

# THE SCOOP

Spring-Ford 7th Grade Center Spring-Ford Area School District

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## ***The 61st Street Gang*** **An Interview With Mr. Ridgeway**

By Pragya Seth and Mackenzie Walters

Mr. Ridgeway's book's name is *The 61st Street Gang*. He wrote his book under the pseudonym Sidney Scott. It is selling for \$18.63 on Amazon.

**For people who have not read your book yet, could you please give us a quick summary of what it is about?**

When I was 11 years old, my family was very poor. And I had a member of the family who was doing pretty well, and that was my Aunt Shirley. And she decided that she would intervene in our family and come and pick me up in West Chester, Pennsylvania and take me with her to Philadelphia to live with her until the financial situation got to be a little better for my mother. So she literally adopted me for a few years and because she did that a couple things happened. Number one, I learned how to live in the city - I used to be a country boy. I learned how to live in the city, and make friends quickly. And also I learned to live in a fashion like my Aunt Shirley wanted me to live because she loved education and she loved sophistication, she loved the good life and she wanted something better for me. So thanks to her, my life is what it is right now. It would not have happened if it hadn't have been for my Aunt Shirley.

**What gave you the inspiration for this book?**

The inspiration came from the fact that a lot of the people in the book, unfortunately, are no longer alive, and I miss them. And I remember the times that we had and we didn't have a lot of money, so we were forced to be creative and resourceful with what we had. And the way I remember it, we had a wonderful time. It wasn't like today with a lot of people staying inside and playing Xbox; it was a lot of physical things outside. We played football, basketball, speed ball, stickball, wiffle ball - this was before frisbees - but we had a lot of fun right there in the neighborhood. We played on the city streets. And until we got an organized baseball team, that's what we did. And in the winter time we played board games, like Monopoly and Pokeno. Ultimately we learned how to play chess. So we were all interlocked with each other, and even though we weren't one big family, it felt like we were ale big family on that 61st Street.

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MacKenzie Walters

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## **Editor-in-Chief**

Mrs. Deanne Snelling

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## **Science** By Emily John

This marking period in science we talked a lot about the cell and what it does. Things we talked about were active transport, passive transport, osmosis, diffusion, and more. Starting were active and passive transport. Active transport is the movement of a substance through a cell membrane using the cell's energy while passive transport is the movement of substances through the cell membrane using no energy. Active transport moves from low to high concentration while passive transport moves from high to low concentration. We also learned about osmosis which is the movement of water molecules. We did an experiment to better understand osmosis. The experiment was the gummy bear lab. We placed a gummy bear in distilled water for 24 hours to see what would happen. When we came back to it, the gummy bear was much larger and felt like jello! Unfortunately, we could not eat the gummy bears. We also learned about diffusion which is movement from an area of higher concentration to lower concentration. We learned so much this marking period that we can't cover it all but what we learned was pretty cool.

## **Algebra** By Max Wolfe

Algebra was exciting and eventful this marking period. We learned how to solve systems of equations, find the point of intersection, and how to find the x and y of an equation. All of these skills, along with skills we learned in the previous marking period, were put to the test when we took the algebra midterm. The algebra midterm was a two part test taken over two days. It was compiled of all the skills we learned in the chapters 1 through 6 of the CPM algebra textbook. Each day had 12 multiple choice questions and 3 to 5 open ended questions. Along with the midterm, we had many tests and quizzes on what we learned. Throughout the marking period, we were pushed to our limits with the tests, quizzes, and eventually midterms our teachers used. But as all subject marking periods go, this is one for the books.

## **English: Quarter 2** By Harkrit S. Sandhu

In English class many people wrote essay after essay. And some even challenged Mr. Balden to a rap battle. Yours truly also tried, but ultimately failed. Also another English teacher wrote a book. In ELA we learned how to write argumentative writing. We focused on topics such as whether or not teachers assign too much homework, and the impact of technology on teens.

# Reading in the Second Marking Period

By Dustin Campbell-Waldeck

Reading in the second marking period was a treat. The main unit for this marking period was Getting Along. We also read the novel, *The Outsiders*. The stories in the textbook we read were "Oranges," "Ransom of Red Chief," "Amigo Brothers," "Dangers of Social Media," "The Teacher Who Changed My Life," and "Monsters are Due on Maple Street." We also learned about the three types of irony. In Mrs. Rotondo's class, we got a new student teacher, Ms. Jugernauth. As usual, at the end of the marking period we made our big projects. We took all the stories and their themes and put them on big posters (with song lyrics in Rotondo's class). With *The Outsiders*, we learned the true meaning of family and staying together. To summarize, this marking period we all learned that people are a lot better when we're all together.

