



No poets, we know it, children's authors maybe

Brooke teaches finer points of children's book writing

In each edition of Take 5, co-publishers Greg Crawford and Todd Elwood will do stuff. Then, in this cleverly named article, they'll share their experience in alternating remarks.

For this "Greg and Todd Do Stuff" article, the pair attended a children's writing workshop led by Brooke Bessesen, author of *Look Who Lives in the Desert!*

Todd: Once upon a time, a pretty maiden named Brooke wrote a funny tale.

Ah, crap. That's no good. See Brooke. See Brooke teach. Teach, Brooke, teach.

That stinks, too. Look at Brooke. Can she cook? Fish with a hook? She wrote a book! Take a look!

OK, apparently I learned nothing from our

children's writing seminar at Scottsdale's Civic Center Library.

Yet I enjoyed every minute of it. Author Brooke Bessesen leads an active workshop that, if nothing else, teaches would-be authors that writing is a skill and the only way to improve is to do it, and do it often.

Greg: Anyone want to hear my short story of a tortoise?

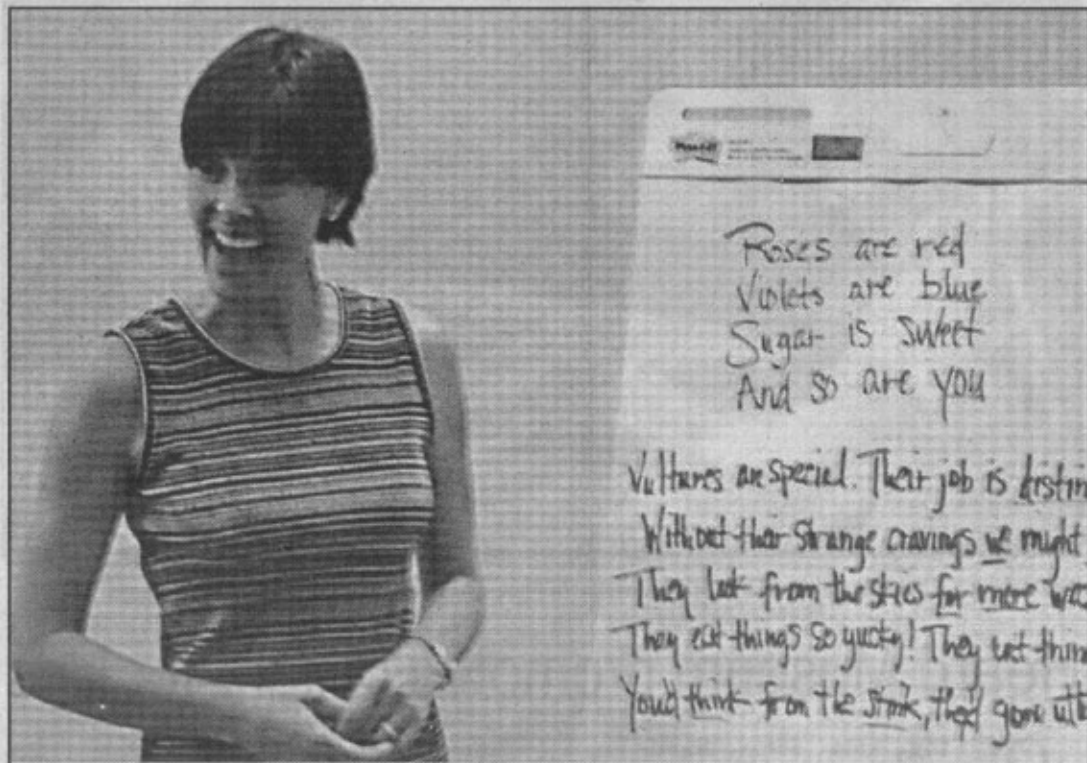
I didn't think so. There's no doubt Brooke enjoys writing. Her energy is incredible and the hour-and-a-half goes by quick.

Even for a guy who's been writing for publications for 11 years, this is something new.

Writing children's books involves fewer, but more carefully chosen words. It is similar in that we're both putting together the pieces of a puzzle. There's rhyming and alliteration.

Yeah, alliteration one of my favorite writing devices.

Todd: "I want to read your terrific tortoise tale, said Todd." Because you know I'm going to share the poem I wrote, called "My Sty."



