



## **Magic and Imagination**

### **BOOK REVIEW:**



By Del Meyer, MD

**ASHLEY AND THE MOONCORN PEOPLE** by Jared James Grantham, MD, Leathers Publishing, Division of Squire Publishers, Inc, 4500 College Blvd, Leawood, KS 66211, 1-888-888-7696 ©2002, ISBN: 1-58597-134-0, 66 pages.

ONE OF THE UNEXPECTED PLEASURES of returning to a medical school class reunion is to meet classmates as unique colleagues and professionals. I discovered that my classmate, Jared Grantham from Dodge City, Kansas, has not only become a Kansas University Distinguished Professor of Medicine, but also a writer of children's books. He has four children and nine grandchildren to entertain, and he wrote this book to honor his first grandchild, Ashley.

This encouraged me to reflect on the history and position of children's literature in our social structure. I found that children's literature emerged as a distinct and independent form of literature in the second half of the 18th century. During the 20th century, its growth was so luxuriant that it commanded the respect given any other recognized branch of literature.

I also found that all young literates, from the instant they joyfully leaf through a picture book or listen to a story, up to the age of about 15, may be called children. This volume should find a place in the homes of many colleagues and friends who not only have literates of their own, but who themselves can find charm and motivation to read aloud in children's literature.

Ashley, the central character of Mooncorn, watches her father dig up the stump of a 100-year-old oak tree. His shovel inadvertently breaks a glass mason jar containing a note which reads, "Please help my tiny friends find a new life."

The author weaves a delightful tale of magic and imagination that comes alive one evening after Ashley's mother puts her to bed. Ashley is not frightened when tiny "Tork" shows up on her windowsill because in Kansas little girls believe in fairies, Oz and dreams-come-true. Ashley is introduced to Tork's wife Marie and the tale of their capture 100 years ago after they drank a hypnotic potion; their rescue from a cage in a wagon prison; their ship ride from Europe to America; the journey across the great new land.

When eventually they stop to camp in Prairie Village, Kansas, a rescuer gives them some Magic Mooncorn seeds that would eventually restore them to normal size. During the full moon, the rescuer placed them in a mason jar along with the seeds that have been preserved for a hundred years.

The planting and growing of the Mooncorn provides the continuous magic and ultimately brings this delightful tale to a beautiful ending. The author weaves a Wonderland and Lilliputian tale that not only captivates children, but also adults who admittedly make up a large part of the readership of children's literature. They are after all the writers,

publishers, selectors, purchasers, and readers of these tales to children.

Dr. Grantham was fortunate to have Craig Lueck, a painter inspired at first by his native Wisconsin countryside and more recently by the Kansas Prairie, to illustrate his book.

The pictures certainly add to the enjoyment: Ashley on the stump watching her father; Tork on the window ledge drinking water Ashley poured into a thimble; the nocturnal trips in moonlight to the Mooncorn; how the Mooncorn was saved from rain and hail; Tork and Marie sleeping ever so peacefully in Ashley's shoes hidden under her bed. This volume will take a worthy place in this third century of children's literature. This delightful book, which is in its second printing, can be obtained directly from the publisher by calling the above number.

[delmeyer@healthcarecom.net](mailto:delmeyer@healthcarecom.net)

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society  
5380 Elvas Avenue #100 • Sacramento, CA 95819  
916.452.2671 PH • 916.452.2690 FX • Email: [info@ssvms.org](mailto:info@ssvms.org)

Copyright © 2000-2008 Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society - All Right's Reserved