

## Don Freeman, 1908-1978

The following has been edited and updated by Roy Freeman from Anne Commire, *Something about the Author*, Volume 17, pages 60-69 published by Gale Research Inc. Detroit, 1976, which should be cited where the text is not surrounded by quotation marks. Note that most of content comprises quotes from Don Freeman's autobiography *Come One, Come All!* published by Rinehart & Company. Inc., New York, in 1949, which should be cited when using these quotes.

[This is not an official biography and there are a lot of holes. I have tried to repair incorrect statements and add what I could – RF, August 2008]

### Career in brief:

**Born** August 11, 1908 in San Diego, California, son of Mortimer Roy (a salesman) and Hazel (Currier) Freeman

**Married** Lydia Cooley (an artist), June 30, 1931

**Children** Christopher (1948, died shortly after birth), Roy (born 1949, presently living in Switzerland).

**Education** Attended Principia College (St. Louis, Missouri) and after graduation in 1928, the Art Students League in New York.

**Work:** Began as a trumpet-player in a jazz band; free-lance artist, painter, print-maker; graphic artist with the New York Times and New York Herald Tribune for more than 20 years; author and illustrator of books for children.

**Died:** in New York City, February 1, 1978 the evening after seeing the final proofs for A POCKET FOR CORDUROY through the press.

### Beginnings:

Don was born in August 11, 1908 in San Diego, California. He and his brother Warren were placed with a guardian, when they were quite young (date unsure, when Don was about 5?). Don's mother was ill and died shortly after. Don calls his guardian "Mrs. Blass" in his autobiography but her real name was something else. Their father, Mortimer Roy, who worked as a salesman in a clothing store in San Diego, visited them on Sundays. Don writes in *Come one, Come All!*:

"My story begins when the world was a town named Chula Vista in a place especially designed for kids to stub their toes on. Here in Chula Vista, California, a few miles above the border of Mexico, I remember discovering that I was alive and free – to a certain extent.

"Life in those days seemed to consist solely of freckles, pepper trees, and a woman named Mrs. Blass. More than anything else her presence became the inevitable obstacle standing in the way of complete freedom. Through certain arrangements which were not made entirely clear to me at the time, Mrs. Blass had become the guardian over my brother Warren, myself, and a boy named Botsford Beverforden. She was extremely strict and appropriately plump, endowments which would have been perfectly acceptable to us had she not possessed a zealous urge to remake the rest of the world in her own image and likeness.

"Botsford's parents were both living at the time; however they were living apart from each other. His father, I remember hearing, was in the consular service attached to some country as distant as Siam, while his mother shivered in Alaska. Mrs. Blass had come into the picture opportunely by contracting to care for Botsford until his far-flung family could pull itself together.

"My brother Warren, having four more years to his credit than both Botsford and myself, was allowed a comparatively free rein while we two were held in firm check. Any failure on our part to toe the line brought forth cool beads of perspiration on Mrs. Blass's brow like early morning dew on a pumpkin – a condition we gradually learned to recognize as the first sign of an impending storm.<sup>1</sup>

"Without a doubt the brightest and most anticipated event of the week came on Sunday – the day my father traveled out to see us. It was his only chance to shower us with affection, as he worked the full week in a clothing store in San Diego, eleven miles away. I believe he lived for this day just as much as we lived for the few hours we could be with him.

"Each Sunday he would bring us presents – always three of a kind; although Botsford was not his boy, he was included in everything. Sometimes he brought clothes, sometimes games, but always he remembered to bring me drawing materials.

"We longed for the day when we could live in San Diego and see my father more often. Happily, sooner than we dared hope, this move was unexpectedly precipitated."<sup>2</sup>

When floods threatened their home in Chula Vista (year?), the Don, Warren, and Botsford moved with Mrs. Blass to San Diego into a small house owned by their guardian. Don and Warren's father followed later. "San Diego in those days purred along like a contented cat. Not that the inhabitants were in the least bit lazy; they just seemed to surge ahead but in one place—and a more beautiful place for such placid movement could not possibly be found. From nearly every window in the entire town the view of the bay was almost inescapable. However, our house on Kalmia Street had many windows but none of them exposed the bay, which was perfectly all right because we had other things—kids next door. I wanted neighbors more than I wanted a view. I had had all the scenic wonders I needed. The floodwaters would hold me for a long time.

