordering their titles by-the-box directly from them.

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– Emilie Buchwald

title *Rufo Liberado*, at the specific request of RedRover, a California-based organization whose tag-line is “Bringing Animals from Crisis to Care.”

RedRover Readers uses several Gryphon books in its programs in the States. Boxes of *Rufo Liberado* recently made their way to Spain and Guatemala. According to The Gryphon Press website, the “Association of Professional Humane Educators, recommends our titles, as does the National Humane Education Society and The Institute for Humane Education. Our titles are on the reading lists and used in the programs of a number of organizations that work to help animals and to strengthen the

Go to The Gryphon Press website for more details.

Gryphon has published 18 titles since its founding in 2006. The 19th book will be out this October. Another recent accomplishment is that 10 of their titles have been licensed to be utilized in humane education programs in China. Being able to expand their reach as humane education publishers is a great accomplishment in both Emilie's and Dana's eyes.

With an eye toward the future, Dana is excited about the possibilities of *Gryphon In The Schools*, reaching an even wider audience. This project is still in its preliminary stages.

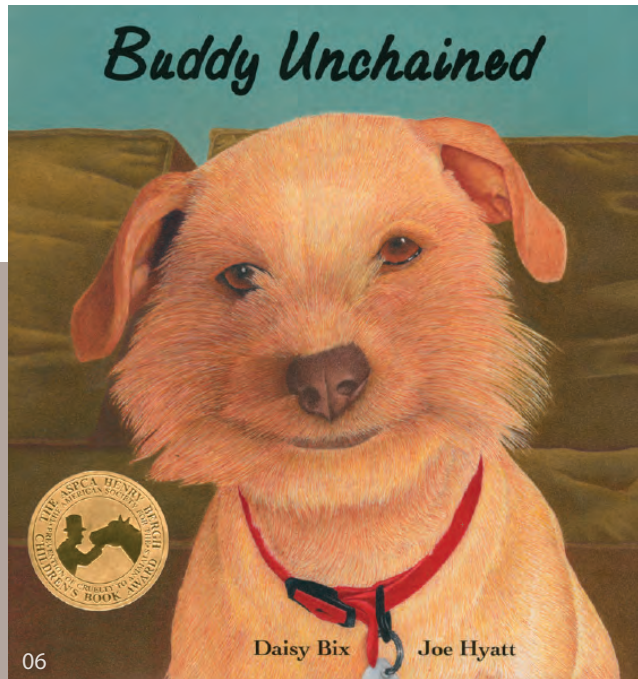
When asked about their greatest accomplishment to date,

Emilie responded, "I would say first of all, continuing to survive as a small press in an industry so heavily tilted at wiping out small presses. Another is to have managed, in a relatively short period of time, to be a major source of books for humane educators, who enjoy using them to teach in shelters and in the classroom."

Dana echoed her sentiment; "I think we would both say staying alive as a very, very, very small press in a very competitive industry that's even more and more geared toward not staying alive for small presses."

Both expressed their hopes for the future of humane education, both here and abroad. Emilie summed it up best, "I guess I'm saying that those who read and endorse your magazine – obviously we're kindred spirits – we choose positive interaction and we have to believe that each in our own way has the power to move the world a little bit closer to the values that we cherish. You know the best thing right now is so many more people feel toward animals the way we do, and toward all sentient beings the way we do, and that in itself is reassuring, especially in these times when there's so much darkness."

To learn more about The Gryphon Press go to:
www.thegryphonpress.com



- 5 Cookie alone under streetlamps
- 6 Buddy Unchained Cover
- 7 Buddy Unchained: Being rescued, sample spread
 a. A person I didn't know came and took off my chain.
 b. He took me away from that place.
- 8 Amana Academy students, Georgia and Always Blue for Chicu
- 9 Gryphon dog Mocha takes a break from editing duties. She's a fan of "Cookie's Fortune."