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REMINISCENCES

OF

BRINTON TURKLE

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Turkle, Brinton

Interview by
Harriet F. Miller
August 28, 1975

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the rest was easy

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MILLER: Today is August the 28th, 1975 and we are talking today with Brinton Turkle, an Alliance native currently residing in New York City, who is quite well known in the United States as an author of children's books and an illustrator of children's books. And Brinton I thought we'd start off by talking a little bit about some of the books that you have written and illustrated yourself. Can we start with the Obadiah series?

TURKLE: Yes, do you want a list of them or what?

MILLER: Yes, how many books are in that series so far?

TURKLE: There are three Obadiah books. And the first book I wrote was Obadiah the Bold. And I think at the time I only thought there would be one book that I would ever write. I never expected there to be two other Obadiahs and I think five other books including the one that is now in a publisher's office waiting for me to work on.

MILLER: How exciting. We'll come to that one later on. Obadiah series started out with Obadiah the Bold and then the next one was?

TURKLE: Thy Friend Obadiah and the last one is the Adventures of Obadiah.

MILLER: And I think Rodman Library right away would like

to point out that we're very fortunate to be the home for the original illustrations for each of those books, and to give Obadiah a home.

TURKLE: I'm glad Obadiah has a home.

MILLER: These books are about a little Quaker boy. And since we know that you have Quaker as your background currently, right? That seems to tie in, but I'm wondering how, since it was the first book that you had written yourself how did you happen to meet Obadiah?

TURKLE: Obadiah first appeared on a valentine, to a little girl. I had been staying with this little girl's parents, visiting them in Chicago: they were old friends of mine. And when I got back to New York I sent the little girl a valentine because it was close to Valentine's Day. And I put on it a little Quaker boy with red hair and of course his gray clothes, and holding behind his back rather shyly he had a big valentine, a big piece of paper with a heart on it, and in the middle of the heart was written, presumably by him, will thee be mine? And from that moment I had a feeling that there must be a story in this little boy. And I actually went to Philadelphia on a visit once hoping I'd find a story there because he was an old fashioned Quaker boy and the first place I thought of for an old fashioned Quaker was Philadelphia. But he didn't live there because I found out nothing about him there at all and pretty much

gave up on the idea of getting a story on him. About two years later I went on a visit to Nantucket, I hadn't wanted to go to Nantucket at all, I wanted to go to Block Island but by the time I was able to get to Block Island I couldn't get there by public transportation without spending two days getting there and two days getting back and I wanted this to be a week-end. And so instead I flew up in a rather bad temper to Nantucket. And the minute I got into this charming little town I realized I was in a very special place indeed because It hasn't changed very much over two hundred years. They've tried very hard to keep it as it used to be and it was essentially a Quaker community from the mid seventeenth century, or from its first settlement actually by white people, until about 1850. And in the eighteenth century I would say that 90% of the people on that island were Quakers. So it was essentially a Quaker community, and the houses looked like Quaker houses. They were gray shingles as they got weather beaten, and white trim and looked like they were made by ships' carpenters, as indeed they were, many of the old ones. The streets were cobblestone streets and I fell instantly in love with Nantucket. Prowled around the town and stayed in an old 18th century Inn, a little place called "The Woodbox." And I was upstairs in my room one night after eating too much lobster and woke up in the middle of the night with a stomach ache and a story about a little boy and a telescope. A little boy who was quite fearless and

then got frightened: well the whole story is about him wanting to be a pirate. The whole idea came to me at that time, and I wrote it down and I believe his name originally was Jeremiah or something in the original transcript. But after I got to New York, I took this back with me and worked on it a little bit and asked Ezra Jack Keats, who was the author of the Snowy Day and a friend of mine, if he would read it to see what he thought of it. If he liked it then I would put it, would send it to a publisher. Ezra was most enthusiastic about it and insisted I send it to his publisher which at that time was the Viking Press. I sent it to them and since the manuscript was only about ten pages it seemed to me that the editor could read it in about ten minutes. But I was deciding to give her a week. In a month I hadn't heard. And finally got in touch with the editor and she said she had given it a brief reading and wanted to discuss it with me but she was concerned about the ending which didn't seem to work out for her somehow. I quickly re-read my carbon copy and sat down and wrote a new ending for it and sent it to her. And she got it and said she was grateful for it and that she would let me know in a week. It was about another month before I finally was called in. And at this time I had almost given up on the idea of it being published, but she talked with me, her name was Annis Duff she was a very gentle and a very amiable lady indeed. And she began talking about various parts of the story and

I thought she was going to give me pointers about how to write another story, that this was not the story that they were going to publish. But she began talking about details of it and she called in the production man of the publishing house to talk about the way the book might be printed, the illustrations, and how I thought the illustrations ought to be done. And suddenly it began to dawn on me that they wouldn't be going to this trouble if they didn't want to publish it, so tentatively I said, "Well, does this mean that you want to publish my book?" And Annis Duff said, "Oh yes." Just like that, and I had always thought that at this magic moment fireworks would go off, bells would ring and sirens would scream. I never thought that it would happen with a simple, quite, "oh yes."

