

• Meet the Author •

Rebecca Rule

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

Grades
K-2



Rebecca Rule gathers and tells stories. Her latest book (and her first picture book for children) is *The Iciest, Diciest, Scariest Sled Ride Ever*, illustrated by Jennifer Thermes. Other books include *Moved and Seconded: New Hampshire Town Meeting*; *The Best Revenge* (named one of five essential New Hampshire books by *New Hampshire Magazine*); *Could Have Been Worse: True Stories, Embellishments, and Outright Lies*; *Live Free and Eat Pie: A Storyteller's Guide to New Hampshire*; and *Headin' for the Rhubarb: A New Hampshire Dictionary (Well, Kinda)*.

I see that you've dedicated this book to your mother and your father, who is also called Grampa Bud. Might this book, then, be based on a true family story? Can you tell us more of the background of the story?

RR: The story incorporates two stories. One is my memory of a thick, thick crust in 1962 when I was in second grade. It was slippery! And us kids could slide all over the fields and woods. The other is a story told by my mom and dad about the big old travis sled and their many sliding adventures and mishaps when they were kids.

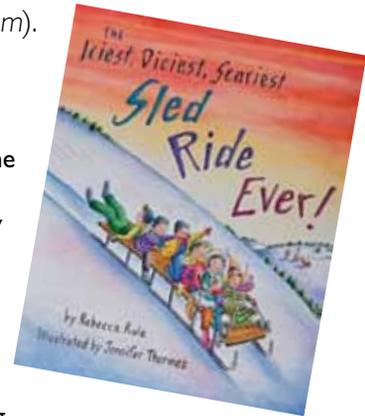
Even when characters are not drawn from real life, they may be based on people the author knows or has known. Can you tell us more about each of the young characters in the book?

RR: I grew up on Corn Hill Road in Boscawen, New Hampshire, with the great gift of lots of kids in the neighborhood. Two of my friends were named Patty. There were lots of big boys in the neighborhood, too, including the Huckins brothers and the Girard boys. My little brother (two years younger) is named Robert. In a story, especially one this short, there's not a lot of room for character development, but I think of Lizzie as adventuresome and

brave; Robert as the littlest of the crew, tagging along; Patty H. (who's more like me) a little bit timid—she wants to go home and have cocoa! Patty P. is up for anything, like Lizzie. The LaPierre boys are willing to do what it takes to get to the top of the hill.

You are well known as a live storyteller. And there is such a delicious storytelling quality to this book! Can you talk about how your storytelling experience influences your writing, especially in this story for children?

RR: Storytelling is my mission and joy. I've been telling for about twenty years and because I've been doing it so long, I get invited to do lots of it—at historical societies, libraries, civic groups, old folks' homes. When you tell a story, you have to get quickly to the heart of it, keep the action going, have a punch at the end. This, I think, is also true of books for children. So there's a lot of overlap. I've been using this story for talks with elders—and it never fails to evoke childhood memories. And, guess what, they like the pictures just as much as the children do. Five-year-olds and eighty-year-olds have a lot in common—mostly they love to be entertained and really appreciate a good yarn.



I see from your author bio on the jacket flap that you have primarily published for adults so far. How did you come to the decision to publish a story in picture book format for children? What were your steps in the process?

RR: As my daughter (a YA writer) points out, I've always written for children. I have a file full of picture book manuscripts. Years ago an agent tried to peddle my work to lots of big publishers with no success (a few close calls but no contract). This story I put on a CD of winter stories that I published myself and sold at gigs. I'd pretty much given up on writing for children. Then, a couple years ago, a teacher from Massachusetts e-mailed that she played my story (called "The Travis" on the CD) for her third graders each year and they loved it. But her CD had broken; would I send her another? I did. And I thought, well, if her kids like the story, it can't be that bad. I rewrote the story, sent it off to Islandport (which had published two of my adult books), and they snapped it up. Hurrah!

Of the many different kinds of publishing you've done in your career, from short stories to nonfiction collections to your blog and now this picture book, which do you prefer to write, and why?

RR: I love all kinds of writing, and each genre has its rewards. I enjoy the discipline of the blog and that it allows me to quickly save the stories I've heard in my travels. I loved writing *Moved and Seconded* about New Hampshire's town meeting (a vanishing tradition) to help preserve this important piece of history. My funny adult books bring me lots of great feedback: "I laughed so hard reading it in bed," a woman said, "my husband made me leave the room." People tell me how the humor got them through rough times, how they give the book to folks who are ailing to cheer them up. One older man said, "I read it. And I'm goin' to read it again." There's little in life more satisfying than giving somebody a good laugh. With the children's book, though, a whole new delightful and very cute audience has opened up.

People send me pictures of their little ones absorbed in the story. When I visit schools and day cares and read the story to the kids, I love how engaged they are. And sometimes, with the kindergarteners, I get spontaneous hugs.

How can readers learn more about you and your other books?

RR: Go to my website, www.rebeccarulenh.com. There are links to my publishers, my blog, and also stories, audio, video, photos, my performance schedule, and other information. You forgot to ask me if I'm going to write another book for children. Yes! And another and another. Pure joy.

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Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is both an author and a career library media specialist. Her credits include, among nineteen picture books, the 2013 Caldecott Honor-winning One Cool Friend, as well as 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.