"I daresay that Kalmia Street held more life and energy than any other thoroughfare in town, most of which to be sure was expended by one family in particular, the Bartletts. Mrs. Bartlett had several children, with another always in process. Some of their names are implanted in my memory like a sailor's tattoo: the girls' names were Delight, Joanna and Rosemary and my special pals were Squeak and Legler.

"The houses themselves were two- or three-story affairs, ours being by far the funniest: a two-story square stucco contraption with a windowed topknot called the solarium. In this solarium Mrs. Blass kept all her precious keepsakes, such as a pair of crutches that once belonged to her deceased husband, several charcoal portraits of relatives and one of a very small boy in a lace collar, wearing long black stockings (we were never told who he was).

"It got to be a full house, especially when my father came and lived with us. He had the room next to mine and it did begin to feel more like home. Although we rarely saw him during the week, since he rose early and worked late, just knowing he was close by helped a lot. Ever so faintly I could recall having felt this sensation of home before. That was during the brief period when my father and mother and Warren and myself lived together on A Street, farther downtown. Of my mother I remember only her frailty and strong devotion.

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<sup>1</sup> Don Freeman, *Come One, Come All!* Rinehart & Company, Inc., New York, 1949, p. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

"Having my father in the same house—well, it was like having somebody on your side, though he never interfered in any way with our appointed guardians sense of direction. Mrs. Blass had been recommended by a close friend of my mother's, and in her last long illness she had asked her to help care for us. Though circumstances prevented my father from being with us as often as he would have liked, his move to Kalmia Street was a reminder of a dim and pleasanter past and it brightened up the somewhat disjointed present.

"The greatest adjustment for living in the town of San Diego came with learning to wear shoes. After this quaint custom was accepted, there was nothing else to do but live abundantly within the limits of Mrs. Blass's eagle eye.

"Our living in San Diego really gave me the hoped-for chance to see my father more often. Saturday afternoons were usually spent with him in the clothing store where he worked for a gruff boss named Mr. McCusick. For a while Mr. McCusick had me convinced that he was a bear in human disguise, as he succeeded in scaring me whenever I arrived at the store asking for my father.

"When I wasn't busy sketching the customers [in the clothing store] I wandered around the block inspecting the penny arcades and ten-cent movies that showed hair-raising serial, the story content of which I stored up for our own back-yard after school productions. Saturday nights I had the privilege of eating dinner with my father, and whenever he didn't work in the evenings he would take me to see the local stock company's stage shows. These were rarer and memorable events for me. My father loved the theater and rarely missed a production if he could help it. Together we saw such plays as *Checkers* and *Seven Keys to Baldplate*. We would sit in the balcony and take turns looking through a small pair of opera glasses which he greatly prized."

**Christmas, 1918.** "It was like my father to know exactly what I wanted without my ever having to hint. For my tenth Christmas he gave me a present of a shiny brass trumpet.

...

No directions went along with the gift of the trumpet because my father knew the problem of learning how to play the instrument would have to be my own worry. But there was no worry to it. Whenever Mrs. Blass went out of the house I turned on the records and sat next to the Victrola and blew myself red in the face. Eventually I got wind of how to play scales and a few other essentials, and after several months I played along with the best recorded orchestras in the nation."

**Late 1920's.** Graduated from high school. "My attributes as a student can best be passed over, saving untold embarrassment all around. It is enough to say that I did graduate, though hardly with honors. It is a pleasure to recall that commencement day, since I know I will never have to relive it.

"As the solemn exercises began, terror seized me. From out of nowhere a telegram appeared. It was handed down the long row of frigid classmates and I knew it was addressed to me. I imagined its contents: STEP OUT OF LINE CALCULATIONS SHOW DISCREPANCY IN GRADE MARKING MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO GRADUATE.

