

Editor's Note

In Full Blume

By Sharon Verbeten



As I walked into an unassuming hotel restaurant in Chicago during the ALA Annual Conference in June, I had my eyes peeled for a colleague I was meeting. Instead, I spotted an icon.

Quickly glancing to the right, I spotted a woman who looks just like Judy Blume, enjoying coffee at a quiet table. Upon finding my tablemates around the corner, I silently squealed, "Is that Judy Blume?"

After a few minutes of "should we or shouldn't we," we decided that the literary icon might not appreciate being interrupted, but she might be honored by the admiration of four librarians.

"Excuse me, we're librarians, and we love you!" That phrase, or something like it, tumbled out of my mouth and she smiled, courteous as ever—telling us that she came to this conference to thank librarians everywhere for their support of her work over many decades. We all chatted collegially until her breakfast soon arrived and were thrilled that she agreed to photos.

A few weeks earlier, I had just watched the documentary of her life on Prime Video. With the current tenor of censorship and challenges surrounding books today, it was eye-opening to hear about the challenges to her books over the years—with many people even challenging her use of the word "menstruation" in *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*.

As much as we'd like to think times have changed in that regard, they haven't really. People still get upset with books (often without reading them). They still speak of indoctrinating youth through books. They question whether books are appropriate.

Blume's books are often considered some of the most challenged of the twentieth century. Maybe that honor (!) alone is what has made her so revered by librarians and made her books so evergreen.

Her quote here should be a guiding tenet for all librarians and parents. "Let children read whatever they want and then talk about it with them. If parents and kids can talk together, we won't have as much censorship because we won't have as much fear."

Thank you, Judy Blume, for your wisdom, your words, and for graciously allowing four admiring librarians to interrupt your morning. &

Meeting a Legend: Editor Sharon Verbeten was thrilled—and a bit nervous—to meet legendary children's author Judy Blume in Chicago at the ALA Annual Conference in June. A once-in-a-lifetime treat!

Children & LIBRARIES

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