Meet the Author

Diane Gonzales Bertrand



Diane Gonzales Bertrand was born smack dab in the middle of seven children. As a child Diane and her family explored much of the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico together. The only thing more important for Diane's family than their sense of unity and adventure was a good education. They were educated in Catholic schools through their childhood, and all seven have graduated from four-year colleges.

This has served Diane well. Diane earned her B.A. in English and History from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 1978. Fourteen years later she earned a Masters in Communication Arts from Our Lady of the Lake University. She is currently Writer-in-Residence at St. Mary's University where she teaches English Composition and Creative Writing. Diane is an award-winning and highly prolific children's author.

Though her children have outgrown bedtime stories Diane still writes for and about them. Some of Diane's picture books include *Family / Familia* and *Uncle Chente's Picnic*, both of which have won best bilingual book awards from the National Latino Literary Hall of Fame.

When Diane is not busy teaching, writing, or parenting she likes to take some time for herself and curl up with a good book. You can often find her with a childhood favorite such as Dr. Seuss. Diane also enjoys the grace and physical nature of dance, and the almost meditative nature of sewing. Even in her downtime Diane exhibits the highly creative and spirited personality that makes her so effective in her roles as mother, wife, sister, teacher, and friend.

Contact Diane Gonzales Bertrand through the publisher at raven@raventreepress.com.



My Pal, Victor written by Diane Gonzales Bertrand / illustrated by Robert L. Sweetland
Mi amigo, Víctor escrito por Diane Gonzales Bertrand / ilustrado por Robert L. Sweetland
Published by Raven Tree Press, ©2004, ISBN 0-9720192-9-4
Hardcover / Jacketed / Full Text English/Spanish / 32 Pages / $16.95 Retail
200 S. Washington St., Suite 306 Green Bay, WI 54301
Phone: 920-438-1605 Fax: 920-438-1607 www.raventreepress.com raven@raventreepress.com

Questions for the Author

Diane Gonzales Bertrand



1. Who or what inspires you to write?
Diane is very family oriented. As such, her family is a huge source of inspiration. From their jokes to their special little idiosyncrasies, Diane has a wealth of material to draw from. In addition to her husband, her children, and her six siblings, Diane is continually inspired by the children she meets on her school visits.

2. What is your favorite writing environment? Describe your workspace.
Coming home from a meeting with her writer's group, Diane begins her writing process in a black marble composition book. Later, she sits at her home computer just a few yards from her husband's office space and diligently writes her second, third, and fourth drafts.

3. Are there any special supplies you use for writing?
Writing requires imagination, a pencil, and some paper. Diane has been known to write a story on napkins, on the back of her checkbook, and in the margins of newspapers.

4. Describe your creative process? What is a 'must have' when you are in the creative process?
There is no routine when you are a busy mom, teacher, wife, daughter, sister, and best friend. Filling all these roles, Diane writes whenever she can steal the time. From scratching a story idea about pineapples and penguins on the back of a receipt to jotting down a bedtime story after the rest of the house is asleep, Diane's process is, in turn, as varied as the opportunities that present themselves.

5. Who are your favorite authors? What influence have they had on your work?
Diane enjoys the classic literature from her own childhood. Her all-time favorite author is Dr. Seuss because he has inspired her to play with language.

6. What specific message do you want people to get from this book and why? What experiences have you had that directly reinforce your book's message?
My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor is a story about acceptance. This is not because one boy is in a wheelchair, but because children, like the narrator, have a lot of flaws we can all relate to.



Questions for the Author (continued)

Diane Gonzales Bertrand



7. Do you have any interesting hobbies that others may be interested in?
Diane is not only a children's author, but a poet as well. In stitching her words and two-stepping with story and verse Diane also likes to dance and sew.

