



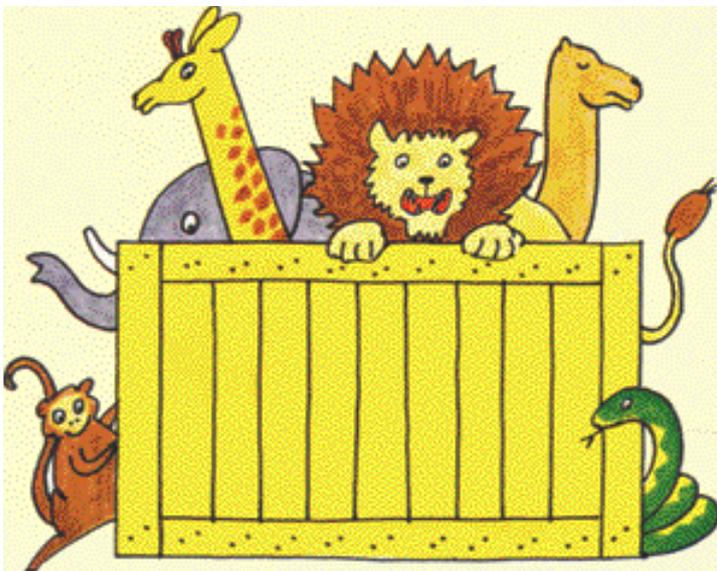
Rod Campbell - Making Early

Congratulations to Rod Campbell on the 25th Anniversary of *Dear Zoo* and for giving us a book which has been one of the most successful and phenomenally popular

for growing minds and with which small hands can engage. For the young child it is undoubtedly a classic of its time and this celebration confirms that *Dear Zoo* has withstood the test of time and competition from other media.

Dear Zoo, throughout all its various editions has surely provided the perfect encouragement for a lifelong love of books and reading. As Rod comments modestly, "Eric Hill's first *Spot* book had come out and it was exciting to see the use of flaps and the potential they had for books for the young. Hard to imagine now when flap books are so common. It was very early in my career and I could see how it would be fun to reveal a series of animals hidden behind flaps but it was a question of how this could be done, ie. what story would hold it together and above all, make it legitimate? It will be hard to believe, but it came to me all of a piece and the original idea is as you see it today! The images were done from memory without looking at pictures, so was my idea of how each animal looks (failing badly with the monkey, but putting it right in the new art work!), using felt tip pens and working same size, the colours are a bit crude but the new version of *Dear Zoo* is much brighter."

The original edition was published by Abelard-Schuman Ltd in 1982 followed in 1984 as a Picture Puffin and then changed in



size to a perfect format for small hands and enhancing dexterity skills as a board book, published in 1998 by Campbell Books, an imprint of Macmillan Children's Books. Until this point, the imagery had either been flat or transformable by interactive flap mechanisms to encourage the anticipatory and surprising storytelling potential. Later Rod recalls, "My American editor suggested it and had in mind a complicated pop-up whereon turning a page a crate would open and an animal stand up! Too complicated for me, so I did something that just adds a little something and is in tune with the original."

His adventure in bringing *Dear Zoo* to life was published in 2004 as *The Pop Up Dear Zoo*. This brought more interactive involvement to the familiar title, keeping it in line with other contemporary trends in book value and appeal. One innovative ploy which Rod has used successfully throughout this title to engage the reader is to employ '...' at the end of each text for the child to link the image to the words. As he says, "It did seem obvious to me because this is what happens when you sit down with a small child with a book. They love to anticipate the text, and certainly to show their knowledge. Naming is so fundamental and to be asked to guess and get it right is a real pleasure for them."

To remind myself of the popularity and skill values of *Dear Zoo*, without any warning, I went to our neighbour to seek some help. This was given immediately when Emma, who is two, was thrilled to find her copy of the title and show me how she could read and handle the book. With squeaks of delight, smiles of achievement and big open eyes reflecting the surprises anticipated, she carefully unfolded the flap of the very heavy yellow crate to reveal the large grey elephant unfolding and expanding to four times the size of the crate. "He was too big so I sent him back," Emma said. When she pulled down the red handle on the flap of the basket she said she wanted to keep the puppy, as she glanced lovingly up at Mummy! Emma had made her choice but the monkey and the frog came very close seconds! Most impressively she read some of the words, loved guessing the names of all the animals and wanted to know more about them but mainly communicated the story from memory. This speaks volumes for the appeal and involvement generated by this book to be enjoyed time and time again.