MILLER: She took it so casually. What a marvelous story. Then you followed that one with Thy Friend Obadiah, and now there have been Adventures of Obadiah.

TURKLE: That's right. Now these didn't happen consecutively.

MILLER: No.

TURKLE: Right after the Obadiah the Bold came another book called the Magic of Millicent Musgrave. And then another book called the Fiddler of High Lonesome. And then I think the sequence followed, Thy Friend Obadiah came next. And

then there was a book called The Sky Dog, Mooncoin Castle and then I think the other Obadiah, the third one.

MILLER: The Adventures of Obadiah.

TURKLE: Now the second Obadiah stories came as a direct result of the first one of course. The second one has to do with Obadiah's relationship with a seagull which adopts him much to his disgust. And that happened as a result of my first trip there because I saw a seagull in distress on the docks of Nantucket on that trip. And he had a, he or she, I don't know why seagulls are always he. Its, the seagull person, had a fisherman's bobber wound around his beak. and it looked to me like the seagull wasn't going to be able to feed properly and was not going to live long with this. I would have given anything to have been able to remove that from this poor creatures beak, but of course you couldn't get near them. You couldn't get within ten yards of them before they would fly off. And in this story, this plight of this poor seagull worried me long afterwards, and in this story I have the seagull being helped by Obadiah. And since seagulls are very wild creatures I thought maybe this could be a very peculiar seagull that had adopted Obadiah first, that made the first friendly overtures to the boy where, which would mean that he could then approach the seagull and relieve him, relieve it of its distress. And that's what that story's about.

MILLER: Let's talk now, we mentioned the first two Obadiah books how about the third book The Adventures of Obadiah.

TURKLE: That came about directly as result of research for the first two books. After all I had only spent three days in Nantucket before the first Obadiah story came out. And so I felt it was important if I was going to make other books about this starbuck family on Nantucket to know about traditions of the Quakers and more about the history of Nantucket and I did a lot of research in New York. I went back to Nantucket and investigated old records to find out the life of the Quakers in 1805 which is actually the date of these stories. The third book is about Obadiah going to a picnic which is called a "squantom." Squantums were big family affairs that everybody went to which centered around a sheep shearing event that took place every year. It seemed to be the big social event of the year and everybody went to these things. It was about three or four miles outside of the town of Nantucket. They go to these sheep shearings and have picnics and the more worldly people, the sailors and people coming from off-island would go to a side show. Side shows would have certainly been out of bounds to any Quaker family. And it is brought out in this story that they are going to the squantom but they are certainly not going to the side show. Obadiah gets there. And the way he gets there is on the back of a sheep that breaks lose from this

enclosure. That is what I actually read about happening in some of the history of the island. Sheep seem to roam all over the island pretty much willy-nilly throughout the year and they were rounded up in the spring or summer rather for the sheep shearing. And one of them did actually get loose and careen all over the town so in my story Obadiah happens to be on the back of the sheep and the sheep tosses him literally into the side show. So he has an experience nobody bargained for in this thing. And when he tells it to them they can't believe it because nobody has ever had the experience of being in one. The story however is varified, and as somebody pointed out later that this book follows very much the story of the Aesop fable of the Boy Who Cried Wolf. I recognized that as I began working on it but that wasn't the impetus at all. The impetus came from the research.

MILLER: And if, then makes it even more realistic because it is documented story. I don't think many people realize how much research is put into a book. This is true in some of the other books that you have done too.

TURKLE: Yes, I seem to like historical backgrounds and I've used historical backgrounds in other books that I have done, and illustrated. I've done two books about Benjamin Franklin for instance and these have required enormous research, which is usually quite terrifying to me and I every now and then think I ought to give up doing historical books because they

are such a headache. But there is something about them I like doing or I wouldn't continue.

MILLER: Let's talk about some of the other books that you have written and illustrated. The next one that comes to mind is Fiddler of High Lonesome. It's so different from the Obadiah books.

