

SPEAKING OF WRITING



Yale Strom
Author of *The Wedding Saved That Saved a Town* (Kar-Ben Publishing)

When you were growing up did you have books in your home?

We always had a lot of books in the home both parents are avid readers. In Detroit where I grew up until 12 I fondly remember the bookmobile coming every Friday to our school. We did not have a library and I thought it was so cool to go up into this big "RV" and be able to check out books.

Any particular story to tell concerning the writing of this book?

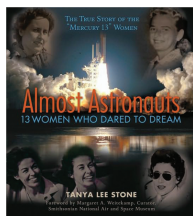
The story "The Wedding That Saved A Town" came from my ethnographic research I had been doing in Poland in the 1980s among the remnant Jewish communities. I had a particular interest in klezmer music—Yiddish instrumental folk music—and was searching for lost melodies and songs. One day I was in the town of Ropczyse in a home of an old Jewish man who had played klezmer before the war. He told me about this story of playing for an orphan bride and groom in a cemetery to help break the plague of cholera. At first I did not believe it but when I read about it in several sources then I realized it was true.

What some good advice that you've received concerning writing? What's some advice that you could offer young writers?

I think the most important thing is for a writer to have a deep passion for the subject/story he/she is writing about. Life is short why write about something that does not give you pleasure. I would also say that if you can write about something that personally happened to you or to someone you know this can help make the story resonate even louder because it is a part of you. Lastly when those days come and you just can not write, you just are staring at a blank computer screen, the muse is not with you then take a break. Do not force yourself to write a specific amount of words everyday unless you can without too much consternation. When you have a great story to tell it will just spring forth naturally.

feel more comfortable in the classroom if a traditional tale of theirs were integrated with dominate Christian traditions. *Kaitlyn Moore*

YOUNG ADULT



Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream

Tanya Lee Stone
Candlewick Press
Softcover \$24.99 (144pp)
978-0-7636-3611-1

In a society obsessed with hero worship, few were as idolized as the early astronauts. Going behind the façade of the space program, Stone, an award-winning young adult writer, explores the "true story of the 'Mercury 13' women."

Combining historical exposé, social analysis, and biography, Stone captures the times, the players, and the courage and capabilities of this extraordinary group of thirteen women. They participated in and passed early NASA testing but were prevented—through institutionalized and pernicious discrimination—from proceeding.

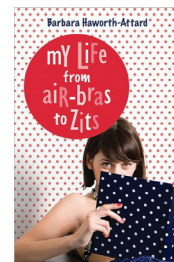
Delving into a treasure trove of research—including an incriminating letter filed away for decades—and interviewing these pioneering women, Stone uncovers an inspiring if heart-breaking true story of grit, persistence, and determination. Commenting on this shameful, hidden chapter of the space program, Stone notes, "...we are finally ready to acknowledge there should be no Wrong Time for women with the Right Stuff."

The book opens in July 1999 with the historic launch of Space Shuttle mission STS-93 with Commander Eileen Collins, the first woman to lead a space flight team. Few realize that, thirty-eight years earlier, thirteen women were ready to take their place in space.

In 1959, pilot Jerrie Cobb "had already logged more than 7,000 hours in the air—far more than John Glenn's 5,000 hours." In February 1960, Cobb started astronaut testing. "In secret, she was the first woman to take all eighty-seven of the physical tests the Mercury 7 men had taken. The first woman to be told that she had passed...The first to open the door for others..." Stone reports that nearly two decades later—in 1978—six women finally joined the space program, among a group of thirty-five. Sally Ride, the first American woman in space in 1983, was in that 1978 group. The book's title doesn't do justice to the full coverage Stone offers, bringing current the role of leading women pilots, astronauts, and NASA officials.

Stone outlines a discriminatory wrong that can never be righted in the history of aviation. It's challenging for readers to see their heroes, who seemed to stand for the good and true, turning their backs on these powerful and outspoken women. Well-documented with sections of further reading, Webliography, and extensive

sources and notes, this remains a needed resource of encouragement for young women as it showcases a poignant chapter in history, women who were "Almost Astronauts." (February) *Bobbye Middendorf*



My Life from Air-Bras to Zits

Barbara Haworth-Attard
Flux
Softcover \$9.95 (288pp)
978-0-7387-1483-7

Tenth-grader Teresa knows exactly how it feels to be in love: "Your stomach is in knots. Your palms sweat. Your hearing goes. Your brain turns to mush. You walk around under a cloud of misery all the time. It's the absolute best!" If only she could make Achingly Adorable Adam feel the same way about her. If only she had bigger boobs, er, breasts ("only women with no self-esteem call them *boobs*," her mother corrects), maybe she'd finally have the man of her dreams, or at least a boyfriend.

Teresa narrates her trials and tribulations—her self-absorbed sister is about to be married, her "old" parents are going to have another baby, her Maltese grandfather has started leaving the mail in the refrigerator, she loses her best friend when the popular Glams want her to hang out with them, and her secret air bra is discovered—through every letter of the alphabet. She weaves each alphabet word, from family, kiss, and opportunity to gross, jerk, and Quantity Theory, into the chapter, adding text messages and comical notes, lists, and observations.

My Life from Air-Bras to Zits continues to prove Barbara Haworth-Attard's writing breadth. The Canadian author has written a variety of novels for young adults, including fantasy in *Truthsinger*, historical fiction in *Love-Lies-Bleeding*, and the gripping realities of life on the streets for one teen in *Theories of Relativity*. She has also gleaned several award nominations for these novels in her native country.

Teresa's self-deprecating humor and such moments as role-playing with her childhood Ken and Barbie and discovering she has a latex allergy while putting a condom on a banana in health class will make readers laugh out loud as the teen copes with personal changes and the changes going on around her. But it is her relationship with her large, multicultural family and the lessons she learns about true friends and loyalty that makes her endearing in the end. This is a book for chick-lit fans who want more intelligence than fluff. (February) *Angela Leeper*