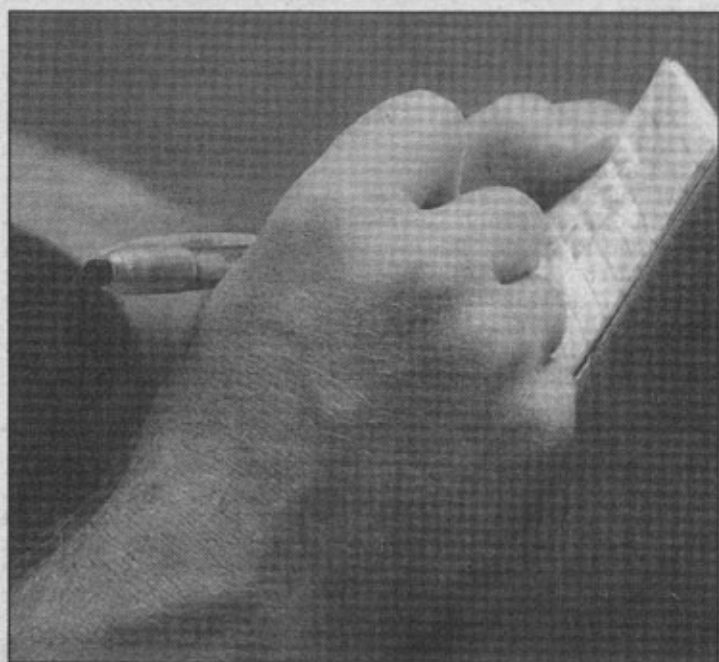
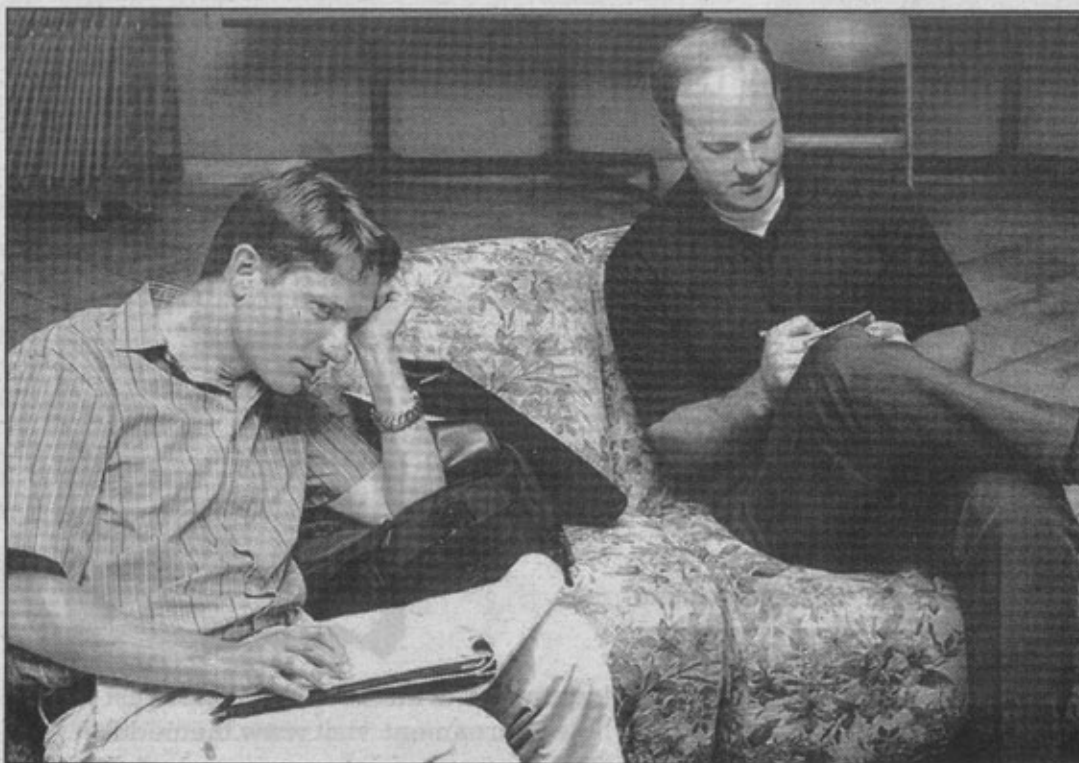
Brooke Bessesen gives insight into the world of writing children's books as part of a Scottsdale Library program.

You'll find our poems on the next page.