TURKLE: Yes. When I was a child I had a series of books called The Bookhouse which were anthologies of stories and biographies, history for various age levels. I got one volume of it and I gave it to my own children to read. Going through that book I came across a story that I had read years ago by Joachin Miller. This is a contemporary of Bret Hartes and Mark Twains who is practically unread today. But he was recounting something about frontiersmen going across the Rockies in a wagontrain, stopping off and camping somewhere in the mountains. And around the fire in the evening, being entertained by a fiddler who it turns out also has entertained, is entertaining, the bears who are dancing in the bushes. They find this out. I don't remember anymore of the story than that. But that set me to thinking. I decided the story sort of came from that. I decided to put it in the southern mountains which bothered me. It seemed to me that this was the right thing, the right format for the story. And very often what seems to be the right thing for a story does not seem the right thing to me. I didn't want

to do anything about the southern mountains. I certainly, as the thing developed didn't feel that it should be in dialect because I had a prejudice against dialect. But the story took its own way as all stories do and decided it wanted to be in the southern mountains and wanted to be in dialect so I got busy and worked on dialect, doing again research for the writing on that, going back to Mark Twain and Bret Harte, early stories that supposedly were written by Davey Crockett but he never did write any stories. I don't know where these, these are sort of part of American legend now. But I developed my own dialect for this and I feel that I have gotten away with it because I've had people from the south say, people from Kentucky say that sounds like people talk in Tennessee. People in Tennessee say that's the way people talk in Kentucky. But it is my own dialect.

MILLER: Oh, so you didn't sit down with a tape recorder and listen to some southerner speak, you simply created the dialect yourself.

TURKLE: No. But now that you mentioned tape recorder that has been a very important tool in my work. Because since most of my stories are picture books, which means that they are to be read to children, the way they sound is extremely important and so I try out the sound of them on tape before putting them down.

MILLER: Marvelous.

TRUKLE: At least I write first, and then I read it into a tape recorder to see how it sounds and if it sounds right then I'll transcribe it and put it down again.

MILLER: How about some of the other books that you have written. I think the background on Mooncoin Castle is interesting because it is not set in the United States at all is it?

TURKLE: No that came out of a love affair with Ireland. I went to Ireland just as I went to Nantucket and fell in love with Nantucket, I went to Ireland and fell in love with that. And I met a perfectly charming gentleman in Waterford, Ireland, who took me around and showed me around that part of Ireland including a trip to the Rock of Cashel which is one of the great monuments in Ireland. It's the seat of early Christendom there and on the way this man, whose name was William Glynn, was a retired headmaster of a school, a Quaker school by the way in Waterford. He took me to a castle where we had lunch and it was a ruined castle and I was so ecstatically happy in this ruined courtyard in this beautiful, beautiful October day, sitting against the warm stones and listening to Jackdaws all around and watching the swans out on the brown river in front of the castle, that it wasn't long after that that I decided I wanted to write a story about an Irish castle. The original idea for that was to be a picture book about the building of a castle and the various tenants that would live there over a long period of time, the decline and decay of the castle and even-

tually its restoration. This would be in a picture book format. But before I was very far into it I discovered I had a ghost in mind, a jackdaw for a hero and a witch and some magic and all sorts of things going on that did not fit into a picture book format. So when I got back to the United States and found this extraordinary tale in my possession and didn't know quite what to do with it, I realized I needed again research about the tearing down of the castle. Because that's an important part of that book. So I wrote to William Glynn, my friend in Waterford, who had been the chairman of the local restoration of old landmarks in Ireland. It's this National Trust Society or something and they are trying in Ireland as they are everywhere else I think to keep the old landmarks keep them from being torn down and turned into supermarkets or parking lots or gasoline stations. I think they call them petrol stations. But at any rate, I wanted to know what means would go about to try to save an old castle so I asked William Glynn for information. And had quite a lengthy list of questions I wanted him to answer. I also told him that I liked his Irish name which is Liam and he preferred to be called Liam rather than William and I said I liked his name Lian so much that I would like to name one of the characters in my book, Liam. I got a marvelous letter from him, a full three or four page letter, type written, starting out with, so I am to be in a book am I? Then I had best put on a bold face and hold back nothing, where upon he told me everything

from Eve Merriam's standpoint, if not mine. But the more

I wanted to know in that marvelous letter. So that helped me enormously with that book. And that is for the oldest level, for the oldest children that I have written.

MILLER: How about the books now that you have illustrated for other authors? I think the one that seems to be so popular in Alliance, with Alliance children is Mr. Blue.

