

The Real Mrs. Skorupski

by Toni Buzzeo

As is so often the case in our virtual world, and particularly in our exceedingly electronic profession, I first “met” Arizona library media specialist Diane Skorupski online some years ago. However, it wasn’t until October 8, 2003, that we met the old-fashioned way, face-to-face, in an airport shuttle on the way to the AASL conference in Kansas City. We were immediately yammering away, swapping “war stories” of our library careers, commiserating over our challenges, and glorying in each other’s company. I must admit that both Diane and I are over-the-top extroverts, fast-talkers, and enthusiastic communicators. We must have made a two-woman show there in that shuttle.

As we fell to talking about my published children’s books, Diane said, “Here’s a great story for a children’s book: the librarian who won’t tell you anything.”

“What?” I asked, unclear about her meaning but sure it was going to result in a belly laugh.

“Well, true story,” Diane said. “A new kid arrived at my school and came down to the library to do research with his class. He was unclear about how to locate the information he needed and mentioned to a fellow student that he’d just ask me.”

“Our librarian won’t tell us ANYTHING!” came the student’s resounding reply.

“You know,” said Diane. “I don’t TELL them anything. It’s true.”

I laughed in anticipation of the punch line.

“Nope. Instead, I use questioning techniques to help focus the students’ thinking, rather than just *answering* them.”

Diane remembers me emphatically announcing, “There’s a story in that,” when she had finished telling her tale. I determined to tuck the idea away in my over-full writer’s brain.

Fast-forward two years to October 8, 2005, at the AASL conference in Pittsburgh. For twenty-four months Diane and I had kept in touch occasionally, life had sped along as it does, and I had



become a full-time speaker and writer and forged a new relationship with UpstartBooks. In fact, at an AASL breakfast meeting, I’d talked with my editor, publisher, and art director about the possibility of writing a children’s book for them.

Serendipity was in operation that day! At my children’s book signing, who should arrive with exclamations and books to sign but Diane?

“Have you given any thought to that idea we talked about in Kansas City?” she asked as she rounded the signing table to give me a hug.

In a flash, I remembered the conversation two years previously and the fabulous idea of a librarian who won’t tell you anything. “Write it down for me this time,” I commanded her.

I left my signing with these words printed on the back of my business card:

Our Librarian Won’t Tell Us ANYTHING
Diane Skorupski

On Sunday, I boarded a plane for home and had a flash of inspiration. I dug an envelope out of my bag and began to write in tiny script (so I’d have plenty of room for the story to unfold):

On my very first day at Liberty Elementary, Mr. Dickinson sent me down to the library media center.

The real Diane Skorupski is as charming, enthusiastic, wily, and intelligent as the fictional Mrs. Skorupski. And I owe all of the inspiration for *Our Librarian Won’t Tell Us ANYTHING! A Mrs. Skorupski Story* to her! Thanks, Diane.