"But I Was wrong! The telegram contained an invitation from my grandmother to come to San Diego and take a summer course in art—her graduation gift to me!

"It had been an unquestioned intention to make for New York immediately, but my grandmother's gift offering disarmed me and the enticements was irresistible.

"Studying art in the San Diego School of Fine Arts, situated in the midst of beautiful Balboa Park, had its value, although at first staying in San Diego seemed like a retrogressive step and it bothered my conscience. But soon I found that drawing from the nude model and studying anatomy were important activities and I became increasingly grateful to my grandmother for her present....

"I found a room on the other side of town, on Hermosa Street, and spent several mornings in the public library, where the sanctity of these walls became a refuge for reflection. I read Dickens, Dana, and Robert Henri's *Art Spirit*, and looked through all the popular magazines studying the illustrations. But all this was evading the issue. I knew I could no longer put off the idea of having to start earning a living. Art and illustration and the cool library were all right, indulgences certainly to be desired, and yet they were luxuries that had temporarily to take a back seat.

"The trumpet my father had given me for a Christmas present many years before still came in handy, and once in a while I found myself torn between a life playing the horn and a life using the pencil. Whenever I heard Bix Beiderbecke play cornet solos on the latest recordings I would have put my soul in hock to have been able to blow hot licks like his.

"... *To pay* my New York train fare plenty of musical notes had to be blown from my trumpet, and eventually I had no trouble securing small-time engagements for nearly every night.

"I played my first job in a tough boxing arena on the sailor side of San Diego, in a five-piece band. Our job was to strike up tunes immediately after a fighter hit the canvas for a K.O. The leader of the band knew more about boxing than he knew about music. He could tell to the punch how long the boxers would last, and before they went down for the count we had our instruments poised ready to rip into a chorus of 'If You Knew Susie Like I Know Susie.'"

**Fall, 1929.** Hitchhiked from California to New York, playing his trumpet on one-night stands across the country. "One state after another rolled out its vast earth-green rug under me. I was well on my way at last.

"But making a beeline across the map of America took slightly longer than calculated. I had to make a stopover in Indianapolis in order to do a little financial refueling. Picking up a few one-night orchestra engagements gave the needed pecuniary push and then I was ready to hitch a ride the rest of the distance.

"Standing on the highway just outside the city limits, I waved a battered trumpet case relentlessly at every moving object to come over the hill heading east. After a good hour of this exercise and with both my thumbs going numb I still had no luck.

" During this quiet spell by the roadside I could almost hear myself thinking, it was so peaceful—and if there was anything to be avoided at this stage, it was an examination of my own thoughts.

" True, I was now free and on my own for the first time, and yet having so much freedom all at once rather overwhelmed me. I hoped that no one would ask me what I intended doing and exactly what I wanted out of life because I realized one thing while waiting there—I had no clear answer.

" My mind was a menagerie of desires: I wanted to be an artist, certainly, but I wanted just as much to see New York and find out how everybody lived and how they looked and acted. I wanted to play a horn, too—this was probably the only thing I had a grain of confidence in doing—and along with this I wanted to find out whether or not it was possible to earn a living, at anything. What it came right down to, I suppose, was that I only wanted to live and look around."

Finally arrived in New York City. " Dazed at finding myself unexpectedly without a job and yet more than a little dazzled at having landed at last in New York, I stood on the corner of 47th Street and Broadway holding my horn in one hand and my suitcase in the other. From the open windows above came sounds of saxophones, pianos and trombones. This, I knew instinctively, was Tin-Pan Alley!

"By seven o'clock, dirty and dog-tired, I decided to call it quits and I checked into a small hotel off Broadway. After cleaning up and attempting a quick snooze I went out again for a bit to eat and to take in the Great White Way at night.

"The following day I reluctantly decided to have one last fling at picking up a steady job off the sidewalks.... But no luck. As a last resort I wandered into the Gaiety Building on Broadway, five floors packed with small-time sad theatrical agents. Each floor had nothing to offer but discouragement—except the fifth. Here the door of one of the offices was wide open. Taking this as a sign of cordiality, I walked in.

