



6-yr-old Author Finnoula Louise

Finnoula Louise (age 6) steps onto the book scene taking her place among a select group of child author/illustrators published before age 18. Finnoula's love of story telling, clever imagination, and fondness for books are qualities of most authors, but it's her ability to focus on a task for long periods that is the secret ingredient to being a child author and illustrator. Miss Louise is just learning to read and write in Kindergarten, so her first title is a picture book with minimal, but poignant, text. "Aminals" Animals, is now available in local New Jersey bookshops and online. In this first-words book, children read animal names, the sounds they make, and fun facts, as they search for hidden animal photos. Finnoula is a recently diagnosed celiac, so this fall she takes a light-hearted look at holidays, cooking, and gluten-free recipes with *Cookies Cookies: A Year of Holiday Treats*. In her spare time, Finnoula enjoys piano, karate, swimming, acting, and all manner of creative endeavors.

Finnoula's first published book, "Aminals" Animals, is now available in New Jersey bookstores and online at major booksellers, including Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com.

Children up to age 6 will delight as they "roar, prooot and screek" along with 12 friendly, silly animals, while exploring a whimsical world of animals as seen through the eyes of a child. In this first-words book, children can read each animal name as they search for hidden pictures and read fun facts along the way.

Children up to age 7 will enjoy Finnoula's stylized illustrations of holiday-related shapes, as well as photographs of her culinary creations—cookies of the same shapes. Uniquely sweet sentiments surprise us each month as we read how holiday shapes and cookies are connected to life, love, and family. Finnoula Louise is a celiac and cannot eat wheat or foods containing gluten. Thus, the cookies in this book are gluten free. *Cookies Cookies* is complete with recipes and cooking tips. While appropriate for all children, this title will be of special interest to those with celiac disease or other gluten-related sensitivities.

During the making of *Cookies Cookies*, Finnoula not only wrote and illustrated, but also made all of the cookies featured in the book. Here she is shown measuring ingredients while she explains the process



A Conversation with - Finnoula Louise (and her Mom)

What do you want to be when you grow up?

I would like to be a detective, because I like to spy on people to see what they are doing. I'm good at it. I'll be able to tell my boss (the person who hires me) when someone is doing something they shouldn't be doing.

[Mom's Comment: Apparently, this knack for spying is a source of her creative ideas. Now that I know about it, I'll have to be more careful. Lest she "spy" on me and report it back the boss.]

Where do your book ideas come from?

What inspires your ideas?

Well, I got tracers [stencils] one Christmas and I started making a book out of them. That's how I got my idea for the animal book. One day we were eating cookies and I said I wanted to do a book about them. Because I'm gluten free, I wanted it to be about that. I don't know what's next, maybe something about balloons. Delia's face makes me think of things, so I could just look at her.

[Mom's Comment: Finn has been making books since she could hold a crayon and wield a stapler (age 3). At age 5, she asked if one of her books could be in the library so her friends could read it. Me being a publisher answered, "I don't see why not?"]

Do you have any other creative ambitions or dreams that you hope to reach?

I would like to build houses...be a house builder. Because I want to help make sure people have places to live. I'll put an ad in the paper for a crew to come and work with me.

[Mom's Comment: News to me.]

Are you ever afraid you will run out of inspiration and creativity [in your job]? Why or why not?

Not worried about it at all. If I am done writing books, I will start the house building.

[Mom's Comment: That's my girl!]

What is the most difficult thing about book writing?

My mom usually helps with my writing so when she is not there that is when I have trouble. Mom tells me how to spell the words. I don't need her to draw from me.

[Mom's Comment: During the development of her books, Finn is the boss. She tells her editor, designer, and publisher what she wants. They advise her as per usual such relationships. She recently had a little taste of the author-editor give-and-take experience. At a book reading, Finn turned to me and said frowning, "Mom, there is a mistake in here. I guess it's too late to fix it though." She was referring to a change the editor had suggested that we must have forgotten to run by Finn. We thought it was a minor change to make something more grammatically correct. I guess we were wrong about it being minor. Finnoula continued, ignoring the printed page by reading aloud what she had originally intended. All the while, her captivated young audience listened unaware of the alteration. Call it creative license.]

What is the most fun part about book writing?

