

Autobiography Excerpt A



When I turned nine, I started writing stories and drawing pictures to go with them. That's when I first knew I wanted to be a writer.



Autobiography Excerpt B

To support myself at that time
I had a lot of part-time jobs.
I was the worst receptionist, secretary,
and waitress. In between, though, I managed
to write and illustrate eight books.

VIOLET, POPPY AND BABS
by
Laura Numeroff

Violet, Poppy and Babs were sisters.

Violet was a cook at Hank's House of Pies, Poppy a math teacher and Babs worked in a book store.

They lived in Florida in a little yellow house with a very large porch and a roof that leaked when it rained.

Violet was the eldest. She couldn't see very well, but she loved to bake.

She had lots and lots of recipes written on ~~index cards~~ and tiny scraps of paper that she stuffed into a wicker picnic basket ~~that~~ her Aunt Agnes gave her.

Violet had recipes for all kinds of goodies... ~~coconut~~ ^{butterscotch} cookies with raisins and nuts, ~~butterscotch brownies with peanut butter frosting~~, lemon bars with walnut pieces and her favorite, angel food cake with dark chocolate frosting and sprinkles.

"Boy, do I love to bake" she would say, mixing and stirring in the sunny kitchen.

The only problem was she couldn't read the dial on the oven, so the house was always filled with smoke.

Poppy and Babs ate Violet's cookies and cake anyway.

"Yummy" Poppy would say, wrapping the burnt parts in her napkin when Violet wasn't looking.

"Scrumptious" said Babs, pecking gently past the burnt edges.

It made Violet happy to ^(know) ~~see~~ her sisters enjoy ^{ed} her baking.

Poppy was the middle sister. She loved to knit.

She knit vests with eleven pockets, twenty two foot scarves and striped turtle neck sweaters ~~with fringe~~.

"Boy, do I love to knit" she would say, sitting on the sofa, surrounded by shopping bags full of yarn in all different colors.

She gave everything she made to Violet and Babs, except at Christmas when she knit gifts for the neighbors.

It made Poppy happy to ^{know} ~~see~~ her sisters enjoy ^{ed} her knitting.

Autobiography Excerpt C

Then, on a long, boring car trip,
I got a little silly.

“What if you went to the zoo,”
I said to my friend, “and the gorilla was eating pizza?”
He laughed.

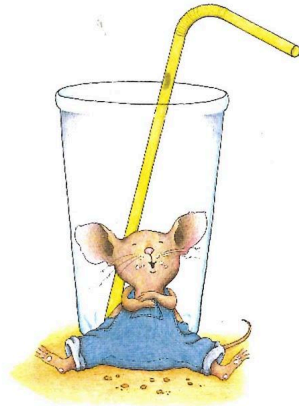
Then I said, “What if you gave a mouse a cookie?”
In my imagination I pictured a tiny mouse
nibbling on a chocolate chip cookie
(my favorite kind of cookie).

“He’d probably want some milk
to go with it,” I told my friend.

I ended up telling the whole story
from beginning to end. It’s the first time
that ever happened and it hasn’t happened since.

When I got home, I typed *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*
on my little portable typewriter that had no “W.”
I sent my story to Harper & Row because they had published
my favorite book about a mouse, *Stuart Little*.
I loved that story because it was set in New York
where I grew up.