"Inside the stuffy and active office a singing sister act was giving a tryout. The walls were plastered with photographs of faintly famous entertainers: all had autographed their smiling faces to their agent, who at this moment sat talking into a pay phone planted on top of his desk. This must be Al Romero if the name on the door meant anything.

"In the middle of his conversation he suddenly stopped and looked up at—not at me, exactly, but at the trumpet case I was carrying. We eyed each other for a few seconds.

"Then, as he held his hand over the phone receiver, he shouted, "Hey a trumpet! I just now got a call for a trumpet job. Want to work?"

What's in it?' I asked him, fortifying myself against any further trickery.

It's a wedding reception at Hennington Hall down on the East Side. Eleven bucks. So I ask you, do you take it or don't you?"

Sure, but I gotta be guaranteed the eleven,' I said."

**1929-1930.** Supported himself by playing trumpet. Studied with John Sloan and Harry Wickey at the Art Students League He also traveled around New York with his sketchbook and by drawing, came to know New York. "New York and I were rapidly becoming good friends; in fact, instead of feeling like a stranger I began to feel as if we had known each other all our lives. Everyone was accepted on equal terms, and made you wonder where you'd been keeping yourself. But along with all this felicity went an inescapable obligation. I knew I had to do something in return for the privilege of being a part of such a family. Everything demanded to be recorded and my great worry was that the dime store supply of sketchbooks might run out. They seemed to have only a limited stock and I was practically buying them in carloads. They were small, inconspicuous, leather-bound books which looked like textbooks. I liked them for that reason. Sketch pads sold in art stores are obviously arty and a menace. Eyes always start bulging, heads twist around,

crowds gather, and an artist usually has to give up sketching. It's a natural reaction; even sign painters are bothered by gawkers. I know that if ever I happened to come across an artist sketching I would break my neck to get a look at what he was doing. But curiosity not only kills cats, it kills creation.

"That is why these dime-store books gave me the protection I needed. Whenever I started sketching, I pretended to be making out a laundry list or adding up a column of figures, mumbling aloud. This worked fairly well as a distraction, though I knew I couldn't go on mumbling such stuff as "three socks, six shorts, four shirts" forever. Yet I had to keep drawing so as to let the world know what wonderful people I had come across—not only the way they looked, but the way they invented lives for themselves out of nothing: carrying signs, fishing for change through sidewalk gratings, shinning shoes, peddling gardenias, selling corsets, plugging song hits, washing windows, sharpening knives. They made the streets a feast for artists.

"... From the instant I stepped into John Sloan's painting class, his forceful flow of wisdom made being there seem the rarest privilege anyone could ever have.

"The very appearance of the man sang out his greatness: his sharp eyes, jutting chin, his brushed-forward sheaf of steel gray hair helped keynote his character. Even his brilliant emerald-green tie exposed the fact that his ancestors were Irish. But what he had to say let us know even more convincingly that he came from high-voltage stock. Never in my life had I seen or heard anything to beat him. His words were like sparks and his ideas charged me with a live current of inspiration. Interspersed among his serious remarks was a sharp, deep and devastating wit.

His criticisms were given in an impersonal manner, never addressed directly to the student whose work he happened to be commenting upon but spoken so that all could hear. Art instruction to him apparently, was no private affair, it was as public as breathing, and he used our individual efforts merely as a springboard for discoursing on more vital matters. Philosophically, whatever Mr. Sloan had to say on art tied up directly with everything else in the world from nature to politicians. I gathered readily that he was just as vehemently opposed to seeing a student slave away meticulously copying the shadows on a figure as he was opposed to seeing the citizens of the nation complacently putting up with corruption; and he flayed both approaches with his blowtorch honesty. According to him, shadows were merely the absence of light, and if as students we were there to study how to create substance with color, then shadows hardly mattered. Form came first.

"His forthright observations of the work upon which he based his remarks made me quite nervous. I dreaded his seeing what I had awkwardly commenced painting.... Anything that reeked of the slick made him sick, and he said so in no uncertain terms.

"My work certainly came under the heading of clumsiness, but something of the slick also crept in—a mistaken notion of trying to give the impression of competence. All this had to go and a personal expression put in its place.