8. How long have you been at work on this book? Why did you write it? Where did your ideas come from?
It only took Diane three months to write *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor*, but it took her three years to find a publisher. She wrote *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor* after speaking on a panel with children's author Kathleen Muldoon, whom the book is dedicated to, and after reflecting on the children she has had the pleasure of working with throughout her career.

9. Did the book involve special research? Please include.
Diane has a wealth of experience working with children. Well aware of the great openness of their hearts and their unswerving desire to play and dream, the only research that was required in writing *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor* was a little bit of memory. After completing the manuscript Diance took it to a fellow author, who happens to walk with two metal crutches and write children's stories that often deal with disabled characters, to ensure that the story sounded authentic.

10. Detail any fun things that have happened/or are happening because of the publication of this book.
My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor won the Schneider Family Book Award from the American Library Association in 2005. Diane is thrilled to be able to advocate the acceptance and celebration of diversity in her book, *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor*.



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Meet the Illustrator

Robert Sweetland



Robert (Bob) Sweetland was schooled at the American Academy of Art in Chicago where he studied a variety of mediums. He continues to utilize various mediums depending on the look he is going for in a particular piece. He might choose watercolor or pastels. Then again, he might go for pen and ink or colored pencils for another project. He believes in marrying the medium to the subject matter.

Bob owned an advertising company for many years and a fine arts school for twelve years, where he taught people of all ages and, once again, in all mediums.

Bob has collaborated on several of his wife's picture books including two for Raven Tree Press, *If I Could / Si yo pudiera*, 2002 and *Yelly Kelly / Kelly, el gritón*, 2004. He was chosen to illustrate *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor* due to his ability to create the old-fashioned, fun loving type of illustrations that would bring Victor and his friend Dominic's carefree world to life. He has also done portraits for the National Football League that utilized his creative use of charcoal pencil. Watercolor landscapes and gorgeous fantasy portraits showcase Bob's talents.

Bob and his author wife, Nancy Rose Sweetland, have 12 children between them and 30 grandchildren. In their free time, Bob and Nancy love to travel all around the country visiting each and every one. Bob and Nancy are also both golf 'nuts' and play as much as they can. Bob has annual golf outings with various groups of friends to courses across the country. He has also been known to take his clubs along when traveling abroad. He belongs to golf clubs in the Green Bay, Wisconsin area and can be seen in between on the little course just outside his back door.

His children and grandchildren often serve as models and inspiration for his artistic endeavors, either in fond memory or in the photographic archives that Bob keeps in his at-home artist's studio. His corkboard is often full of little smiling faces in a variety of posing postures, all happy to 'sit' for Grandpa.

Contact Robert Sweetland through the publisher at raven@raventreepress.com.



If I Could written by Nancy Rose Sweetland / illustrated by Robert Sweetland
©2002, ISBN 0-9701107-7-4

Yelly Kelly written by Nancy Rose Sweetland / illustrated by Robert Sweetland
©2004, ISBN 0-9720192-0-0

My Pal, Victor written by Diane Gonzales Bertrand / illustrated by Robert Sweetland
©2004, ISBN 0-9720192-9-4

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Questions for the Illustrator

Robert Sweetland



1. Who or what inspires you to write?
The most inspiring thing Bob likes to find is a text that leaves a lot of room for imaginative art. One idea becomes a springboard for other ideas.

2. What is your favorite writing environment? Describe your workspace.
Bob's at-home art studio is full of light from the big windows. Although it's a small space, he loves it because everything he needs he can reach without getting up. Many narrow drawers in which to store illustrations, either in process or completed art, fill one wall of the room so they are safe from wrinkling and exposure to the elements.

3. Are there any special supplies you use for writing?
Bob works in so many mediums that he has a little of everything in his studio. Always on hand—various drawing pencils, colored pencils, pastels, watercolors, pen and ink supplies, and a variety of paper on which to draw, what he calls the 'usual art stuff.'