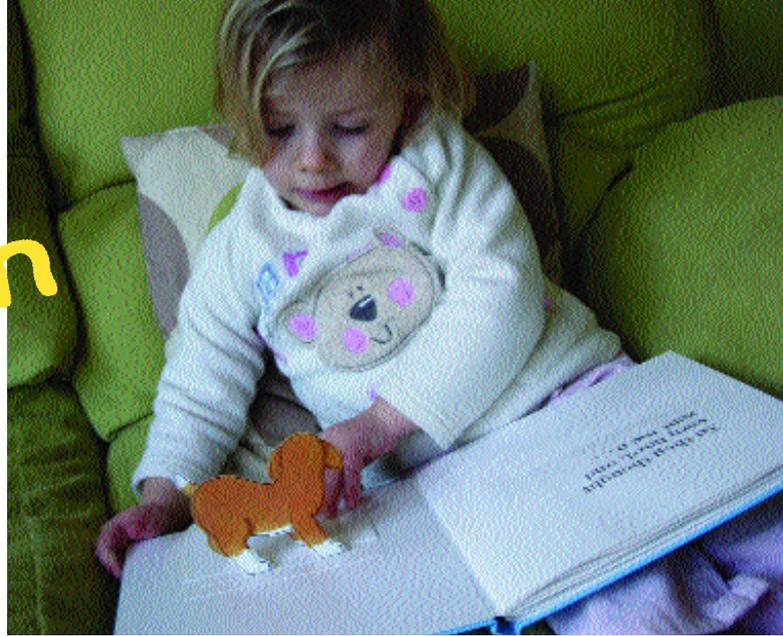
Beyond the book form, *Dear Zoo* was reproduced in 2005 as an attractive board book and jigsaw puzzle. Forever looking at new ways to engage his audience through play this offers an adventure into the zoo with more animals represented. As you piece the puzzle together, in addition to the original characters, there are questions which beg answers and more animals have been included such as at least three varieties of bears, a kangaroo

Learning Fun

and a hippopotamus. When we hear so much about the demise of many species, *Dear Zoo* takes on another important role of raising issues to be shared between parent and child, yet another possible outreach into the world and the learning process.

Apart from *Dear Zoo*, Rod's name is synonymous with making 'feely books' that work through introducing children to new learning skills by looking and touching different textures on the page. One such title is *I Won't Bite* first published in 1992 by Campbell Books which won a design award in America and also the Sheffield Book Award. Winning this award particularly pleased him as it was the choice of children themselves. This same title features another imaginative hallmark of Rod's and that is to offer the quietly safe approach through most of a book as you look and feel your way, but suddenly come across a massive pair of jaws, snapping and gnashing at you from between the pages! I asked Rod if this dramatic ploy was a surprise, a threat or a wake up call and where did the idea come from? In reply he said, "All small children like to be scared in a safe context. I read *I Won't Bite* (Bitey croc at end) with a toddler who was a bit reserved at the first reading, demanded a second, and now that he knew what to expect, he loved the build up and anticipation of the croc to come. Third time, hand was offered to the croc to bite, knowing it was safe but enjoying the thrill of being scared!"

The remarkable innovative skills and diversity of his books have been produced with no formal art school training but with an unusual background, having been born in Scotland and growing up in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) between the ages of 2 and 23. There being no art school, he returned to England and did research in organic chemistry at university, finally giving it all up and moving to London to paint. The breakthrough came after making some designs for Galt Toys which led him to



Two-year-old Emma enjoys what is to be found in *Dear Zoo*

illustrate some early learning books for Blackie. Later he published his own books and commissioned others from talented authors and illustrators. Rod obviously enjoyed this role by confirming, "It is a great freedom and allows me to publish books before others cotton on to the same ideas and one can be ahead of the game, as it were." This is true of all Rod's work, but in particular the innovatory, multi-sensory books. These established not only a hallmark image, unique to him at the time but has also been an immense influence over books for very young children ever since. As for future books from Rod, "There will be a new Buster title this year and I would like to create a baby range of first books but it's a lot of work!!"

Mike Simkin

Dear Zoo Picture Puffins 1984 ISBN: 014050446X
I Won't Bite! Campbell Books 1992 ISBN: 1405050977
Dear Zoo Board Book Campbell Books 1998 ISBN: 0333712781
I'm Hungry Campbell Books 2004 ISBN: 1405032464
Pop Up Dear Zoo Campbell Books 2004 ISBN: 140505686X
Dear Zoo Book and Jigsaw Pack Campbell Books 2005 ISBN: 1405054565

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