TURKLE: Yes. That was an early book. I think that has to be about twelve or thirteen years old. That was of course before I began writing and I don't know how to account for its popularity except it does seem to appeal to children and it is great fun. I have illustrated so many books I literally have lost track of them, because I have been doing this for a long time. I tell people that I am a young author but a very old artist.

MILLER: Let's talk about some of the other ones that you have illustrated. You've mentioned the Ben Franklin. Now you illustrated the Biography of Ben Franklin that was written by Eve Merriam.

TURKLE: Eve Merriam, yes.

MILLER: And that came first.

TURKLE: That came first and that's pretty much a straight biography which I liked very much in the reading. And I think it's an interesting book and very well done at least from Eve Merriam's standpoint, if not mine. But the more

interesting one for me was Poor Richard in France because this has a wrinkle to it. The wrinkle being that this gives you an insight in Ben Franklin as seen by his grandson Benjie or Benny, who accompanied him to Paris when Ben went to raise funds for the American Revolution. Nobody quite knows why Ben took his grandson with him because it must have been an extremely dangerous trip to take on this little tiny wooden boat crossing the Atlantic. Had they have been caught by the British the boat would certainly have been sunk or they would have been captive. But at any rate they got over there safely and then this story of his raising the money for the Revolution is as told by a rather precocious young seven year old Benjamin.

MILLER: Interesting. Very interesting. And most of the tales in this are more of a fictional nature are they not? It had the fictional touch.

TURKLE: Yes. Because nobody knows very much about the child, Benny. I forget, I don't know that he ever reached maturity. He certainly never wrote anything about his grandfather. But everything in that book, all the facts are there.

MILLER: Documented. But yet it has a fictional overtone.

TURKLE: And I think certainly if Benny had written about his grandfather, if he loved him, this is what he would have written.

MILLER: And another book that you've illustrated that has historic tale to it is Ballad of William Sycamore. Of course it is a poem by Stephen Vincent Benet.

TURKLE: And it was the editor of Little Brown having seen some of the historical things I had done, thought I would be the right person to illustrate this book. And I found it an interesting sort of thing to do. Again there was historical research involved because this is frontier America. And it is the second poem that I have illustrated. The second classic, not that was the first one, the second one was the Thanksgiving Book.

MILLER: Very good. I think before we leave Ballad of William Sycamore we have to point out the interesting review that it had in one of the reviewing media, and this was Book List.

I found it interesting that the reviewer there commented on the violence of the illustrations. I thought it was interesting because of your Quaker background, and I can't think of a less violent person or someone who would under no circumstances construe something to be violent in his drawing.

TURKLE: Well maybe I got some subconscious aggression out in that thing. But I'm certainly not aware of it and I don't think, never for one minute did I want to glorify violence if there is. William Sycamore's one son dies I think in the Alamo and the other with Custer and I did show a rather large dramatic scene of the one son being shot. But it's in the

poem, I didn't make it up. And I don't think it's William Sycamore saying isn't this a great thing, my son got killed.

MILLER: No. No. It was just part of the story and part of the times in which they lived. It was a very fine poem but I thought that was a interesting comment in the review. Then the other one that you mentioned that is a poem that you illustrated is Over The River and Through The Wood.

TURKLE: Yes. Which is the most recent one. And has turned out to be possibly, the most successful or popular book that I have ever done, illustrated or written. Of course I didn't write that. This was written in 1840. By Lydia Marie Child. And when the editor at Coward McCann called me he was very excited because I had illustrated Poor Richard In France which was written by him although he didn't publish it. His house was interested in this Over The River and Through The Wood, the Thanksgiving poem. He thought I could do it and he wanted to send me the poem and I read it and thought this can not be illustrated. But I thought it over a good deal and he seemed to be so enthusiastic about it I worked on it a little bit. And then he called me up and said he had just checked with the Library of Congress and found that there were six verses that hadn't been printed for about a hundred years that were part of the original poem. And he sent them to me very happily, wanting to know if I wanted them in this poem and at first I didn't. One reason was because it had what I thought was one

of the worst rhymes I had ever heard of in it. And I thought that Lydia Maria Child's muse had abandoned her in this one thing which I thought was forgettable, Old Bowser the dog, or Towser the dog in the farm house as the family drives in the sleigh she has written, he raises his paw and says bow wow. Well I thought she couldn't get a rhyme for paw or bow wow and so she made this, which I thought was really inexcusable of her. But I decided to let the whole thing go and would print the whole thing even though I didn't approve of her poetry. I found out later that I was quite wrong and that Mrs. Child was quite right because in Webster's Dictionary paw is a rather archaic expression for head. And in that time in 1840, it was....