"Mr. Sloan encouraged us to feel as free as possible in interpreting the figure as long as we were not influenced by the 'photographic.' The 'camera eye' he called anything that looked flat. 'The camera can't think!' he said. 'It only photographs lies. If you would believe the camera's statements about nature, you would have to believe that the hand that is nearest you is always larger than the hand farther back. But this isn't so, both hands are the same size—that is, they were before the camera was invented. The artists in the past were never bothered by this sort of distortion—look at Rembrandt, Leech, Van Gogh—they actually resisted perspective!'

"The smoke-filled cafeteria at the League rated more adherents to varying schools of thought than any other department of the institution and fiercely enthusiastic discussions were always going on. All the students, however, agreed on one subject wholeheartedly—the importance of food.

"Early one noontime while sitting in the lunchroom finishing a bowl of soup, I felt vibrations from several powerful voices emanating from the classroom adjoining. Not a single booming word penetrated the wall distinctly, but rarely had I felt such compelling ardor, especially over art and, if I knew my vibrations, these were certainly most sincere.

" Printed on the door of the classroom was *Subjects: Etching and Lithography*. Lithography is a medium for drawing on stone with a greased pencil and it had always interested me, but since I hadn't yet learned how to draw on paper I judiciously put off getting involved with this fascinating process. Now the sounds from inside the class made me think I was missing something.

"Next day I signed up for instruction in this class and not long afterwards I too was shouting explosively. I found that the lithographic medium fitted my temperament to a T-square. The sensitive surface of the flat stone was so rewarding that it set me to work translating into prints all the random sketches I had gathered about town.

"Now my weekly calendar read something like this: Lithographing in the morning, painting in the afternoon and Broadwaying at night."<sup>3</sup>

### **Early 1930's.**

His trumpet playing ended quite abruptly when he lost his trumpet on the subway. "One night I was coming home on the subway and was so busy sketching I didn't realize it was my stop until it was almost too late. I lurched out of the train, the doors closed behind me, and I realized I had left my trumpet inside. I know it sounds melodramatic, but there I was pounding on the door. Losing my horn made me face the fact that I would have to make my living by drawing. I started submitting work to Arthur Folwell, the editor of the *Herald Tribune* Sunday section. My work kept piling up on his desk as Mr. Folwell found it quite resistible. Then one Saturday night I was walking up Eighth Avenue. I bought a Sunday paper, and there was one of my drawings printed on the front page of the drama section!"

"Had the drama editor known what a weekly pest I was to become after that, he probably would have reconsidered before using this first drawing. Every Monday afternoon at four, for the next several years, I appeared at his desk loaded with material gathered from my adventures through the stage doors of all the current productions. Having ecstatically crashed into the theater with this one drawing, it was almost unbelievable to me that such a privilege could also be a way of earning a living—seeing the plays and being paid for it at the same time!

"However, not *all* the drawings I showered on the drama department were used, far from it. Two long months went by before another drawing of mine appeared. It seems other artists had to live also. I became used to the routine of wildly opening the Sunday paper to find my drawing had been left out. The editor possessed a special gift for encouraging artists. He did it with such verbose versatility that it was almost worth going to see him every Monday just to hear how he would paraphrase his eloquent rejection.

"These drawings as they appeared were paid for by the column: in other words, if a drawing stretched across three columns I would be paid thirty dollars, ten a column. No matter how deep the drawing, it was the width that counted, a fact which may account somewhat for the tendency of my compositions to take on a rather wide rectangular shape!

"The appearance in print of this first drawing established necessary proof for the press agents of the various shows that I had legitimate business backstage.

" After having once passed through the stage door, I was a goner, given over completely to the fantastic backstage world of scene shifters, electricians, seamstresses, chorus girls and stars....

" After several of my drawings had appeared in the newspapers, including the now defunct *New York World* and the going concern called the *New York Times*, the desire to see something of mine printed on the glossy pages of a magazine prompted me to gather up enough courage to see the editor of *Theatre Magazine*. The art editor must have had a heart of gold, for right off she sent me out on an assignment to cover a rehearsal of Ziegfeld's 'Show Girl.'