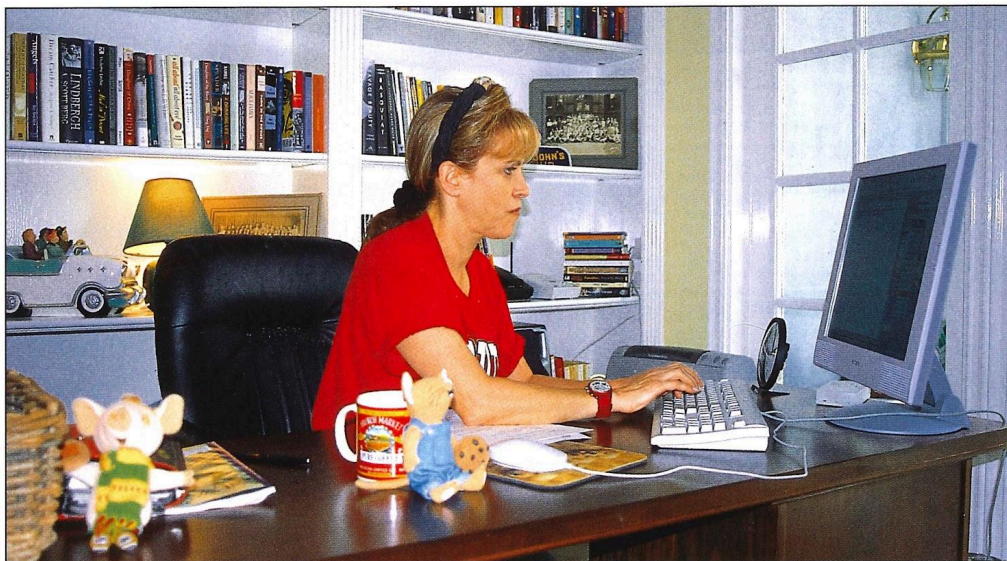
Harper & Row rejected my story.
So I sent it out again and again.
It was turned down eight more times.



Autobiography Excerpt D

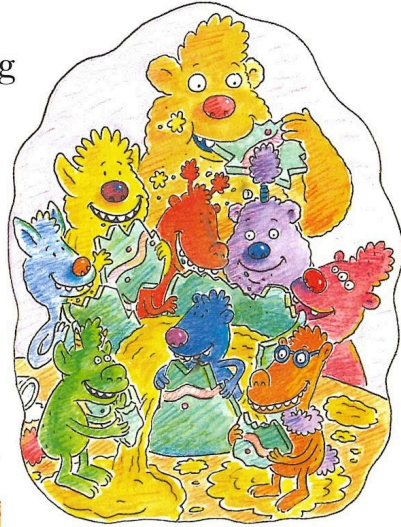
I get ideas for books in many ways.
One day, I saw a Dalmatian dog and thought
it would look cute wearing red high-top sneakers.
My imagination took off and I started rhyming
in my head.

“Dogs don’t wear sneakers
and pigs don’t wear hats
and dresses look silly on Siamese cats.”



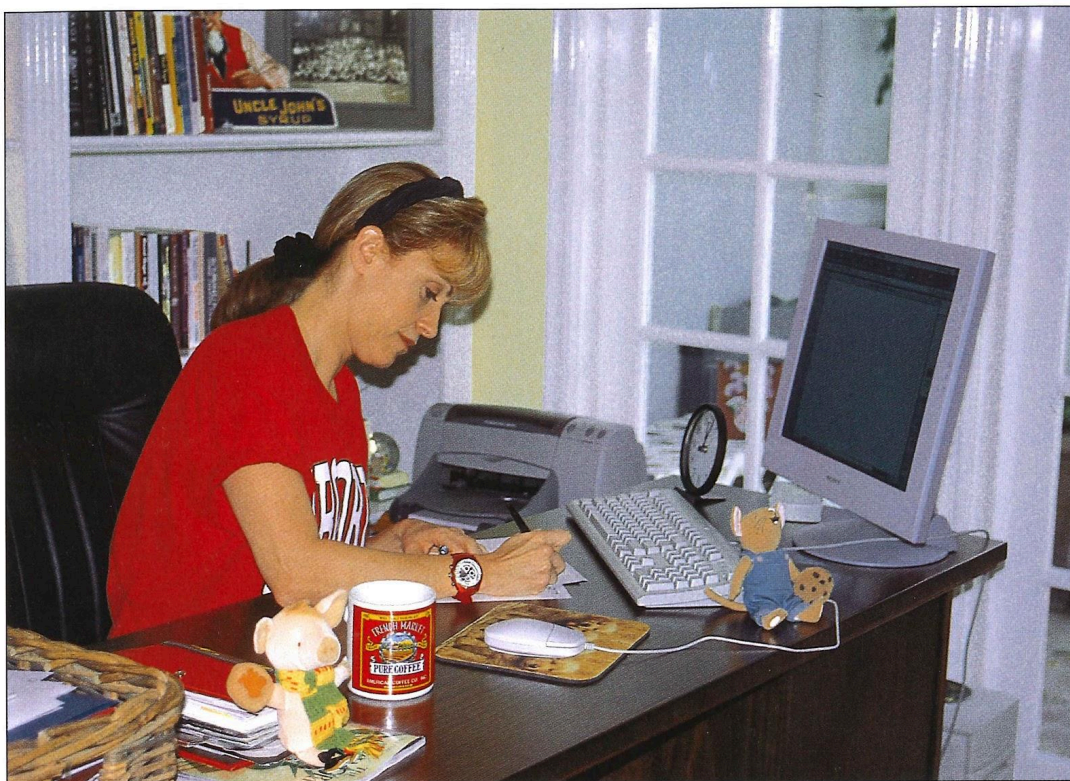
As soon as I got home, I sat down
at my computer and continued
making up the verses. It was so much fun
trying to imagine animals doing silly things
and wearing funny clothes!