MILLER: It would have been understood.

TURKLE: And understood, yes. So I became a little more humble after that, I hope.

MILLER: And the book did get published with your illustrations.

TURKLE: Yes.

MILLER: I think this, the illustrations in Over The River and I think in the Ballad of William Sycamore and the Obadiah series are note worthy not only for the beauty of them but also for the warm family scenes. There is something very joyous, very comfortable in the family scenes that you do in these books.

TURKLE: Well, don't ask me to be objective about what I do because people say they can recognize my style. I can't recognize my style. This is all very unconscious I think. I appreciate those things. I would like to mention however before we leave the Thanksgiving poem, which was originally called A New England Boy's Thanksgiving. I think, was its original title. It was a New England setting. And I've kept it New England except for one glaring inconsistency, and that is a house in Alliance, which is the Hartzell house. I had a picture of it and it was exactly the right period and it seemed to be exactly the right kind of a townhouse for the family to set out from to go to Grandfather's house. So that's it.

MILLER: And you know it's interesting, now, the people who are reading your book who are not from Alliance, I'm sure do not recognize that that's a home that was built in Alliance, Ohio, and find that it fits in well with a New England setting. The people from Alliance recognize the Hartzell Museum right away and then look in the other New England buildings for other buildings from Alliance.

TURKLE: Yeah. No it's the only one, but I think that it is legitimate. This was after all the Western Reserve wasn't it?

TURKLE: Absolutely, that's right. So it's a book that I

MILLER: Yes it was.

TURKLE: And this was highly influenced by New England. And

I have done research on New England architecture and that the house could certainly have fit in Lynn, Massachusetts or any place.

MILLER: And of course it makes us in Alliance very proud to know that we have something we can recognize in the book too. How about things that you're working on now? You had mentioned that you just have a manuscript or a book with the publisher. Do you want to give us any indication of what is to be coming new from your work?

TURKLE: Yes, this book, I haven't signed the contract for it, I'll do that as soon as I return to New York. It's going to be a picture book: it's a book that I edited the words out of all together, and working on the story and simplifying it because it's a very simple story and I don't want to go into it at this point. But it suddenly occurred to me that it maybe could be told by pictures alone and I believe in editing, taking out anything that isn't really essential. And if the words weren't essential then I wasn't going to leave them in. The words didn't seem to be essential and so I developed it as a picture story and....

MILLER: This would be then a picture book in the true sense of the word, where the pictures tell the entire story.

TURKLE: Absolutely, that's right. So it's a book that I kind of unwrote. Coming up for this Christmas will be a

TURKLE: Yes. It's changed around considerably. But, yeah

illustrated edition, which I did not write or rewrite, of the old Grimm fairy tale, The Elves and the Shoemaker. And that is in full color. And that was a book that was actually illustrated twice, I illustrated it twice. And the first time we got into some problems, I don't know if this is the time to go into it or not. Did you hear about the naked elves?

MILLER: No.

TURKLE: Well The Elves and the Shoemaker in this Grimm's story the elves come and made the shoemaker's shoes for him and the author had written that they were naked. So I made them naked being very discrete about their nakedness but none the less they didn't have clothes on. And when the illustrations were finished, the editor got cold feet and said they couldn't possibly have this because it was for Scholastic Magazine Press. That none of the Parochial Schools would ever allow this thing to be put in their school system and that they couldn't use them. And I pointed out that I had only followed the story. And they said yes they realized it but they would have to either be not done or I would have to do it again. So we made a contract on it and it was redone. It's the only book I've ever had that kind of experience with.

MILLER: And you feel happy with these elves now that they are clothed?

TURKLE: Yes. It's changed around considerably. But, yeah

they've got rags on now, discretely covering them.

MILLER: Well I'm sure in the old fairy tale and folk tale literature you could find them either way.

TURKLE: Also coming out in the spring is another book I illustrated for a northwest author, about an island in the Puget Sound area off Vancouver Island. And it was so specific a location that I was asked by the publisher to go there and do research on that. So it will be a fairly factual, almost documentary of the San Juan Islands.

MILLER: But certainly done and illustrated by an artist whos seen the area.

TURKLE: That's right.

MILLER: In other words you've had your trip there.

TURKLE: Yes.

MILLER: Marvelous. Let's talk a little bit about how you managed to get into the world of children's books. This was not in your background originally. How does one get to be a children's author and artist?