"I had the opportunity of meeting most of the famous Broadway actors and actresses. At first meeting the stars in their dressing rooms made me nervous, but later I found that they were nothing but people with a coating of greasepaint. Most of them put up with my snooping, probably because their publicity agents told them it might mean getting their faces in the Sunday paper."<sup>4</sup>

Don's drawings appeared in the *Herald Tribune* for many years. His impressions of New York became a regular feature of the *New York Times* drama section and his work also appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Theater Magazine*, and several other magazines and newspapers.

**June, 1931.** Don married Lydia Cooley, an artist whom he had met while enrolled for the summer at San Diego School of Fine Arts. The couple made New York their home. Theater life continued to be lucrative – Freeman did a series of posters and a series of sketches for the famous New York restaurant, Sardis. "Came spring and came the girl from California and I could not help being extremely delighted and personally proud of the show my city put on for her welcome. New York emerged from the long winter with all the eagerness of a young bear romping out of hibernation. The population flocked into the sunshine seeking every opportunity to get out from under the cold gray shadows. Central Park flourished with enraptured couples. 'Keep off the grass' signs lost all authority – everyone broke the law and nature ruled supreme.

"Perhaps I was biased, but spring in the country could be no match for spring in the city! Seasonal signs of the earth's awakening were everywhere. In the windows of the drab tenements mattresses bloomed, pillows popped out on fire escapes with all the profusion of an orchard of blooming apple trees.

"Yes, the city in all its grimy glory helped me win over my girl Lydia to my way of life. Her name now became synonymous with spring. It was love at first sight between her and the city and soon afterward we were married in a little church around the corner from the Little Church Around the Corner.

"Word reached California about our matrimonial amalgamation. Not having heard from my old guardian Mrs. Blass for such a great while, it came more or less as a shock when a letter finally

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 153.

did arrive. She seemed not to be quite her buoyant self, probably because she learned that the girl was of my own choosing and not hers.

“Our honeymoon was spent revisiting all the places I had written Lydia about. She had to see Mulberry Street, Orchard Street, the Bowery, and of course Broadway. We took our time wandering around. Sometime we got caught in sudden spring showers, but nothing stopped us from sketching almost everything we saw. I hadn’t dared hope she would feel as I did about the city but there she was, driven to make watercolors and drawings of the city with the same elation as I had first felt. She found subjects I had blindly passed by. It seemed incredible to me that I could have skied so much.

“Eventually she met all my friends, who accepted her unanimously as I knew she would.”<sup>5</sup>

**1943.** Don and Lydia lived on 14<sup>th</sup> Street in the Greenwich Village. Don met William Saroyan, whom Don admired very much. Don writes: “Mr. Saroyan looked at my drawings and said: ‘I want you to illustrate my new book!’ I thought I’d never hear from him again, but I was wrong”<sup>6</sup> Saroyan did come back and asked Don to illustrate his books, *My Name is Aram* (1940) and *The Human Comedy* (19??).

#### **1943-1944**

Don was in the Army at Camp Gruber, Missouri.

**1945.** Don illustrates James Thurber’s novel: *White Deer*. Also in 1945 Don published *It Shouldn’t Happen*, a story about a dog who was drafted into the Army based on Don’s experiences.

**1948.** Don and Lydia have a son, Christopher, who was born with Down’s syndrome and only lived a few days. He died of heart failure. Judging by the lack of information, this must have been a devastating experience for them.

**1949.** Their second son, Roy, was born in Santa Barbara, California where Freeman and his wife had returned to live.

**1951.** Don and Lydia write and illustrate their first book for children, *Chuggy and the Blue Caboose*. Lydia focused on the text, Don did all the illustrations. Marjorie Rankin, the librarian at the Santa Barbara Library, encouraged Don to send *Chuggy* to a publisher. When Don asked which publisher, Marjorie said: “Why not try for the best, May Masee at The Viking Press”.

