

# • Meet the Author •

## Marty Sederman

Interview conducted by Toni Buzzeo, career media specialist and author (visit [www.tonibuzzeo.com](http://www.tonibuzzeo.com)).



Photo from [martyseidermanbooks.com](http://martyseidermanbooks.com)

When her two boys were young, Marty started writing children's stories and poetry. *Casey and Derek on the Ice* is her second children's book and was inspired by the countless hours she has spent watching her sons play hockey and other team sports. She is an avid hockey player herself. Originally from western Massachusetts, where she developed a deep love of the outdoors and sports, Marty now lives in New Jersey with her family. She holds a B.A. in economics from Williams College, an MBA from Harvard, and an M.S. in psychology from The Pennsylvania State University.

**What an inspiration it was to create a retelling of "Casey at the Bat!" What was the initial spark that led you to do so?**

**MS:** A misstep with my first book was the motivation for writing *Casey and Derek on the Ice*. My first book, *The Magic Box: When Parents Can't be There to Tuck you*

*In*, was based on an idea I came up with to help Casey, my oldest son, deal with his father's frequent absences for work. Derek was just a toddler at the time. Luckily, I got it published, but unluckily, I was foolish enough to use Casey's name as the main character. I'd write another book about Derek ...right? Well I did, but was unable to find an interested publisher. Several years later when Derek was in kindergarten he asked, "Where's the book about me, Mommy?" I just had to get a book published about Derek. But what? Derek had recently started playing hockey and was totally excited about the sport. There were few hockey picture books available at the time, and one day after reading *Casey at the Bat*, I wondered why there wasn't an exciting sports poem like that for young hockey players. Then I thought, "I could write *Derek on the Ice*." But that didn't seem to have a direct enough connection to the famous poem. Of course, for obvious reasons I couldn't write *Casey on the Ice*. Quickly the game plan became clear: I'd write *Casey and Derek on the Ice* (and never use either of their names again if I ever got another book published!).

***Casey and Derek on the Ice* is written in rhyme that just begs to be read aloud. Can you share the joys and challenges of writ-**

**ing in rhyme, particularly when bounded by the requirements of the original text?**

**MS:** What a wonderful question. To appreciate *Casey and Derek on the Ice* fully, I totally agree that it must be read aloud. The meter—the poem's "heartbeat"—and suspenseful on-ice scenario combine to create more excitement than either could accomplish alone.

To me, the joy of writing in rhyme comes from the inherent challenge of the task. Just like putting the pieces of a puzzle together, I find it satisfying to find the right word or phrase, with just the right meter and rhyme that communicates the feeling or point I am trying to make. For athletes or performers who do something exceptionally well, their movements appear graceful and effortless. I aspire to make the meter and rhyme seem effortless and unforced. Since making something look effortless takes considerable effort, it's gratifying to me when I feel I've done it successfully.

When I decided to write *Casey and Derek on the Ice*, I thought carefully about how I wanted to be influenced by the famous *Casey at the Bat* poem. I decided my poem had to be written in the same meter and to have a similar opening—the

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home team in a desperate situation and running out of time. I would use the sad ending of the original poem (i.e., that Casey strikes out) to create suspense in my poem. While I wanted my poem to be clearly inspired by the famous baseball poem, it was critical for me to develop a plot and characters that were totally unique.

Ironically, since I used their names, my most challenging self-imposed requirement was to give Derek and Casey equally important roles in the story AND to give them equivalent “airtime.” So it just wasn’t good enough for one to score the tying goal and one to score the winning goal, each character had to be “talked about” in the story about the same amount. This was the driving force behind one brother drawing the penalty shot and the other brother taking the penalty shot.

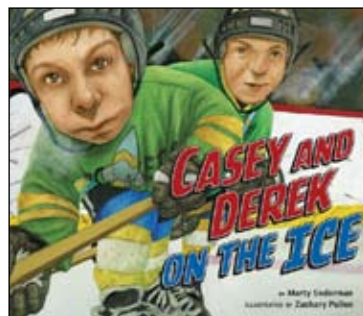
**Did you have real life models for the characters of Derek and Casey? Tell us more about your history with hockey and hockey players.**

**MS:** Just as the poem does not recount any one game I’ve observed, but is a condensed montage of all the exciting elements of hockey I’ve witnessed, the characters of Casey and Derek were inspired not only by my two boys, but by all the children I’ve seen who play their sports with grace, passion, and deep respect for their teammates.

Although I grew up in Massachusetts, I did not start out as a hockey fan. My hus-

band, Rob, however, is a huge hockey fan and still enjoys playing the game with his buddies as often as he can. We started our children skating when they were about three or four years old. Soon, they began playing hockey. Several years ago, while I was watching Rob, Casey, and Derek at “family hockey night” at a local rink, I wondered why I was the only one not out there having fun. A few months later, I attended my first woman’s hockey clinic, got totally hooked on the sport and have played consistently every since. Learning to play hockey at the same time as my children has given me a unique understanding of their experience on the ice.

Because of our Massachusetts roots, we are avid Bruins fans.



**Did you and your illustrator, Zachary Pullen, do any collaborating on the illustrations in Casey and Derek on the Ice?**

**MS:** Most authors and illustrators never meet or talk. My only input into Mr. Pullen’s wonderful illustrations was to provide some guidance about the “hockey itself.” For example, in the picture showing Derek being tripped, the trip has to be depicted “from behind” (i.e., with the opposing

player behind Derek when the trip occurs). If not, a penalty shot would not be called by the refs.

Mr. Pullen was kind enough to use Casey’s and Derek’s jersey numbers (17, and 27, respectively) in the pictures.

**What role do you think picture books about sports play in young readers’ lives?**

**MS:** My two sons loved picture books when they were younger, but I often found it difficult to find boy-oriented books they’d enjoy, especially as they got a little older. Many of my friends shared similar frustrations. Girls seem to have a wider variety of titles available to them, from sports and adventure to princess-oriented stories. I think fast-paced picture books about sports are a wonderful way of engaging boy readers as well as girls.

**How can readers learn more about you and your books?**

**MS:** My website, [www.marty-sedermanbooks.com](http://www.marty-sedermanbooks.com), has some additional information about my background and my two children’s books as well as an email link if someone has additional questions or thoughts to share.

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**Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is an author as well as a career library media specialist. She is the author of eleven picture books, most recently No T. Rex in the Library! (McElderry, 2010) and many professional books and articles. Visit [www.tonibuzzeo.com](http://www.tonibuzzeo.com) or e-mail Toni at [tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com](mailto:tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com).**