TURKLE: Well it was and it wasn't in my background. I was fortunate because I was given children's books to read and I didn't really discover your library, until I was practically in high school because I was given books. And some of the books I enjoyed most happened to be written by a very good

friend of my mother and father's, an Alliance resident named Gertrude Alice Kay. And she was really the only person in Alliance that had any real feeling for art and a person that I felt comfortable with. And going to her studio was one of the most exciting things I can remember of my days as a young boy in Alliance. These trips to the studio were fairly infrequent because Gertrude wasn't in Alliance a lot. She traveled a great deal. And she was a very busy woman indeed and nothing would have pleased me more than to have had her as a teacher. And I believe my mother even asked her if she would consider teaching me but she said she wasn't a teacher and I know now what she means because I had a very abortive career as a teacher myself and discovered that I'm not a teacher either. You either have it or you don't and she didn't, she recognized she didn't have it. But she did have me to her studio and I always thought if I could just watch her work sometime I could pick up the secrets of being an artist. I always liked to draw. And I think almost from the beginning thought I would like to draw in books because I loved books so much. And it seems only absolutely right and fitting that loving words and pictures that I should be doing this professionally now as a children's author and artist.

MILLER: What careers did you get started in before you got around to getting to this one that hit home so well?

TURKLE: Well I sort of flirted with the theatre for a while. In high school I had gotten involved in dramatic club and senior class play and thought that was pretty exciting and I went to Carnegie Tech which is now Carnegie Mellon I believe, in Pittsburgh and studied theatre there until I discovered that there were really more starving actors than starving artists. Where upon I changed, I went to art school and from then on, really it was children's books. Although I had about ten years in advertising first simply because I couldn't get into publishing. And it took a long time to get into publishing, I had to come in by way of text books and then in books for older children until finally I have got to the middle aged children, which is the peculiar name for the bracket of children before teen age and after picture book age. And then eventually I came down to my level which is, I think, the picture books.

MILLER: Do you find it sometimes difficult to explain to people that you, you have come down to your level you say and that they expect you someday to be grown up again?

TURKLE: Yes. I get this all the time. It's as if I've got to graduate from kindergarten sometime. But people don't realize that kindergarten is where I belong.

MILLER: Well people don't realize that such research as you talked about goes into these picture books. They think that because they were written for children they were written by

a child and it just isn't true.

TURKLE: Well, I have a very strong feeling about this. I think it's a tremendous privilege to be working with children because children's minds are flexible like no one else's. As we get older we solidify, we get into ruts, into stilted, stultifying ways of thinking and children are open. And I believe that reading has a greater influence on children than it has on adults. And if I can touch a child's mind, and I have I know of, from time to time, this to me is what it's all about.

MILLER: And I think that there are hundreds of children's librarians that would say hurrah to that and would agree with you heartily. I think you talked about some of the experiences that a children's author and illustrator has in an article that you did for Publisher's Weekly, do you recall that, "Confessions of Leprechaun", where people asked you are you going to grow up and write adult books some day.

TURKLE: Well yeah. I keep getting that all the time and people think it's a little odd that you would not want to go to the big time. Well to me, children's books are the big time.

MILLER: And may they so continue to be. You had mentioned some of the scenes of Alliance that were in your book, Over The River and Through The Wood, and that would be the Mabel Hartzell Museum.

TURKLE: It's crept in in another book, in the most recent one I wrote, which is It's Only Arnold. And this is in a way the most autobiographical book I've written. I have included in it not exact replicas but certainly influences from my home on Union Ave., the house next door to it, which is now occupied by the Dean of Mount Union College. I used to roam around the back yards which that house adjoins, it is the one neighboring house to my family home. And so as a child I was wondering all around this area, and that area is in the book, also the front porch of our house on Union Ave. is in there. And I have put people I know in pictures, I have even put myself in a picture once in a book called Sky Dog.

MILLER: Well if you continue to write enough of them pretty
MILLER: Yes, let's identify that. That's a scene in a book where a gentleman is persuing some books, paperback books.

TURKLE: Yes, it's in a store, a general store at a beach, a resort. And there were a lot of people in the store, so I guess I went on an ego trip, decided I might as well put myself in there. And it's really worked out rather nicely because I get letters from children wanting to know what I look like, if I'll send them a photograph and I refer them to that picture because I can't send photographs to all the children that want one.

MILLER: I think that's a fine idea. You've also brought out your family and friends in the dedications you make for various books.

TURKLE: Yes.

MILLER: Who have you covered by now?