Don writes: It was published, and since then I’ve been hooked. Illustrating children’s books is an expression of the theatre for me. I can create my own theatre in picture books. I love the flow of turning the pages, the suspense of what’s next. Ideas just come at me and after me. It’s all so natural. I work all the time, long into the night, and it’s such a pleasure. I don’t know when time ends. I’ve never been happier in my life!”<sup>7</sup>

#### **San Francisco:**

Don covered the UN Founding Meeting for *The Christian Science Monitor*.

<sup>5</sup> Come One Come All! Page...

<sup>6</sup> “Don Freeman”, article in *Books are by People*, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Citation Press, 1969.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. (Bennett) page unknown.

**1953.** Don and Lydia won the Book World Children's Spring Book Festival Award for their second book, *Pet of the Met*.

Don continues to write and illustrate children's books; Lydia concentrates on bringing up Roy. She works also in primary schools and occasionally illustrates books on her own.

**1958.** Don creates one of his favorite books, set in San Francisco (where his family lived in Sausalito) *Fly High, Fly Low* is a runner-up for the Caldecott Medal.

**1964.** *Dandelion* published. A Freeman idiosyncrasy was the habit of checking into a hotel as a book deadline approached so that he wouldn't be distracted. "I've finished books in hotels in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City, and a host of other big cities. *Dandelion* a funny account of a lion who decides to live up to his name, was done in a gloomy hotel room in Washington, D.C."<sup>8</sup>

**1968.** *Corduroy*, a story about a stuffed bear in green corduroy overalls was published. The Freeman's made Santa Barbara their home although Don continued to visit often and work in New York. "If I had a map of the world and someone gave me a thumbtack to place where I would *not* want to live, I'd put it on Santa Barbara. We live in a wooden house, sort of a mountain cabin. When someone asks me about it, I just say, 'It's beautiful – but I don't mind it!' I'm a city guy. I love big cities. I love to be involved with big cities. I only need one bush or one tree – out there I have too many. People keep me going. My hobby is living."<sup>9</sup>

**1973.** *Flash the Dash*, Don's twenty-fifth children's book is published. "As best I can recall, the idea for *Flash the Dash* began creeping up on me a few years ago, right after meeting two lively dachshunds that belonged to a friend of mine. These two dogs wanted to play games with me and they wouldn't take No, not now' for an answer. I remember innocently throwing some sort of rubber object as far as possible, only to have them dash after it and bring it back and lay it in my lap. I suppose they took turns. Anyway, this so-called game went on and on until my arm and patience grew weak to the point of exhaustion.

"Little did I know that these two perpetual-motion pets would continue chasing me in my mind for months afterwards. Finally one day I sat down and started to put together a story about a dachshund that delivered telegrams. The name Flash came naturally but the name for his mate took a bit of head scratching. Yes, she had to be Sashay."<sup>10</sup>

**February 1, 1978.** Died at the age of sixty-nine. His most recent book, *A Pocket for Corduroy*, was in press at the time of his death. Many of Freeman's books have been translated into foreign languages. In all editions, hardcover and paperback, there are more than one million copies of his books in print today. "Creating picture books for children fulfills all my enthusiasms and interests and love of life."

**For more information, see:**  
*Kirkus*, September 15, 1949;

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. (Bennett) page unknown.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. (Bennett) page unknown.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. (Bennett) page unknown.

*Christian Science Monitor*, November 10, 1949, May 7, 1964;  
*New York Times*, November 13, 1949, April 12, 1953, October 6, 1957;  
*New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, December 11, 1949, May 17, 1953, November 17, 1957;  
*Chicago Sunday Tribune*, June 7, 1953  
Bertha M. Miller and others, compilers, *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1946-1956*  
Horn Book, 1958;  
Horn Book, June, 1963, June, 1966, April, 1977;  
Muriel Fuller, editor, *More Junior Authors*,  
H. W. Wilson, 1963;  
Lee Kingman and others, compilers, *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1957-1966*,  
Horn Book, 1968:  
Lee B. Hopkins, *Books Are by People*, Citation Press, 1969;  
*Contemporary American Illustrators of Children's Book*, Rutgers University Art Gallery, 1974.