

DAILY LIFE

A SENSE OF PLACE: NEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Check out these other new Minnesota-related children's books:

"Agate" by Joy Morgan Dey, illustrated by Nikki Johnson (Lake Superior Port Cities Inc., \$17.95): Agate, the moose, has low self-esteem. He mopes at the end of a lake, thinking he looks like "a Tinker Toy project gone wrong ... a big, brown mistake." He wants to shine like Garnet the crocodile, stay cool like Amethyst the Elephant and have all the skills and beauty

of the Earth's other animals. But Agate's friends convince him he is a gem — a secret jewel, shining like an agate. The book includes an explanation of how nature makes agates (found around Lake Superior), as well as an explanation of birthstones, on which all the animals in the story are based. Both living in Duluth, Dey designed the classic "Old Turtle," and Johnson is a master painter with the Lake Superior Watercolor Society.

"Andy's Big Day" by Carol Hadrits; illustrated by Shirley Engen (Old Farmhouse Press, \$13.95): Most kids love the State Fair. They can relive their Fair adventures with this story of Andy, an ant who's happily munching a popsicle when he's accidentally trapped in the backpack of a human who's off to the Fair. Andy gets an ant's-eye view of everything from Princess Kay to the biggest pig, and he ends up making his home on the Fairgrounds. Hadrits, who lives in Wood-

bury, says she really did take an ant to the Fair; Engen, who lives in Newport, took lots of photos of Fair events to use as a basis for her friendly illustrations.

"The Dragon Emperor" retold by Wang Ping, illustrated by Tang Ge (Millbrook Press/Lerner Publishing Group, \$25.26): This retelling of an

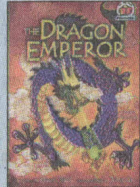
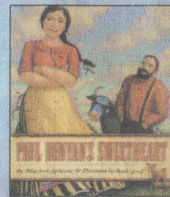
CHILDREN'S BOOKS, 2D

Children's books

(continued)

ancient Chinese folk tale is part of the publisher's On My Own Folklore series. They couldn't have found a better storyteller than Wang Ping, who was born in China and teaches at Macalester College. Her adult fiction and essays have been praised by critics, and she brings a sense of drama to this story of a baby who is both emperor and dragon. This would be a good book for youngsters transitioning from picture books to reading on their own.

"Max Talks to Me" by Claire Buchwald, illustrated by Karen Ritz (The Gryphon Press, \$15.95): Adults will realize this book is about communication between a child and his beloved dog; for children, it's about how great Max is and what this boy must do for his four-legged friend: "I want to make Max happy, too, so I watch him and listen to him, because real friends/listen to each other." This title comes from a new press launched by Emilie Buchwald (Claire's mother) after she retired as publisher of Minneapolis-based Milkweed Editions. Gryphon books



Bloomington, is "the daughter who has always had a shelter dog and has always been a writer." St. Paul artist Karen Ritz, who captures the affection between Max and the boy, has illustrated more than 40 children's books.

"Oma Finds a Miracle" by Patrick "Packy" Mader, illustrated by Andrew Holmquist (Beaver's Pond Press, \$15.95): Oma (German for grandmother), tells her grandchildren about finding and rescuing an all-white newborn calf during a snowstorm when she was younger. Mader is an elementary teacher from Northfield who drew on his experiences to tell this story. Holmquist, whose illustrations are bright and vivid, also grew up in Northfield and is a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Their previous collaboration was "Opa and Oma Together."

"Someday" by Alison McGhee; illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds (Atheneum Books for Young Readers/Simon & Schuster, \$14.99). This heart-touching poem is by a Minnesota author who also writes

child's hair." Elegant in its simplicity of tone, with a minimum of figures in the illustrations, this would make a lovely gift for any mother who likes to read.

"Paul Bunyan's Sweetheart" by Marybeth Lorbiecki, illustrated by Rene Graef (Sleeping Bear Press, \$16.95): Did you know Paul Bunyan married Lucette Kensack on June 9, 1838? Their grand wedding is the culmination of the sweet courtship story Lorbiecki tells in "Paul Bunyan's Sweetheart." Lucette, who is raised by a mama bear after her parents die of smallpox, just grows and grows to the size matching big Paul. When Paul steals her homemade candy, she thumps him on the head, and he falls in love with her. Paul wants her so much even Babe the Blue Ox turns purple with anxiety. There's a lot of text in this fast-paced story, so it's another book that would be a transition between read-aloud and kids who are beginning to read on their own. Lorbiecki, who lives in Hudson, Wis., has written more than

16 at the Red Balloon, 891 Grand Ave., St. Paul.

"Wishing I Was Fishing" by Eva Wells, illustrated by Chandra Dale (Beaver's Pond Press, \$16.95): A little boy anticipates a day of fishing with Dad in this happy story by a Woodbury author. The boy imagines hooking the trailer to the car, sliding the boat into the water, putting a minnow on the hook and catching the season's first fish, which he hopes is really big. Wells says the story came to her when she was fishing on Rainy Lake with her husband and two young sons and recalled the days when she fished with her dad. But the story would work equally well if the adult reader changes the father to grandfather and the boy to a girl. Illustrator Dale grew up in St. Paul and lives in Port St. Lucie, Fla. Her watercolors are filled with details kids will enjoy. Wells will read from "Wishing I Was Fishing" at 11 a.m. June 16 at Borders, 8472 Tamarack Road, Woodbury.

— Mary Ann Grossmann