TURKLE: Well, I've tried to cover only children but I haven't been able quite to do that. I did dedicate a book to my Mother and Father and to Miss Mary Rose Kraft who has been almost a member of our family, living with us for so long, since I was three years old actually. And then a very dear friend of mine in Chicago, two friends there, a man and wife, I've known and loved for a long time. But I really don't approve of dedicating books, children's books, to adults but I'll probably continue to do it though.

MILLER: Well if you continue to write enough of them pretty soon you will have taken up all of your friends and family and then you could dedicate to who ever you please.

TURKLE: I have dedicated the three books to my three children. When the first Obadiah was published, or going to be published, I dediced to give this or dedicate this to my son Jonathan. And Jonathan was eight years old at the time: the other two children had gotten away from me. They were beyond picture books at this point. So I was going to surprise Jonathan and give him the first copy, let him see it, to get the thrill of seeing his name on the dedication page. But just to be sure he was impressed, I questioned him about dedications some weeks if not months before the book was

published. I asked him if he knew what a dedication was and he said he didn't so I explained it to him in detail. And then I spilled the beans, I said, "Jonathan, when Obadiah rather the Bold is published," I said, "There will be copies in every library in every state in every city in this country. I really felt that might be true at the time. I said there will be thousands of books published and every book will have your name in it because I'm going to dedicate it to you. Jonathan said, "Okay Daddy, I don't mind."

MILLER: Well it was nice of him to give you that permission, wasn't it? *it's on page six.*

TURKLE: He wasn't going to stand in my way. *I don't know*

whether Mr. Nixon has seen it. I rather doubt it.
MILLER: Let's talk a bit about some other things that have been included in your books. If people didn't know for instance you and didn't know that you were standing in the book, Sky Dog they might not also recognized a bit of satire you've included in the Poor Richard story. Do you want to explain that?
TURKLE: It depends. Since color illustrations are so very expensive to reproduce, editors, publishers, like very much

TURKLE: Yes. Now this was illustrated a year and a half ago or perhaps almost two years ago. And in this book is included some of the aphorisms of Poor Richard in France. Little Benny talks about his grandfather in admiring terms and he tells about his grandfather having written this book. He said, in it he wrote such aphorisms as, "a penny saved is a penny

earned" or "a rotten apple spoils the lot" and another one I forget; "a sleeping fox catches no poultry," and "honesty is the best policy." Now I decided to illustrate these with rather amusing drawings. I was a little concerned about honesty in high places at this point because it looked to me like there was a lack of it, a rather enormous lack of it. So if you look carefully in this book you might notice the culprit in the stocks illustrating "honesty is the best policy" has the face of an ex-President on it.

MILLER: I see. And for those who want to search that out in the book it's on page six.

TURKLE: It hasn't been widely recognized and I don't know whether Mr. Nixon has seen it. I rather doubt it.

MILLER: I rather doubt it too. But it is there for posterity certainly. About the art work that you do. You work primarily in water colors?

TURKLE: It depends. Since color illustrations are so very expensive to reproduce, editors, publishers, like very much to have books done in any other way possible. The books I have done in full color are certainly the Obadiah books and that is done with water color and a line, the line being a pencil line, but it's a charcoal pencil. Other times it's a little complicated to explain, but the color has to be separated. And a book called Sky Dog for instance has four

colors: a blue and a black and a tan and an orange. For every one of those colors I had to make a special drawing. They had to be fitted together, registered together. It looks like it might have been done all in one but it has to be done separately by the artist. Other books like the Ben Franklin book, Poor Richard in France were done that was a two color again but they were done with charcoal crayons on a separate drawing for each for buff and for the black.

MILLER: What about the book Fiddler of High Lonesome?

TURKLE: That was done, I don't know that I'll ever do another book like that because it was very odd and rather difficult to do. I did it in something called gouache. Now gouache is a gesso it was done with gouache on a gesso panel. What this means is that I have taken a drawing board and covered it with a plaster, a very thin coating of plaster and on that plaster I have put in opaque colors, the painting. These paintings really were done in black and white but it was printed in a bluish color and a black together called a duo-tone to get a sort of mysterious night quality, though so much of it is at night.

MILLER: And a softness to it too. Interesting.

TURKLE: I tried to do each book a little differently because I think each story is different and requires a different approach. Now the three Obadiah books I wanted to look similar. And they are the only ones that have been consistently,

I've tried to be consistent with.

MILLER: And they were very colorful books. And there you did not have to do the color separations, that was done by the camera.