## Outsiders Day

By Emily John

In the last marking period, we read *The Outsiders*. In the book, there are two rival groups, the Socs who were the rich kids, and the Greasers, who were a gang of poor kids who were rough and tough. Once we finished reading the book, the school got to dress up as either a Greaser or a Soc. Everyone seemed to enjoy the book, so when we got the chance to dress up as our favorite characters, everyone jumped at the opportunity. So on Outsiders Day, most of the school came in as their favorite characters from the book. People who decided to dress up as Socs came in dresses, vests and others nice clothing. People who came in dressed as Greasers dressed in leather, jean jackets and lots of edgy clothing. Outsiders Day was a fun experience and I believe everyone who participated, enjoyed it.

## Math

By Conor Neal

The major things that happen in math is the MAP testing and make-up MAP testing. We learn how to solve equations and inequality, and near the end of the marking period, we are learning about geometry with acute, obtuse, right angles and triangles. We also learned about the multiply properties. There were multiple vocabulary quizzes and a test and also mixed review. Plus, we also learned over 40 vocabulary words in three chapters and over 10 lessons.

## Social Studies: Quarter 2

By Griffin MacDonell

In the second marking period, we had to do many different papers and projects. Some of the various pages our social studies teachers threw at us were harder than others. The big project that we all probably remember is the state project. The state project was a different level of difficulty for everyone. Depending on whether you got a state with many cool facts or a state with absolutely nothing interesting at all would tip the scale of complexity. Some students got lucky and got a state like Pennsylvania or Florida and probably passed with flying colors. I'm glad some people had fun doing that project and I hope they will use these skills in the future.

## **Reading Olympics** By Pragya Seth

Reading Olympics is an informative way to learn and explore new genres of books and take part in a reading based competition. During the monthly meetings, you have the opportunity to pick books from the competition list. You can read your books, discuss them with teammates, and practice the competition questions. At the competition, the Spring-Ford team will oppose teams from other schools in the county. The moderators will ask each team a question from the books on the list. The team must then use their knowledge to attempt to answer as accurately as they can. At the end of each round, the scores are calculated and added to your scorecard. The overall score decides your placement in the competition or score category the team belongs in. This year the Blazin Booknerdz earned a red ribbon, the second highest, and the Rebellious Rams earned Blue, the highest. As you can see, Reading Olympics can expand your horizons when you are reading and gives you an opportunity to participate in a competition with teammates who enjoy reading as much as you do!

### **Spring-Ford's 2 teams - The Blazin Booknerdz and the Rebellious Rams**

Raehani Bandekar  
James Bonawitz  
Ankita Chakraborty  
Gauri Chopra  
Arnav Gupta  
Neng Jiang

Arhan Kaul  
Faryan Khandaker  
Naman Khandelwal  
Gianna Osborne  
Farhana Raisa  
Harkrit Sandhu

Pragya Seth  
Sam Vossen  
Ayan Zamam

Abaas Peera and Nandu Paila also participated throughout the year but were unable to make the competition.

## **The 61st Street Gang continued from page 1**

### **What is your writing process?**

My writing process has evolved over the years, because at first I would sit down and try to just write everything out in one big gush. But then I learned that what I had to do was I had to sit down and make an outline. And I got the idea from the old TV guide magazine, where they would give you a little blurb about each episode; you would know what Richie Cunningham was going to do that week, and how Fonsi was going to help him or whatever. And so for each of my chapters, I made a little thumbnail sketch so I would remember exactly what I was doing, and which characters were involved and so forth. And that served me well.

### **How long did it take you to write this book?**

It really took me about two years to write the first draft. And then I sat on it for another couple of years after that. And then I started getting interested in getting it published, so I put all of that first draft on disk in order to save it. Little did I know that the formatting of the disk would change and that when I put my old disks into the new computers, it came out like gobbledygook. So a couple years ago, I had to start all of over again. Thankfully, I had a hard copy of the first draft. And that might have been a blessing in disguise, cause when I sat down and wrote it from scratch, from the very beginning, I think I may have improved the novel.

### **How did writing about your past make you feel?**

It's a wonderful feeling to relive the best and sometimes most embarrassing moments of your life with people that you love. And as I said, some of those people aren't with us anymore, but when I write about them, they are; they come to life once again. I feel like I haven't really lost them forever.