Sometimes I wake up with an idea
in the middle of the night. *Monster Munchies*
came to me like that. I wonder if I was dreaming
about monsters. I hope not!



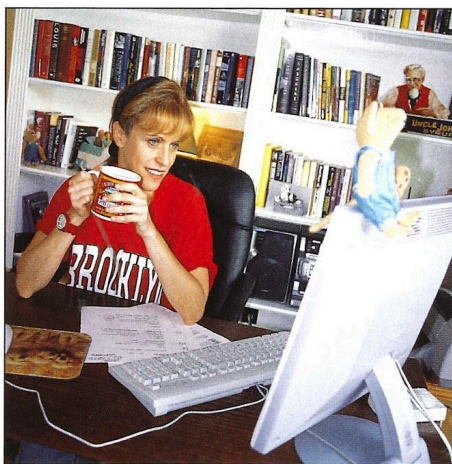
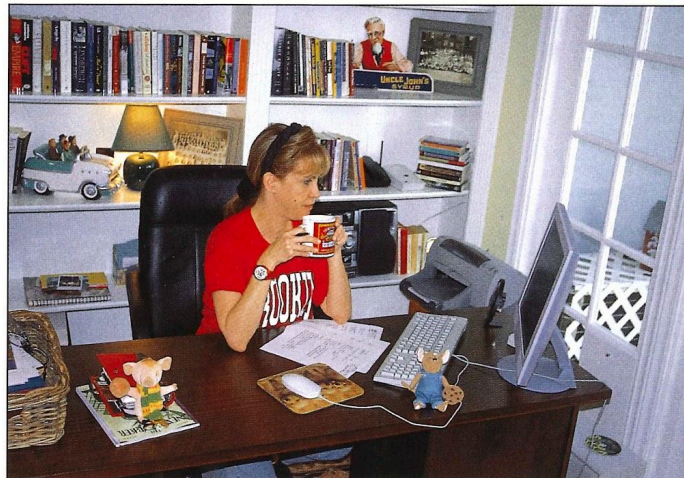
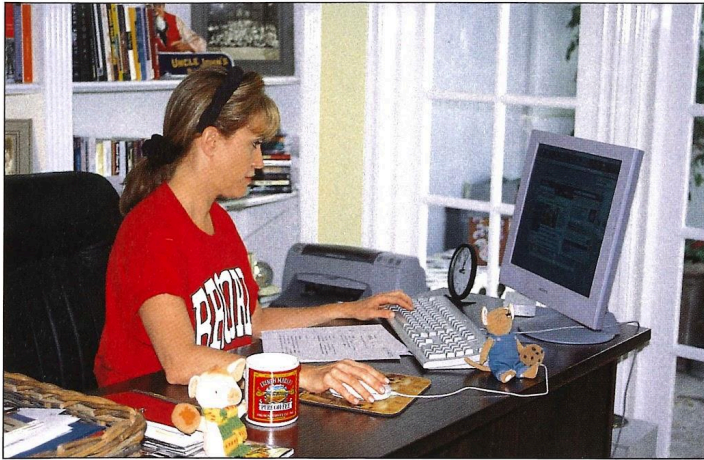
Other times I hear things that give me ideas.
I heard a mother talking about all the things
she does with her kids. That gave me the idea to write
What Mommies Do Best and *What Daddies Do Best*.