4. Describe your creative process? What is a 'must have' when you are in the creative process?
Bob researches a subject thoroughly so as to become familiar with his topic. In the case of *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor*, a visit to a local home health care center was needed to see what type of wheelchair Victor would be seated in for the final illustration. His fanciful imagination is key to his process as evidenced in his children's book illustrations. He says that it helps to have Judge Judy on TV when he's drawing.

5. Who are your favorite illustrators? What influence have they had on your work?
Bob appreciates realistic art more so than the abstract. Maurice Sendak is an illustrator that is top of mind when Bob's favorites are discussed.

6. What specific message do you want people to get from this book and why? What experiences have you had that directly reinforce your book's message.
It's always nice if kids take away a lesson as well as enjoy the story and the illustrations. Bob feels it's certainly something to strive for in children's books. A positive message like the one in *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor* gives an illustrator added incentive to make the pictures reflect the message the best they can. Bob credits Nancy's son Stewart for directly influencing *Yelly Kelly / Kelly, el gritón*.



Questions for the Illustrator (continued)

Robert Sweetland



7. Do you have any interesting hobbies that others may be interested in?
Bob loves to golf, golf, and then golf some more. Many days are filled with this relaxing activity and he plans many of his and Nancy's vacations around this, his favorite pastime. He also likes to sail remote control boats.

8. How long have you been at work on this book? Why did you illustrate it? Where did your ideas come from?
Yelly Kelly was originally published in 1970 as an English-only edition. When Raven Tree wanted to reissue it, Bob updated the characters' look a little (gone are Mom's June Cleaver pearls and Dad's original crewcut) and reformatted for the correct page count.

The story of *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor* was compelling to Bob in that he saw an opportunity to let his own imagination soar through the playful imaginativeness of Victor's character. Both books took approximately a year each to complete with final revisions.

9. Did the book involve special research? Please include.
Bob researched the various types of wheelchairs on the market before he drew Victor's and much discussion was had deciding the types of clothing and various expressions for each character in *Yelly Kelly / Kelly, el gritón*.

10. Detail any fun things that have happened/or are happening because of the publication of this book.
Bob's art is receiving a lot of attention. Many kids tell Bob that they love to draw too. By his example and obvious love of the art itself, he hopes he inspires them to keep drawing.

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Si yo pudiera escrito por Nancy Rose Sweetland / ilustrado por Robert Sweetland
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Yelly Kelly written by Nancy Rose Sweetland / illustrated by Robert Sweetland
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About the Book

My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor



Why do we choose the friends we do? What makes the bond of friendship so special? What chance does disability stand in the face of the enabling power of this transforming relationship? One child, Dominic, answers these questions in the stirring celebration of his best bud, Victor, in *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor*.

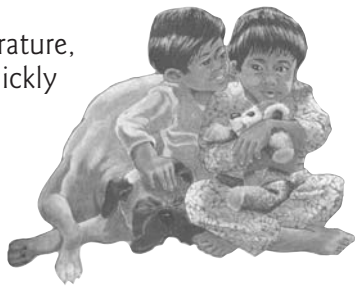
Roping and riding cloud dragons, diving for pennies at the bottom of the pool, or conquering the "dizziest, fastest, zoomiest rides he can find", Dominic and Victor demonstrate how the bond of friendship transcends one boy's disability. Apart, Dominic and Victor are two very special boys, together, they are unstoppable. *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor*, by author Diane Gonzales Bertrand and illustrator Robert L. Sweetland, is a cheering exploration of the depth of the human heart and two boys unwillingness to let something as small as a wheelchair stand between the grand times that comprise their childhood.

My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor is written in the fun and accessible language of a young boy. Drawn with colored pencils on soft tissue paper, Robert Sweetland's illustrations are done in a traditional style that mirrors the effortless and carefree friendship that Dominic and Victor possess. Like the boys' relationship, the strengths of the story and the illustrations truly compliment one another.