### **If you could tell your past self one thing before you began to write your book, what would it be?**

Shut up and listen to your Aunt Shirley.

### **Why did you choose to write under a pseudonym?**

It wasn't my idea. My publishers came up with the idea because some of the moments in the novel are very frank and honest. And they were worried that my commentary about certain people might cause them to want to go to court. And I think they were worried more than I was that somebody would try to bring a lawsuit because I spoke the truth about how some people had bad habits and bad attitudes and so forth. And so, they got a little skittish and they urged me to come up with a pen name. Now, the pen name is interesting because I chose two figures from my life. I chose Sidney Poitier, the great African-American actor, and George C. Scott, the great American actor, and combined their names. Sidney Scott.

### **Does being a teacher affect your writing?**

It does because being a writing teacher makes sure when I write I'm doing it the correct way. The other thing is, as a 7th grade English teacher, I am really very very anxious to write a story about being a 7th grade English teacher. So some of my students who later

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**The 61st Street Gang continued from page 6**

on might find a novel by Sidney Scott about a 7th grade English teacher might find their personalities in their somewhere.

**Which author do you aspire to?**

Well I like Jerry Spinelli because he's got a really down to earth style and I think a lot of people are comfortable with it. I also like Langston Hughes because he wrote in a very naturalistic way. Although it might appear to be a little dated right now, but he was true to his culture and true to his ideas. I also like some of the great mystery writers and I would like to take a chance to write some mystery stories when I get a chance.

**What is your favorite book?**

My favorite book? It probably is *Nine Stories* by J.D. Salinger. I like the short story form. My first effort has been a novel because it came out that way and it is about my life, so it is easier to frame it. But I would really like to have the chance to write a bunch of short stories that have a tinge of truth and a strong bend for irony.

**Are you planning on writing another book, if so what will it be about?**

My next book is going to be about the 61st Street Gang moving up. In other words, we start off very young, and then we get to the point where we are leaving elementary school and going to junior high school. And we get the chance to actually play formal sports. My friend Dwight introduces us to this baseball team that is being introduced by the local recreation league, and we get a chance to actually get out there with baseballs, bats, uniforms, and so on. And it's a little different than playing on a city block.

**What scene in your book was the most difficult to write about?**

The assassination of John F. Kennedy. It was very difficult because my whole family was really very fond of the president and he was starting to make good things happen for civil rights, and for America in general. And then we lost him on that faithful November day. It was a shock. It's hard to lose a president that you love.

**Do you think most 7th graders can relate to your book in some way?**

I think so because there are moments in the book that talk about ordinary behavior - nobody in this book is a saint; everybody has their own foibles and flaws. And I think the language is down to earth enough so they think it is too elevated or sophisticated. And a lot of the book is just about having fun.

**Do you believe in writer's block?**

Not with this because it comes from my own life. If I were to write something completely from scratch, completely from my imagination, I think that probably could happen because writers don't have much to draw from. They have to figure how to make point A connect with point Z, and the toughest part is right there in the middle where things really need to shift from the climax to the falling action and that can be really difficult.

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## **Movie review: *Ralph Breaks the Internet*** By Emily John

After 6 years, the second Wreck it Ralph movie is finally here! The movie takes place about 6 years after the original when Ralph and Vanellope become friends. Ralph and Vanellope are always hanging out at all the different arcade games when the arcade is closed, but when the arcade gets WiFi, Ralph and Vanellope want to check it out. But they can't because apparently, it is dangerous. Then, when Vanellope's game breaks, Ralph and Vanellope need to go to the internet to get the new piece for her game. When Vanellope and Ralph arrive, it's like a fish out of water. They are so lost and confused, but mesmerized at the same time. While they get to ebay, they don't have enough money to buy the piece, so Ralph and Vanellope go to a game called Slator Race to get the money they need by stealing a car. But when they arrive Vanellope soon falls in love with the game. To find out what happens, you will have to watch the movie. Now, about how I felt about the movie. When I saw the preview, I was very excited, but when I saw the movie, I was a little disappointed. The preview made the movie seem amazing, but I felt the movie itself wasn't as great as it appeared to be from the trailer. I expected there to be more interaction with the internet by showing viewers a lot more of the internet has to offer. But over all, I really enjoyed the plot of the movie and how it shows the development of Ralph and Vanellope's friendship. I definitely recommend the funny, and heart felt film to everyone.