I get to be famous! Soon you [I] can get lots of money and will be rich. When I travel to book signings, if there are little kids like me there, I make new friends when I meet people. At book signings, I get to sign my name with sharpies, and it's fun 'cause it's my name and I know it really good. [and when making books] I get to draw pictures and color them. I liked helping make the Little Valley Books logo, too. For the next one, we made cookies and a movie, and that was really fun.

[Mom's Comment: Finn has just finished kindergarten, so the world of reading and writing on her own is just opening up to her.

It's interesting to witness the changes in how she views her books and writings now that she can actually decode the written word.]

Which elements of your creativity can you attribute to your family?

Well, I get a lot of it from my brain, and my sister makes me think of stories just by looking at her.

[Mom's Comment: Cordelia (Delia) is Finn's two-year-old younger sister.]

Who is your favorite author(s)?

Mo Smells Christmas is my favorite book, so whoever wrote that book is my favorite. [Margaret Hyde; A Scentsational Journey (Mo's Nose) series] [Some other favorite books are pulled off the shelf as we talk.] This used to be my favorite, but now it's Delia's. [Hungry Caterpillar by Erik Carle] Me and Delia laugh so hard when we do the moves like the dogs in this book [Doggie Do! by Dar Hosta]. I've read a lot of these books. I love fairies. [Rainbow Magic Fairies series by Daisy Meadows] Oh, how about the author I met and she signed a copy of her book Where Did Mommy's Superpowers Go? [Jenifer Gershman] Her son really likes my book, which is cool. And the one who gave me a signed copy of her book Red Penguin and the Missing Sushi [Eileen Wacker; Fujimini Adventure Series]. Oh, and the nice lady who gave me a stuffed bee when I fell, and she signed a copy of her book Ruby Lee the Bumble Bee. [Dawn Matheson; A Bee's Bit Of Wisdom series]

[Mom's Comment: While at BEA 2011, we were in the Mom's Choice Awards booth and Finn fell. Dawn offered her a prize from

the raffle box to dry her tears. Unknowingly, Finn chose Dawn's Ruby Lee Bee and Dawn exclaimed, "of all the things here, you just picked out my bee!" I think Finn must have sixth sense about people. The Ruby Lee Bee now accompanies us on book signings where it is placed on the table along with Finnoula's other animal mascots.]

Do you like art?

Yes, I like art. I like pottery. I get to use my hands and it's fun 'cause I get to design and paint it however I want.

[Mom's Comment: We have three large bins full of "art." I'm not allowed to throw any of it out.]

Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview? What tips would you give to other kids who want to be authors?

Well, a tip I would give is to make sure you are with a grownup who can help you write the words! Mom does that for me. Dad's can help if they are home. He [my dad] helped me a little bit.

[Mom's Comment: Dad's helping is limited because he paraphrases rather than transcribes. Finn asks for us to read it back to "check" our work.]

I'm told that you've considered being an actress as a career. Is this true?

Well, I already am one because I was in "Pirates of Penzance" and "Midsummer Nights Dream." I would like to be in a video on the Internet and I want to be on TV someday. I could be in a toy or movie preview, or commercials. Hmm, could anyone make their own TV show? Because if they [TV people]

said 'yes' to my idea. I would put an ad in the paper. I would have my own little helpers and put out a sign "Finnoula's Kid Show—Who Wants to be In It?"

What do you think would be a good TV idea?

Sort of like the Spy Kids movie. My show would be called Spy Kids Forever. There are only two adults in the show, one is the mom and the other is a bad guy. We [the kids] spy on the bad guy and he has bombs everywhere. Spy Kids take them and throw them in the water so he [bad guy] can't get them. We go under the water and light [diffuse] them. We swim out, and go behind a building and watch them explode. We get rid of the other bombs. Then, a Loch Ness monster corners us. We find even more bombs, light them, put them in his mouth, and he explodes. We take the pieces and make sushi. Then we go to the mom and we say "Spy Kids, reunite!" and then we all have the sushi for dinner. At this point, the picture on the TV would get smaller and smaller, on my face and then it shuts closed. At the end, we always have sushi from the Loch Ness monster.

[Mom's Comment: With mouth agape, I listen to this story but can't help commenting, "It sounds kind of dangerous for kids to be working with bombs." Her terse response, "They not real bombs, because it's TV. It would just be guys with fireworks on a hidden dock somewhere. It's fine, Mom." I guess I wouldn't be a very good stage mom. Better stick to author mom.]