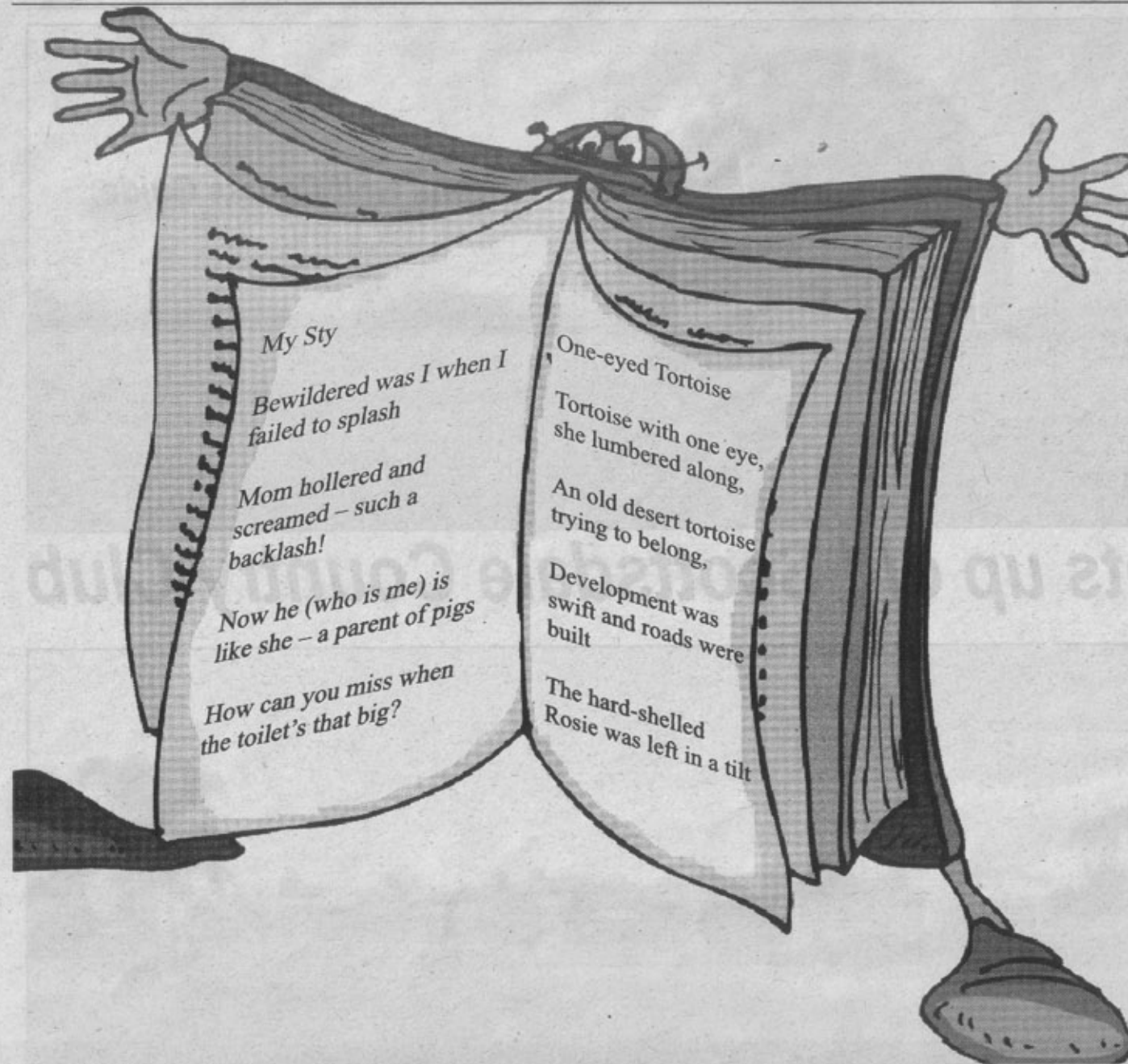
I enjoyed what Brooke said about talent vs. skill. Talent

in writing is the author's willingness to open his or her imagination, she said, while skill is when the author sits for hours upon hours trying to find the exact words that

Please see *Do Stuff* page 7.



(Above) The pen is, well not so mighty this day as Greg Crawford finishes his piece. (At left) Todd Elwood, left, and Greg Crawford work furiously to create the masterpieces printed on page 7.



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will bring the imagination to the page.

Or something like that. **Greg:** Brooke tells us today is about having fun.

"I want you to draw that inner child out," she says.

I quickly look for my crayons and notepad.

Now we write.

Brooke puts parameters on the exercise. Like her, she wants us to write non-fiction on a familiar subject we enjoy.

I write about my childhood tortoise, which really did have one eye.

Todd: Why would you lie about that?

I choose the first thing that comes to mind - potty humor.

The night before, I cleaned my boys' bathroom. Thus the title "My Sty."

You'll see.

In the exercise, Brooke asks us to create a four-line stanza, rhyming lines one with two, and three with four. Also, we were to attempt to include rhymes-within-rhymes and alliteration.

That's a pretty tall order for a couple of journalists who rarely come off sounding like Dr. Seuss. And if we do, it's purely coincidental.

Yet the 20 or so in attendance scribbled and toiled, writing with vigor.

It made me wonder if a future Seuss sat among us.

A mushroom is a fungus. (Once you start rhyming, it kinda' sticks in your head.)

(He said.) **Greg:** I know, I know, this children's writing is hard.

I toil and struggle ... (Ah crap! Where's my rhyming dictionary?)

And let down my guard. (Yes!)

The words flow, line-by-line I've got a stanza and I'm happy.

Because even though I'm not very good at this, my stanza's not too shabby.

I also learned about urohydrois. Some kinds of vultures urinate and poop on their legs to cool down.

And to think all we did to cool down was step into the library for a fun mid-day seminar. Thanks Brooke.

Look Who Lives in the Desert! is available at most major bookstores as well as *Gridleys of Fountain Hills*.

Bessesen is also available to do school programs on writing and desert wildlife. Contact her at (480) 860-0700 or e-mail brooke.school@cox.net.

Brooke Bessesen signs copies of her book *Look Who Live in the Desert* for fans Barb Nelson, right, and Mary Southworth, center.

