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# M. E. Kerr Addresses NCASL

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North Carolina Association of School Librarians' program speaker was M. E. Kerr, noted children's/young adult author. Unfortunately, because of copyright considerations, we are unable to print her entertaining address. We are including, however, NCASL President Helen Tugwell's introduction to Ms. Kerr so that you might become more familiar with this popular author's life and work.

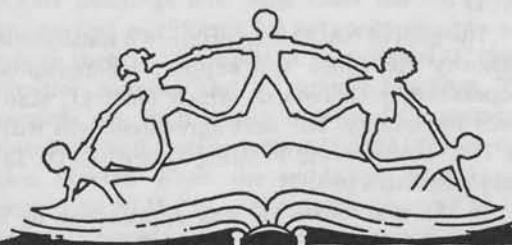
M. E. Kerr says that she was very much formed by books when she was young. Author of many award-winning young adult novels, she says "I was a bookworm and a poetry lover. I think of myself, and what I would have liked to have found in books those many years ago. I remember being depressed by all the neatly tied-up, happy-ending stories, the abundance of winners, the themes of winning, solving, finding—when around me it didn't seem that easy. So I write with a different feeling when I write for young adults. I guess I write for myself at that age."

The pen name M. E. Kerr is from her real last name *Meaker*—Marijane Meaker. She was born in Auburn, New York, attended the University of Missouri and went to New York City after graduation with great plans to be in advertising or publishing. While working in various boring jobs, she wrote. Her father's advice was "Don't write poetry and don't marry a poet." Her first story, published

under the name Vin Packer, was sold to *Ladies Home Journal* in 1951.

Twenty years later, M. E. Kerr wrote her first book for young adults, *Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!* It was named a Notable Children's Book of 1972 by the American Library Association, a Best Children's Book of the Year by *School Library Journal*, and later adapted into an ABC-TV "Afterschool Special."

Ms. Kerr now lives in East Hampton on Long Island, New York. She has written adult mysteries under the name Vin Packer; as M. J. Meaker she has written other books for adults. She finds that there is an important distinction between writing for adults, whose values are already formed, and for young adults, who are concerned with the basics of making and losing friends and wondering what to do with their lives. And, she states, "My 'job' as a writer of books for young people is to entertain them, hope they will want to come back for more."



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