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**FROM: CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIVISION, AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

Newbery - Caldecott Winners Announced

Elizabeth George Speare and Barbara Cooney were acclaimed today as winners of this year's Newbery and Caldecott medals for the most distinguished books written for children in 1958. The announcement came from the New York office of Mr. Frederic G. Melcher, donor of the medals, and was made by Mrs. Carolyn W. Field, chairman of the Newbery-Caldecott Committee of the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association, which is responsible for selection of the prize-winning books.

The Newbery Medal, given annually for thirty-seven years to the most distinguished contribution to American literature for boys and girls, was won by Mrs. Speare for The Witch of Blackbird Pond published by Houghton Mifflin Company. The twenty-second Caldecott Medal for the most outstanding American picture book of the year was won by Barbara Cooney for Chanticleer and the Fox published by Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

Because children's and school librarians all over the country participate in the selection, the news is eagerly awaited not only by librarians but by booksellers, book publishers, parents, and all adults interested in children's reading. The medals will be presented to the winners at the Newbery-Caldecott banquet Tuesday, June 23, at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., during the American Library Association Convention.

Mrs. Speare was born and brought up in Melrose, Mass., and received her B.A. and M.A. degrees from Boston University. As a New Englander she has a basic sympathy and understanding for the Puritan character, and her own love for history and biography provided a natural background for her prize-winning book, The Witch of Blackbird Pond. The setting of the story is Wethersfield, Conn., where Mrs. Speare now lives; the time is 1687; and the heroine is Kit, a gay sixteen-year old who comes from the Barbadoes to make her home with relatives in the Puritan community. In that day, because it was generally accepted that one could become a witch by association, Kit's friendship with

old Hannah leads her into serious trouble. When Hannah is accused as a witch and escapes, the wrath of the community falls on Kit. Two witches were actually tried in Wethersfield during Puritan days—one was hanged and the other deported, and it was in the town records that Mrs. Speare found the text of the indictment and the tests she uses in her book. Her first-hand experience with her own teen-age children and the students she had in her English classes has kept her in close touch with young people and helped her achieve the perfect combination of suspense and romance they want in historical novels.

Runners-up for the Newbery award are: Natalie Savage Carlson, The Family Under the Bridge, Harper; Meindert De Jong, Along Came a Dog, Harper; Francis Kalnay, Chucaro, Harcourt; William O. Steele, The Perilous Road, Harcourt.

Barbara Cooney, who won the Caldecott medal, was born in Brooklyn and spent her childhood on Long Island and in Maine. She was educated in the Great Neck Preparatory School, Briarcliff, Smith College, and the Art Students League of New York. After various experiences, including WAAC, farming, and running a children's camp, she is now settled with her four children in Pepperell, Mass., where her husband, Dr. Talbot Porter, is a general practitioner. During the past eleven years she has done illustrations for various magazines and anthologies, and has illustrated thirty-five books. Chanticleer and the Fox is her adaptation of Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale. She studied the treasured illuminated manuscripts at the Cloisters, the Morgan Library, and the New York Public Library for background and atmosphere of the period as well as for the richness of her colors. Her own herb garden provided living copy for the plants she scattered over the pages and a neighbor loaned chickens to model for the main characters. When the book was finished she even modeled its figures in gingerbread for decorations for her children's Christmas tree. She is an artist who works in all media.

Runners-up for the Caldecott medal are: Antonio Frasconi, The House that Jack Built, Harcourt; Maurice Sendak, What Do You Say, Dear? by Sesyle Joslin, Scott; Taro Yashima, Umbrella, Viking.

From: Carolyn W. Field, Chairman, Newbery-Caldecott Committee, Children's Services Division, American Library Association

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