

• Meet the Author •

Donna W. Earnhardt

Grades
K-2



Donna Earnhardt is a homeschooling mama and Loch Ness Monster fan, and has recently discovered the joy of Nutella on toast. She is married to Sean and they have three daughters, a bloodhound, and a house full of rebellious dust bunnies. Her first book, *Being Frank*, was published in October 2012 with Flashlight Press. She is a little quirky ... and most of her characters are, too.

I read on the jacket flap that *Being Frank* is your first published picture book. What has been the most exciting experience about being published? What has been the most surprising thing? What has been the most satisfying thing?

DWE: The most exciting thing: Knowing that my name is on the spine of a book—and that I didn't scribble it on there with a Sharpie! It is still surreal to me.

The most surprising thing: That people want my autograph. (I have horrible handwriting!) I actually get very nervous when signing, because I am worried about messing up. I have to tell folks that I can't talk when I am signing because I will write whatever I am saying. It has happened more than once!

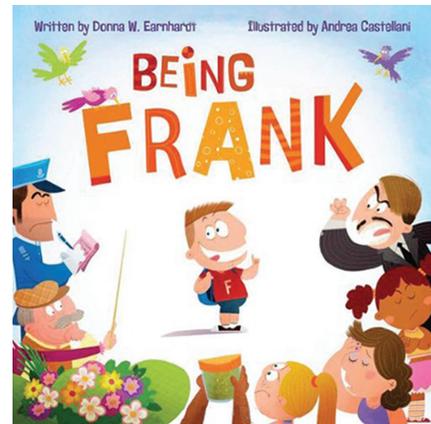
The most satisfying thing: Hearing children read *Being Frank* and watching them enjoy it when others read it to them. THAT is my favorite part of it all.

How long had you been writing before this first picture book sale? Do you have other projects under way? If so, can you tell me about them?

DWE: I have considered myself a writer all my life, but only started writing with the intent of being published in the last ten years or so. I do have other picture books completed and a couple of chapter books ready for submission. I consider *Being Frank* to be a wee bit quirky ... and so are my other books. It's just the way I roll. Hopefully, I'll find a publisher for them soon.

What gave you the idea for *Being Frank*? Is it based on a real-life experience with your children? Your dedication to your "family of Franks" makes me think so!

Interview conducted by Toni Buzzeo, career media specialist and author (visit www.tonibuzzeo.com).



DWE: The title for the book came first, because I was praying and thinking about my father at the same time. His first name was Frank. He passed away ten years ago, so it makes me happy to honor his memory in this way. But yes ... my children (and husband) definitely influenced much of the story, though all of us (the family) can be a little too frank at times. So we are all working on "speaking the truth in love!"

I have read that you are a homeschooling mom. Tell us more about how your work as your children's teacher intersects with your work as a writer. Did one lead to the other? Do they work well together for you?

DWE: My dream of being a published writer developed before my desire to homeschool did, but thankfully both desires/dreams have complemented each other. I love doing both! The more I revise my work, the easier it is to teach my kids how to do the same thing with their

writing projects. And the more I teach, the easier it is to see my children's work (and my own work) through different eyes. I want my children to have confidence when they write. They are learning that rough drafts, revisions, and re-visioning are all parts of the process that help your story come alive and be what it is meant to be—in writing *and* in life.

Which illustrations in the book tickled your fancy the most? In which ones did Andrea Castellani capture a scene or character in just the perfect way?

DWE: OOOH! Andrea is so gifted! The text jumped right off the page when he came on board with the project. My hubby liked *Being Frank*, but he was sort of bored with the text after so many times of listening to it. But then he saw Andrea's first rough sketches of Frank. WOW. At that point, Sean decided it was the best book ever. I owe Andrea a nice chocolate cake!

What are your plans for future books? What would you most like to write about? Will you continue to publish only picture books, or might you try your hand at something longer?

DWE: I hope to have an agent who can help me navigate the world of publishing and find homes for the books I have ready—and the ones still waiting to find their way to paper. I have picture books, chapter books, mid-grades ... and I want to finish a mystery novel (adult) that I started many, many years ago!

How can readers learn more about you and your books?

DWE: They can find *Being Frank* in local independent bookstores, at Barnes and Noble, and on Amazon. They can follow me on Twitter and Facebook, too. I also have a blog, but I don't post there as often as I'd like.

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Donna Welch Earnhardt
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(Blog)

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Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is both an author and a career library media specialist. Her credits include t nineteen picture books, including the 2013 Caldecott Honor-winning One Cool Friend (Dial, 2012), But I Read It on the Internet! (Upstart, 2013), and Just Like My Papa (Hyperion, 2013). She has also authored many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.