My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor is the 2005 winner of The Schneider Family Book Award for best picture book for young children. The award honors an author and illustrator for a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences.

This story is presented as a full text translation. In a full text translation the story text is included fully in both English and in Spanish. In general, both texts are supplied on the page with an icon separating the two. Different ink colors for each text further distinguish the English from the Spanish. The book ends with a keyword vocabulary page for learning both languages.

My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor helps children gain an appreciation of literature, another culture/language, and the power of friendship. It is guaranteed to quickly become one of your children's favorite stories. Pick up your copy of *My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor* today.



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Rave Reviews

My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor



"...Dominic's friend, Victor, may not walk, but he's far from disabled. He is not only a source of support, but a limit-pushing, life-expanding influence..." **—School Library Journal**

"The virtue of acceptance is portrayed between the friendship two best friends share unconditionally." **—Hispanic Magazine**

"... flows agreeably in both languages... Sweetland is a master of shading and using light to create depth in his illustrations...a family-oriented book perfect for children aged five to eight. It is a simple story, told in simple words, weaving a tale of the value of a good friendship, in any language, in any culture, and with any physical ability." **—ForeWord Magazine**

"Tender and quite wonderful!...stand[s] head and shoulders above the crowd. Truly an enchanting story...Teachers will love this book as an instrumental teaching tool." **—Betsie's Literary Page**

"...social awareness through a story about friendship. It reminds the reader that it is what's inside that matters... The vivid illustrations capture the children's innocence..." **—Hispanic Link Weekly Report**

"...celebrates close friends and all the things these two boys do together while accepting each other's differences totally...an excellent language practice book..." **—Heartland Review**

"...This book adds a different spin on the subject that should be helpful in promoting discussion and learning." **—Karen C. Wentworth, The Spina Bifida Association**

- Winner American Library Association's Schneider Family Book Award
- New York Reading Association's Suggested Reading List
- Featured on Univision's Despierta America September 3, 2004
- Featured on "Writing Across Texas" Television show hosted by Sara Puig Laas



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Tip Sheet for

My Pal, Victor/ Mi amigo, Víctor

My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor
Written by Diane Gonzales Bertrand Illustrated by Robert Sweetland
32 pg. / Hardcover / Jacketed / 1st Edition / Trade Cloth
Children's Bilingual (English/Spanish full text translations in both languages)
ISBN 0-9720192-9-4 Reading Level—2.4
Publication Date–June 2004 9 x 11
Retail Price $16.95 USD Ages 4-8 Accelerated Reader® Quiz #80436

Description: Victor tells heart-booming ghost stories, claps the loudest at Dominic's baseball games, and performs a fabulous floating frog stroke. Two Latino boys experience carefree camaraderie despite one boy's disability. Fun and friendship overpower physical limitations.

Selling Points:
- WINNER—ALA's Schneider Family Book Award
- New York Reading Association's Suggested Reading List
- Fun story with surprise ending / New slant on disability issues
- Featured on "Writing Across Texas" (TV show hosted by Sara Puig Laas)

Selling Sentence: Two young boys experience carefree friendship despite one boy's disability.

Author Bio: Diane Gonzales Bertrand is Writer-in-Residence at St. Mary's University and lives with her family in San Antonio, Texas. Several of her books have won best bilingual book awards from the National Latino Literary Hall of Fame.

Illustrator Bio: Bob Sweetland was chosen to illustrate My Pal, Victor / Mi amigo, Víctor. due to his ability to create the old-fashioned, fun loving type of illustrations that would bring Victor and his friend Dominic's carefree world to life.

Advertising & Promotion Plans:
- Direct marketing to booksellers, schools and libraries
- Electronic advertising to e-lists
- Introduction at local, national and international trade shows including BEA and ALA
- Catalog and galley mailings to all major book reviewers

Pre-Publication Comments and Special Sales:
- National reviews and awards

Subrights: All subrights currently available

Market Niche: Disability organizations



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