When I get an idea I immediately write it down.
It may be on the back of a napkin or on a scrap of paper.
I keep a pad in the car and in my bag beside me
all the time.

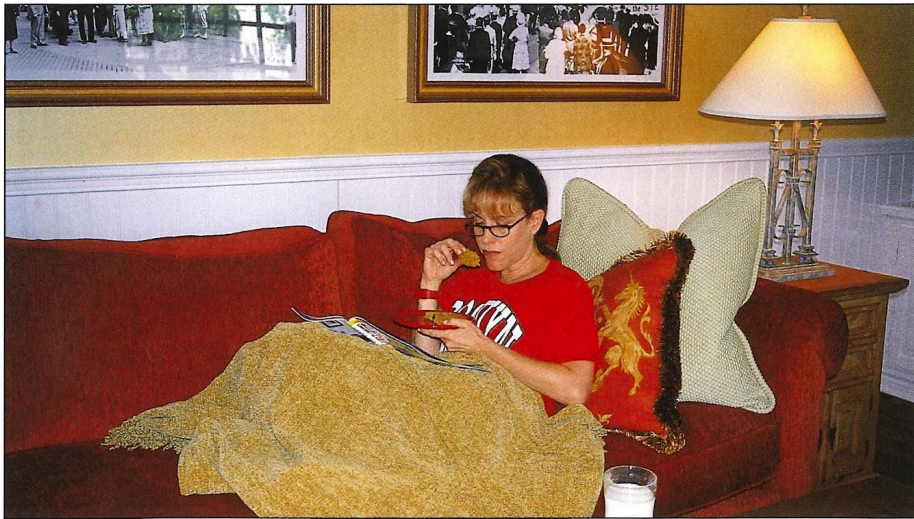


When I've completed a first draft,
I don't look at it for a few days.
When I go back to it, I read it out loud
and change the things I don't like.

Autobiography Excerpt G



I do that until I'm satisfied.
Then I type it up and send it
to an editor.



Some days I don't write at all and other days
I write for hours and hours, sometimes past midnight.

Autobiography Excerpt H

“Music for Fun and Profit” Stanza 1

Gary Soto

I love music.
I made a drum
Out of an oatmeal box
And a harmonica
Out of my comb and wax paper.
I made a flute
From a straw,
A triangle from a coat hanger,
And with rubber bands
Between my thumb
And a finger,
I twanged out
“Michael Row the Boat Ashore”
To my cousin Enrique,
Cholito behind
The bars of his crib.
With pencils,
I clapped out
“Las Mañanitas”
On pie tins
And shook maracas
Of soup cans
And a handful of BBs.

Autobiography Excerpt I

“Music for Fun and Profit” Stanza 2

Gary Soto

With my fingers
In my mouth
I whistled
“Ol’ Man River”
As I walked
To school,
Kicking through leaves
And the applause
Of cat-and-dog rain.
I made a guitar
From a shoebox
And fish line,
And strummed
“Louie Louie”
To my low-riding cat
Chato as he slunk
About the yard,
A blue bandana
Around his neck.
I sang along
To the radio,
Slapping a beat
From my thighs.
I whistled
Through my nose
And popped a bass
From my puffed-up cheek.

Autobiography Excerpt J

“Music for Fun and Profit” Stanza 3

Gary Soto

Yes, I love music,
But I upset my *papi*
When I did a drumroll
With my spoon
And fork
As the food arrived
At the kitchen table.
I *really* upset my parents
When I spent two dollars
And a bubble gum wrapper
For a kazoo,
A flute That sounds like a duck.

Autobiography Excerpt K

“Music for Fun and Profit” Stanza 4

Gary Soto

Music is fun,
And it's also for profit.
Every time I bring out
My shoe-box guitar,
My oatmeal drum,
My harmonica comb
With its skirt
Of wax paper,
Or especially my kazoo,
Papi shakes his head
And growls. He rattles
His newspaper and yells
¡Por favor, cállate!
He punches his fist
Into his pocket
And brings out
A quarter or a dime,
And I run away with the music
Of money jingling
In my pocket.
Fun and profit!
Already I'm the lead singer
Of my own band.