

A Self-Interview* with Marti Regan, author of Dogs of a Different Collar (January 2008)

(*means I asked myself questions I'd ask myself if I was a young reader and not myself :-)

Question: *What made you decide to write a children's book?*

Marti: I've always enjoyed writing, but I'd never thought of writing a children's book until we went to adopt Sadie, our standard poodle. Just as I write in the book about Abby, my husband and I couldn't decide between two adorable pups. I thought it would be fun to tell a story about the parallel lives of two puppy sisters. And, I also felt it was a story I'd have liked to read when I was young.

Question: *How did you think up the stories in the book?*

Marti: Not sure about how my brain comes up with the ideas. I just sort of imagine being the characters and the stories create in my head ... almost like seeing a dream, except I'm awake. Neat thing is that if I don't like the way a story is developing, then I rewind the image in my head and make up something different. I find it really fun.

Question: *Are the characters of Abby, Sophie and Jonathan based on anyone you know?*

Marti: In the initial versions of the story, Abby was based on me as a kid, but she morphed (that is, developed) into a much more gregarious and rebellious kid than I ever was. Jonathan certainly has characteristics of my son as a child, but none of the scenes come from his growing up. Sophie isn't based on any one person ... just a composite of girls I knew whose parents were always working and moving them around. I just projected how I might act in that situation, and voila, Sophie was born as a character.

Question: *What was the hardest part about writing a book?*

Marti: Let's start with what was the easiest! I love conceptualizing the story, creating dialogue and character development. The rough draft of Dogs of a Different Collar flowed easily. It took about 6 months, and I was only writing on occasional nights and weekends, as I had a full-time job and lots of other stuff going on. I loved this phase of writing a book. The reviewing and reworking and reviewing and reworking, again and again, is a grind to me. Also, since I decided to self-publish the book, I had to take on the role of hiring a professional editor, carefully making edits, and paying close attention to the details. This is not my favorite thing to do, so that's what I found to be the hardest part of writing a book.

Question: *How come you use your name, Marti Regan, when you're real name is Marti Szczur?*

Marti: I debated this decision for quite a time. Regan is my real middle name and is my maiden name (that is, last name before I married.) I finally decided that "Regan" is probably easier to remember, and since it was my name when I was kid, why not use it as my author name for my children books? Time will tell if this was a good decision!

Question: *How old are you?*

Marti: Hmm...let's say I'm old enough to retire and young enough to love Halloween and amusement parks. If you want more specificity, then you've got to work for it ... I'm between $((10 \times 6) + 1)$ and $((5 \times 2 \times 7) - (3 + 2))$

Question: *What did you do before you got old?*

Marti: There you go with that "old" word again! Do keep in mind that "old" is relative to one's own age. Okay, I may seem old to you, but to my 87-year-old mom, I'm a "youngster."

Anyway, before I got "old" (from your perspective), I worked as a computer scientist and manager at National Aeronautics and Space Agency ([NASA](#)) for 30 years – a very cool place to work – and then 7 years at the National Institutes of Health's [National Library of Medicine](#) (NLM), another neat place to work. In my opinion, what makes a job enjoyable is interesting and challenging work, along with motivated and amiable people. I found this combination at NASA and NLM.

Question: *What do you do when you are not working or writing or sleeping?*

Marti: Since I was eight years old, I've ridden horses, and I've owned horses for over 30 years. Riding and working with horses is certainly one of my passions. My current horse is Toblerone (Toby, for short) and what a cutie he is. Still young (4 years old) and full of personality.

I also love to travel and read and hike and play with my friends and family.

Question: *Will you write a sequel to Dogs of a Different Collar?*

Marti: I've got some ideas about a sequel ... maybe even another couple of books. If there is interest from my readers, I'm likely to get busy and write one. Readers, let me know!

Question: *Have you written any other books?*

Marti: Yes, I've got two other children books completed. One is a picture book called Lazy Daisy, the Love Dog. It is about a puppy, who enjoys cuddling more than scampering. When the pup's young owner becomes ill, Daisy's laziness becomes an asset when she becomes a 'love dog' at the hospital. The other book is an easy reader for 6-8 year olds, called Buddy, the Reading Dog. It is about Nicki, who hates school - particularly reading out loud when her stutter makes the other kids snicker. Her decision to never talk again changes after she meets Buddy, the reading dog. The gentle pup helps Nicki gain more confidence in her reading and relationship with her classmates. I'm in the process of sending out the manuscripts to publishers. Wish me luck!

I've also got some other book ideas and hope to find more time to write, now that I'm retired.

Have a question for Marti? Send an email to martiregan@aol.com