

### Dear Friend,

Thank you for writing to me. It's always good to hear from you.

As you can see this is the volume number two of my newsletter. I am glad that I have called my newsletter "occasional." Otherwise, I would be forced to stick to a schedule and that is, as we all know, not easy. Should you have missed the issue number one, and would like to have it, please send a SASE (self-addressed-stamped-envelope.)

Your letters and drawings keep coming and questions never stop. Thank you for your interest in my books and my work.

As in the first newsletter, I shall try to answer some of new questions you have asked me.

### When did you decide to start writing and illustrating books?

My career began as a graphic designer. Later I was an art director for an advertising agency. In the mid 1960's Bill Martin Jr saw an ad of a red lobster that I had designed and asked me to illustrate *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* What an inspiring book! Now the large sheets of paper, the colorful paints and fat brushes of my earlier school came to my mind. I was set on fire! It was possible, after all, to do something special that would show a child the joy to be found in books. This opportunity changed my life.

I found that illustrating alone was not entirely satisfying and wanted to try writing as well. I began to make rough books of my ideas and stored them in a small cardboard box. When I illustrated an historical cookbook, the editor heard about my box of ideas and asked to see them. I submitted *1,2,3 to the Zoo*. Then I showed her a story about a worm who ate holes through the pages. Ann Beneduce, my editor, wasn't so sure about the appeal of worm. "Maybe another creature would be better. How about a caterpillar?" Ann asked. "Butterfly!" I exclaimed. That is how *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was born. Almost without any planning, I had become an author and illustrator of books for children.

### Did you ever want to be anything other than an artist, like a fireman?

There was a short time in my childhood when I wanted to be a forester. On many Sunday mornings my father and I would go for walks in the forest. This was in Germany and occasionally we would pass a forester's house. It was nestled in the woods, surrounded by a large flower and vegetable garden, and enclosed by a picket fence. "Wouldn't it be nice to be a forester," suggested my father, "and live in such a beautiful place?"

He then went on to tell me about the deer, foxes, rabbits, and owls that would come up to the house.



My imagination began to spin and for a while I wanted to become a forester and live in this remote fairyland. But soon I went back to my first love: drawing pictures.

In my adult life I have on occasion fantasized about being a chef. Wouldn't it be great to be a cook in a fine restaurant and dream up mouth-watering meals! I see myself in a tall white hat, giving orders to my sub chefs and every so often dipping my finger into a pot or pan to taste my inventions. A fantasy is something you often just dream about!

**How did you get interested in art?** In retrospect it appears that the action of these individuals had been orchestrated by a higher force to encourage my creative development:

MY FATHER, who drew rather well, wanted to become an artist. But his father, a state employee (customs official), would not have a "starving artist" in his family. So my father became a municipal clerk. However, he never lost his interest in and love for drawing and often drew pictures for me, mostly of animals.

MISS FRICKEY, my first grade teacher in Syracuse, NY, discovered my love for drawing that, undoubtedly, had been passed on to me by my father. In an arranged meeting, Miss Frickey pointed out to my mother that her son was talented and that she should nurture that talent.

HERR KRAUSS, my art teacher in *gymnasium* (German high school) early discovered my love for drawing and painting. With great care and deliberation he set out to cultivate my artistic development. When I was 12 or 13 years old he secretly showed me reproductions of the "Forbidden Art" done by so-called "degenerate artists," according to the then-prevailing Nazi doctrine. He showed me the works done by the German Expressionists and the Abstract Artists, all widely respected artists whose works were shown in museums around the world, and who were not at all degenerate, of course. But, for this act of defiance Herr Krauss could have been dismissed or

worse. His courageous act opened my eyes to the beauty of German Expressionism and Abstract Art. In addition, Herr Krauss demonstrated his trust in me.

PROFESSOR SCHNEIDLER, at the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste*, with whom I studied design from age 16 to 20. These 4 years were the most inspiring and exciting years of my artistic schooling. At the *Akademie*, I also met and related to my fellow students from various backgrounds. My artistic, spiritual and cultural horizons expanded. Schneidler's message was, in short: as designers, we should shape in a responsible, noble and tasteful way all the things that confront us visually—the illustrations for a book, the color scheme for a shopping center, the shape of a coffee cup, the design of a poster, or the form of a typeface, for example.



**Do you have brothers and sisters?** I have one sister, Christa, who is much younger than I am, 21 years younger, in fact. I have dedicated *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to her.

**Did you scribble when you were a little boy?** Not only did I scribble when I was a child, but I still do!

As far back as I can remember I enjoyed drawing pictures and I knew then that I would always draw. When I had grown to the age when kids are asked what they'd do "when they had grown up," I always answered that I would draw pictures, be an artist, be a scribbler. It always felt good to work with pencil, paints, crayons and paper. I will never stop being a scribbler.





