

"SQUIRT" IS A story about a squid and is written by Stacy A. Nyikos and illustrated by Shawn Sisneros. The children's book has the full approval of the Oklahoma Aquarium. Nyikos will be at Brace Books and More from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Thursday.

'Squirt' Author Here Thursday To Visit Schools, Sign Book

"Squirt" is the title of a book about squid written by Stacy A. Nyikos, which has received a stamp of approval from the Oklahoma Aquarium.

The author will be in Ponca City on Thursday to visit two elementary schools and autograph at Brace Books and More. She will spend Thursday morning



Stacy A. Nyikos

at Lincoln Elementary School and the afternoon at Woodlands Elementary School. At 3:30 she will be at Brace Books and More to meet the public and sign copies of her book until 5 p.m.

Written by Nyikos and illustrated by Shawn Sisneros, "Squirt" is a rhyming picture book story about a young squid who loves sea horse rides, sand castles, and games of ink and hide. When he becomes very attached to a cartoon on his "holoclam," he withdraws from his usual outside activities, preferring to watch TV all day. Even when his "holoclam" disappears, he can't break away from his desire to do nothing but watch TV ... until his inky tantrum prompts a sudden discovery of the wonders of the world outside, and the possibility of finding his most beloved cartoon hero inside of himself.

A page of true facts about squid (did you know that squid can fly above water?) offers a wrap-up to this tale with a message about hidden qualities inside oneself and the power of imagination.

Author Nyikos, is an award-winning writer, as well as a musician and teacher. Her work has been featured in various political journals and books. When she is not writ-

ing, she spends her spare time playing — violin, that is. A resident of Tulsa, she has played with various orchestras both in the U.S. and Europe. "I often relied on the money I made playing to pay the bills in graduate school."

For her debut children's picture book, she pulled upon experiences both old and new.

"I have to confess, Squirt is a product of a lot of long, cold winter months in Indiana. You couldn't always be outside playing, not when it's below zero. I spent a lot of time watching cartoons. My mom was not happy," she says.

The character of a squid named Squirt emerged later.

"My oldest daughter put the idea in my head. We were at an aquarium, and the first thing she did in the giftshop was bypass the small book display and go straight for the plush toys. I couldn't blame her. There wasn't much there to catch a child's eye." And that's when the idea came to her, a picture book that kids will want to read and that gives them exciting, fun, interesting facts about marine life.

"I tried to create a Jan Cannon meets Dr. Suess for marine animals." Clearly the idea is a catchy one. The Oklahoma Aquarium jumped in full force behind the book, agreeing to feature it in their giftshop, as well as put together special information days on cephalopods, run contests and do book signings.

Illustrator Sisneros is a well-known local fine artist. Originally from New Mexico, he first traveled to Tulsa for his undergraduate, then moved on to Chicago for a bachelor's in fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He returned to Tulsa after finishing his degree.

Over the last four years, Shawn's contemporary paintings have been featured in various galleries and auctions across town. He has been com-

missioned to do numerous oils for patrons.

But his early love of animation would not rest.

"My oils were doing well," he explained, "and I was ready to try something new. I was thrilled when approached to do the illustrations. I read the book, and I was hooked."

To complete the illustrations for "Squirt" Shawn spent a lot of time in the Oklahoma Aquarium watching all kinds of sea life.

"I practically became one of the aquarium's exhibits." Aside from studying illustrated work on squid and research published on them, "I used the book as an excuse to get caught up on all of the animated movies I had missed in the last few years." Then the drawing process began. It took fifteen months.

Jean Brace of Brace Books and More remarked that this story "offers a fun way to remind parents and encourage children to use their imagination, not just let TV dictate it. We have copies of the book on display now, and for those who would like to have a book autographed but who are unable to attend the event on Thursday, we would be glad to have the autographing done for you. Just call us at 765-5173 or 800-256-5173 or email us at email@bracebooks.com."