TURKLE: Yes. But the most colorful book I ever illustrated, and I don't know whether there's a copy here, is a book called C is for Circus. And it was done as brilliantly as I could possibly make it and it was separated, each of the four colors, red, blue and yellow and black were so brilliant. The red was even a fluorescent ink to give it even a brighter punch. And I wanted this to be as loud and blaring as a brass band.

MILLER: And as a circus.

TURKLE: Yes, a circus. And no other book I've ever done remotely resembles it.

MILLER: Must check that out. You happen to be in Alliance today Brinton, because you have been traveling to speak at seminars, have you not?

TURKLE: Yes, one seminar at the State University of Montana. There was a writer's workshop there and a children's literature workshop. So once getting out there, being out there I spent some time on a ranch. Had a fine time.

MILLER: And you are stopping in Alliance to visit your family.

TURKLE: That's right. And every time I have the opportunity to come by and stay for a while and get reacquainted with the city.

MILLER: Yes, and you are on your way back to your home, where?

TURKLE: Back to New York City.

MILLER: New York City. And you live where in New York City?

TURKLE: Right in the middle of New York City on East 15th Street.

MILLER: A true city dweller.

TURKLE: Yes, not very happy about it but that's the way it is.

MILLER: Well in New York you would have the greatest accessibility to the publishing industries.

TURKLE: That's true. And also for research. Again if you can't find it in New York. A lot of things I know are there only I can't always track them down. For instance, The Poor Richard in France, I wanted to get an idea of what the hold of a ship would be like, where the cabin that Benny and his grandfather Ben lived in on their voyage. I thought the ship, there would be a picture of the ship somewhere and I think the ship is called the Enterprise or something.

MILLER: We were talking about the research that you had done

for your book Poor Richard in France and about finding a picture or a description of the ship.

TURKLE: Yes. The ship was called the Repraisal and I did an enormous amount of chasing around New York trying to find pictures of the ship. I found none. I found that it was a brig and I got pictures of brigs. But I could find no pictures of what the cabin or the hold would look like. I really was climbing the walls over this one. I went first of all to the Public Libraries. I looked up in old records of ships, I found nothing, no illustrations at all to go by. I went down to the South Street Seaport Museum in New York. But their research was all on steamships down there, early steamships. But that wouldn't do. And I went to the sailors, Seamen and Sailors Institute down by the Battery there, they had a library. And found nothing there. And finally settled for some pictures of the insides of the Old Ironsides, the Constitution.

MILLER: Oh yes, the U. S. Constitution.

TURKLE: Also, Nelson's ship, I forget the name of that, and my history is not as good as it should be. But these of course were huge ships, they were war ships and I simply had to adapt those, make them as small as I could, trying to remember that this would be a very cramped little vessel. And I made it up in the end, feeling this was not at all satisfactory. A year later, talking to another author and artist

MILLER: It's a matter of how...

for children's books, Peter Spier, told him what a time I had. He said, "Oh if you would have come to me I have all the information you would need on that." This is always happening. I'm finding a year or two later things I couldn't find at the time. But I didn't know Peter Spier at the time and wouldn't have known that he had this. But this happened to be a specialty of his.

MILLER: Oh. Well it's just amazing that, I think authors and illustrators go to this trouble to be as exact as they could. And certainly you went to a great deal of trouble in your research. And you did the best you could.

TURKLE: Once, working on the Magic of Millicent Musgrave, which I set, decided was going to be in 1905. I went to a great deal of trouble getting the costumes of that period, all the information for that period. And although it's a fantasy I wanted it all to be accurate. I did a lot of research and sketching of costumes and a friend was in the studio and said, "Why on earth do you go to all this trouble because no child would know the difference.?" And that's quite true, there would be no child that would be able to say this dress is really 1910 or 1890. Perhaps most young parents wouldn't know, but I would know and that's the important thing.

MILLER: And in a way it wouldn't be truthful would it?

TURKLE: Well that's it. I wouldn't be.

MILLER: It's a matter of having....

TURKLE: You try to get it as truthful as possible. I have not been truthful in one area and I'm very very sorry about this but it was because I didn't know that. The first Obadiah book has the family going to meeting in a large, tree-lined street. And in 1805 there were only tiny little trees if any. It was practically bare and I didn't know that until much later. That haunts me but there is nothing that I can do about it now.

MILLER: Well, it's there for everyone to see and it certainly is a beautiful tree-lined street.

TURKLE: It's the way Nantucket is now but it is not the way it was in 1805.

MILLER: Well, we're so pleased that you could come and be with us today and to take time out to do this tape and we wish you a safe journey home.

TURKLE: Thank you.

MILLER: And a quick return.

TURKLE: Thank you very much.

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