

An Interview With Christine Petrell Kallevig

by Pauline Davidson, Bluepaper Reviews



Christine Petrell Kallevig and her wild little beagle, Kirby.

Okay, first things first. There are two titles for this book. Why?

The first title, *Please Pass Grandma's Leg*, describes the book's emotional conflict. The second, *AKA: The Case of the Sacked Potatoes*, describes its plot, the mystery to be solved. Each book in the Nose 'N Me Mystery Series will have two titles because our hero, Roland Weedervich, figures stuff out about himself while he's also solving the mystery.

***Please Pass Grandma's Leg*... That's a great title, but where did it come from?**

The *leg* part or the *please pass* part?

Both.

Don't you think *Please Pass Grandma's Leg* sounds better than *Please Pass Grandma's Toes*? Asking for her *leg* is much better than requesting her "fake lower limb" or her "fabulous new prosthesis device scientifically designed to make mobility possible for an overweight elderly amputee."

Okay. It sounds right, but I guess what I really want to know is, where did the idea come from?

It happened to me! I came home from school and caught my diabetic grandma passing her artificial leg around to my sister's friends. All the little kids from the neighborhood were crowded around our backyard sandbox, completely mesmerized by her leg. It was a scene I never forgot.

And the "Please Pass" part?

Among a dozen other hang-ups, Roland has problems with being overly polite.

Are you overly polite, too?

Only on my good days. My sons would probably tell you that I'm NEVER polite...

How long have you been writing?

My first book, *Folding Stories: Storytelling and Origami Together As One*, was published in 1991. Since then, I've written three more Storigami (Storytelling + Origami = Storigami) collections, a book for preschool teachers, *All About Pockets: Storytime Activities for Early Childhood*, and a historical novel, *Carry Me Home Cuyahoga*. Those are my published books. Most of my writing is stored in boxes and old notebooks - letters, stories, journals, and practice novels that will never see the light of day...

And now you're writing this new mystery series? Isn't that a big change?

No. I've been a professional storyteller for a long time. I speak mostly in schools or to family audiences at libraries or museums, and I *love* telling funny stories. I love mysteries, too, and quirky characters in weird situations. So the Nose 'N Me Mysteries are a perfect fit. Plus I have an attitude about diabetes.

You have an attitude about diabetes? Diabetes is an important issue in this book.

Yes, but not in a "how-to" kind of way. I don't like how diabetic characters in other books are always so stiff and crabby. Just because someone has to inject insulin doesn't mean that they can't laugh or enjoy life or be creative or wear huge electronic hats. Diabetics aren't perfect, even though they have to be impossibly perfect in order to perfectly manage the disease. The point is, perfection isn't a reasonable goal. Not in diabetes management, and not our regular lives, either. Roland is newly diagnosed. He doesn't know how to deal with diabetes, yet, and makes plenty of rookie mistakes about a lot of things. He doesn't know how to fit in at school, how to be a friend, how to deal with bullies. Like most sixth-graders, he has an active fantasy life and exaggerates his positives *and* his negatives, his blunders *and* his skills. Hopefully he'll figure out how to succeed as his true self in the next few Nose 'N Me Mysteries. I think he makes some progress in this first book.

You talk about Roland like he's a real person. Is he?

He's real to me. All the characters are. They're everyone and no one. They're me. They're not me. Who knows where they came from, what will happen to them? Finding out is what makes writing such a joy.

And a joy to read. What's the next Nose 'N Me book about?

I don't want to reveal too much, but the title is, *The Abominable Abominable Snowperson - AKA: The Case of the Dogged Delinquent*.

I'm looking forward to reading it. Will you tell me about beagle mania the next time we talk?

Woooo Woooo Wooooould you be referring to my wild little dog? Sure, I'll tell you whatever you want to know, but you have to help me catch her, first.

It's a deal. I'll wear my running shoes and bring lots of pizza. Good luck, and we'll talk again soon.

Know an interesting author? Tell Pauline at bluepaperreviews@att.net