

A GOLD GONG FOR NIKI!

IBBY SA

Niki Daly was awarded a Molteno Medal in Gold by the Cape 300 Foundation for his services to literature at an event hosted by the Foundation in the Old Town House in Greenmarket Street.

Member of the Cape 300 Foundation Council and also IBBY SA Chairperson, Robin Malan read the citation for Niki Daly's award. This is what he said:

'For the last ten years, Britain has had a Children's Laureate, and for only one year now, the US has had a National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. If South Africa had such a doyen of children's book writers and illustrators, there is no doubt that Niki Daly would be it. Certainly, Niki Daly was the first South African children's book illustrator to be nominated for the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Award.

'Not that any of those fancy, posh words - "laureate", "ambassador", "doyen" - have anything much to do with the working-class boy from Observatory, who grew up in Observatory, went to Observatory Junior School and then Observatory High School, and who still lives and works in Mowbray-Observatory, as he has done for most of his life.

Niki tells of his childhood in the suburb: the little boy sitting on the kerb of the pavement, dreaming dreams. Moreover, he reckons that is pretty much what he is still doing, though he may have migrated, somewhat reluctantly, from the pavement to his desk and drawing-board.

After matriculating, he attended the Cape Technikon where he obtained a Diploma in Art and Design. In 1970 he went to England, worked as a graphic designer/illustrator, and taught at the East Ham College of Technology. In 1980 he returned to South Africa, where he has worked as a teacher and freelance illustrator, and headed the Graphic Design Department of Stellenbosch University until 1989. Then, for some years he developed Songololo Books, a children's book division for David Philip Publishers.

'Niki is internationally known as a children's book writer and illustrator. Sometimes he illustrates books that other people have written; on occasion he writes and someone else illustrates his books; but most times he does both: he writes and illustrates.

'One of the things that Niki will be remembered for is that he introduced the urban working-class black child as authentic hero in South African children's literature.

One of Niki's early successes - and probably still my favourite among his picture books - is **Not so fast, Songololo**, in which the hero is a small township boy whose Gogo takes him to town to buy new tackies.

'And, in recent years, readers the world over have grown to know and love Jamela ("wearing funky trousers and sporty red shoes ... beaded braids ... a really cool kid") in a series of books: **Jamela's dress, Where's Jamela?, Yebo Jamela, Jamela's birthday** ...

Niki always makes sure that his new books are published or co-published in South Africa, but now he is regularly published in London, New York, Copenhagen, Paris, Brazil, Spain, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea. Therefore, as a writer and illustrator of children's books, he is clearly an internationalist. Yet, in his heart and his head, he and his work remain quintessentially South Africa and Cape Town.

'Niki Daly is a worthy recipient of the Molteno Medal in Gold.'



▲ Seen at the ceremony awarding Niki Daly a Molteno Medal in Gold for his service to literature are (ltr) Paddy Bourma, Jude Daly, Niki Daly, Robin Malan