

"I'm a real Moonraker," Pam Adams told me with obvious pride at the beginning of our conversation. As any good Wiltshire-born person



knows, a Moonraker is someone born in the county of Wiltshire – the term implies a canny country person well able to cope with the supposedly more sophisticated man from the city. This canniness and adaptability describes Pam Adams

well. Swindon-born, she has adapted to life in London several times in her life but was always happy to return to her Wiltshire roots in the end.

Born eighty years ago, Pam and her sister were brought up on Beatrix Potter, A.A. Milne, and Arthur Rackham, but her favourites were Richmal Crompton's *Just William* books. She still has one or two on her shelves today! She was always drawing as a child, so naturally Swindon Art College was where she began her formal artistic training, followed by several years at The Central School of Art in London before the war. During hostilities she was back in Wiltshire as a driver for RAF Wroughton.

"It was terribly easy to get jobs in London just after the war," she continued, "and I worked for a variety of advertising agencies in the 50s and 60s as a graphic artist."



When one firm she worked for folded, she and a fellow employee raced round to all the freelance artists (who would have been the last to be paid) and handed out all the art materials left on the firm's shelves. Her father's death and mother's failing health brought an end to this phase of her life and she returned to Swindon in the early 70s.

It was then that her life-long friend, Barbara Thompson, suggested that she might team up with Michael Twinn who had recently founded a small publishing firm called *Child's Play*. This was the beginning of an incredibly fruitful and successful partnership. "He was always the ideas man," she told me several times. She particularly enjoyed the variety in the projects she worked on at *Child's Play* – from books to games to tie-in toys. "She was an angel out of the blue," according to

Michael Twinn, "and although she had never worked on children's books before, her attractive art work, sense of humour and great versatility soon made her an invaluable member of the team."

A CONVERSATION WITH ILLUSTRATOR,

PAM ADAMS



The first book she illustrated was **There Was An Old Woman Who Swallowed A Fly**, first published in 1972 and still selling well all over the world.

Her bright, clear colours, appealing shapes and attention to detail made her pictures instantly successful with children. This book and others in the series – **This Old Man**, **Old Macdonald Had A Farm**, **This Is The House That Jack Built**, all available with soft cover at £3.99, were among the first in the United Kingdom to have holes.

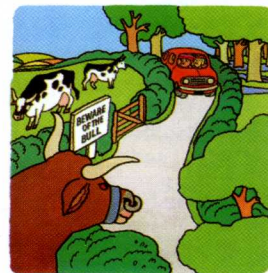
Child's Play were real innovators in the field of three-dimensional books, games and linked activities. Pam enjoyed the challenge of working with these projects. "She always adds something," Michael Twinn told me. "She was quick to see that the holes had to work both ways."

The company also led the way in the late 70s and early

80s in bringing out multicultural books and books to develop a child's sense of social responsibility

Special People, All Kinds, for example. Both ideas brought creative challenges which Pam enjoyed.

In the 80s it was decided to invest in a series of bath books. Pam happily faced and resolved all the problems and ensured that the end product was both safe and rewarding. Her **Wally Whale** continues to be one of their most popular titles. Her small board books that can fit into a child's pocket are also very popular. "Pam is a great stickler for detail," and "She can be relied upon to make sure that the frog has the right number of toes." Colourful, tactile activity board books also came out during that period – **Ten Beads Tall** and **The Helpful Shoelace** to name but two which are still available at £4.95.



I asked if any of the books were based on her own experiences or memories. She laughed and told me about a rather eccentric old friend of her mother's who saw a lamb chop behind every gambolling lamb in the fields around Swindon. **The Lady Who Loved Animals** came from that memory – a book with a twist in its tail! Her favourites among her many books are the **Mrs. Honey** series, which she wrote as well as illustrated in the 80s. In the first, **Mrs. Honey's Hat**, the hat goes through a wonderful transformation in the course of the story that would appeal to any child's sense of the ridiculous.

Of the top twenty books and products currently sold by *Child's Play*, at least half involve Pam Adams' artwork. One could say that her life as an illustrator of children's books has come full circle – her current project is the reworking of her first book **There Was An Old Woman Who Swallowed A Fly** for a new large edition of this best selling book.



Marianne Adey

Pam Adams' titles also include: **Great Pal Mouse** £4.99 **Pocket Python** 99p **Noah's Ark** £4.99 all published by *Child's Play International*