**What makes the fireflies light up in your *The Very Lonely Firefly*?** Do you remember the answer to the question in the first newsletter "How is the chirp in *The Very Quiet Cricket* made?" *The Very Lonely Firefly* works in a similar way. A computer chip has been placed inside the back cover. A tiny battery supplies the power to little circuits, like trails, to the light bulbs that are the flashers of the fireflies. So when you open to the last page you are treated to a firefly show that you usually only see in the summer. The battery can be replaced when it runs low.

**How long does it take to make a book?** It all starts with an idea, one's imagination, a spark. But so far no one has come up with a satisfactory answer to where ideas, imagination, sparks come from. Once you have an idea, you sit down and sketch it out on a flat piece of paper. After it seems to work out all right, you put your story in rough form in a 32 page dummy (see newsletter #1). Now you've begun. When will it end? Sometimes the idea develops nicely, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes you work at it furiously and long hours; other times you may merely dabble a little here and there. You may get frustrated and banish your idea into a drawer or box (I have several idea boxes.) All this takes time. There are all kinds of reasons to delay your work: visitors stop by, the car needs to be taken to the repair shop, a dentist appointment. More time has gone by. By now you must be accusing me of hedging on an answer. The truth is, it's a difficult question.

Let us look at two examples: I worked on *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* for over two years. That doesn't mean that I worked at it steadily. One day I worked on it joyously, but the next day I would have doubts about my story. Then the idea gets put away. Two months later I'd fiddle with it again. And so it went

for almost two years. *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* was in a state of banishment, I had once again lost faith in it, when my British editor visited me. I did not mean to show her what I had done so far on *Do You Want to Be My Friend?*, but somehow it fell out of a box, and before I could hide it, my editor leafed through my dummy and had declared it wonderful. Encouraged, I finished the illustrations over the next weekend.

The idea for *Little Cloud* to be published in the summer of 1996, hit me like a lightning bolt. Excitedly I called my



editor, Patricia Gauch, and she told me to go ahead. A week later, the finished art was delivered to the publisher. **When did you grow your beard?** I had no intentions of growing a beard. But this is how it happened anyway. In the early 1970's I bought land in the northwest corner of Massachusetts. In order to get a better view of the distant hills, I climbed a tall pine tree. All of a sudden, the branch below my feet broke and gave way. I fell standing up, and broke two vertebrae of my lower back as I hit the ground. In the hospital the nurse offered to shave me, but I declined and said that I would shave myself after I had been dismissed from the hospital. Well, you

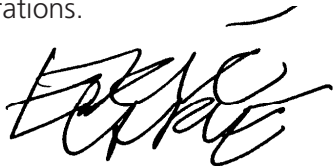


get the idea: I never did shave off my beard. By the way, my back mended well and I'm o.k.

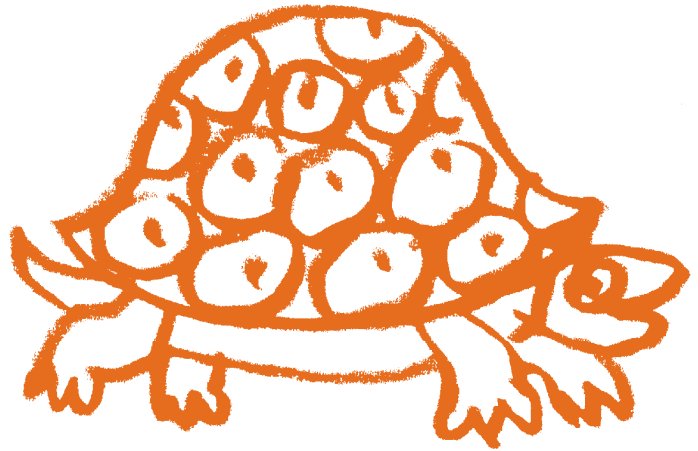
**Can you come to our school and meet us?** I would love to come visit with all of you but if I did that I would have very little time to create the books that you enjoy reading. Therefore I no longer make school visits. There is a video called *Eric Carle: Picture Writer* that shows you how to create collages similar to mine. Although it may not have the excitement of actually meeting each other, many children and teachers have said that they feel like they know me better after seeing the video. The video is available from your local bookstore or from Philomel Books (call toll free 800 631 8571) or from Scholastic Book Club.

As mentioned, my new book, *Little Cloud* is coming out in the summer of 1996. Also, in preparation for publication in the fall of 1996 is a book called *The Art of Eric Carle*. This is a 128 page book with my autobiography, essays by my editors, representative illustrations from my picture books and a section on how I make my painted tissue papers and illustrations.

Until next time,  
Sincerely,



**P.S.** If you are writing as a class, it would be greatly appreciated if you could send one mailing of all the letters instead of having each child send his or her letter in a separate envelope (and it saves postage for you). Although I would love to be able to write to each child individually, I am afraid if I did, I wouldn't have enough time left for working on new books. Also, when you send something for me to look at, a drawing, a book, a video, etc. that you want returned to you, please enclose a SASE. Many thanks.



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