## **Yearbook Club** By Pragya Seth

Every year, Spring-Ford has a yearbook club. In yearbook club, students design every aspect of the 2018-2019 yearbook, from the pictures to the layout. They carefully choose backgrounds, layouts, and color schemes for every single page. Each page is designed online using the Walsworth Yearbooks website. After a club member's assigned page has been approved, it will be added to the yearbook for the entire grade to see. In summary, the yearbook club is completely responsible for the 2018-2019 yearbook, with several people to impress. Hope you already ordered one!

## **Hunger Games Book Review** By Gian Baez

The *Hunger Games* is a great book. I personally like it because of the constant stirring of suspense throughout the entirety of the series; you will never be bored with the book. It doesn't matter if you are a bookworm, or the most stubborn reader in the world. The book takes place in a fictional nation named Panem, and it is made up of 12 districts which supply different things such as fish, grain, coal, etc. The main character is Katniss Everdeen. She lives in District 12, the most poverty-riddled district of them all. All of the districts are controlled by the Capitol. The Capitol is the main district that controls the rest. They have an annual "Hunger Games" to remind the 12 districts that if they were to rebel, they'd fail. The Hunger Games is when the Capitol picks out 24 tributes to fight to the death, 12 boys, 12 girls. But what does Katniss do when her beloved little sister Primrose is picked to fight to the death in the arena? Read *The Hunger Games* to find out.

# Interview with college author Griffin Engle about his current book and future projects in illustration

By Nathan DeDominic

## Can you explain the basic premise of your second published book which is coming out?

Here's the basic premise: My book (Working title *The Ebony Castle*) is the story of a young boy travelling through an exotic world full of animals and creatures of large sizes. The boy has no memory, but he learns of a creature the animals call the Great Beast, a being of great unknown power. The boy is drawn to this beast, and he commits his life to finding it, wherever it might be. The boy scours this unfamiliar land, discovering small tribes and communities of different animals. They all know of the beast, but they always have different names for it. #####, ##, ###, #####, every time someone says the name of the beast, the words only appear as asterisks on the book's pages. This is to symbolize just how powerful the beast is, even its name is a mystery.

## How soon do you think until this book will be out and where can an individual buy this book?

The book will be out in at least a month, possibly longer. You can find the book on Amazon.com for 99 cents. The name is still undecided, (I don't really like the name *The Ebony Castle*, but you can try looking up the name Griffin J. Engel on Amazon. You can also find my book *Breakfast with Eggs* on the website, which will link to more of my books.

## In your opinion, is this your best book?

I wouldn't say it's my best book, as the theme and writing style differ greatly from my first book. If you are more into fantasy and adventure, you're more likely to prefer this book

## Are there any other projects you are working on that the readers may find interesting?

I'm currently illustrating for a short comic book called *MoonPrints* which will be available later this year, and you can also look forward to the illustrated version of *The Road to Chidarra*. That book is already available, but the version I illustrated will be out in the future.

## Can you give basic summaries of both books you illustrated?

Well *MoonPrints* is still in development and the story isn't quite finished, but *The Road to Chidarra* is a fantasy story by a Christian author, telling tales of ghosts, goblins and werewolves.

## Do you have an artstyle in general or does it vary for what your doing?

Typically I draw in a cartoony style (Scott Pilgrim, Calvin and Hobbes, etc.) but in my professional work I have done more realistic drawing, much like the classic Marvel comic

style. It definitely varies as every client will want something a little different, but if you were to hold my drawings side-by-side, my art style is recognizable.

### **That's good to know and thank you. Anything you want the readers to know?**

My next book will be out soon, and I look forward to the future. I have many stories to write and the only thing stopping me is time. Also, reading is important, if you don't read, you won't grow, you won't learn, and I'll be out of work.

## **RACK'ed by Simply Positive Kids** By Nanditha Paila

Simply Positive Kids (SPK) is a non-profit organization that helps people in need, while at the same time, spreading kindness around our community. I have been a part of this organization since the beginning. One event SPK annually does is RACK. RACK stands for "Random Acts of Christmas Kindness." Typically, in the first week of December, a group of around 600-800 people from the Spring-Ford community come together to spread holiday kindness and cheer throughout the area. One of the acts of kindness they do is hanging candy canes and inspirational messages on peoples' cars.

The positive messages make their day when they see them. One Christmas, about two years ago, we were hanging candy canes on peoples' cars. On one of the positive message cards, the SPK Facebook page link was written. The next day, a woman commented on the Facebook page. She said that she was having a bad day, but when she got to her car and saw the candy cane and positive message, her day immediately brightened up and she felt a lot happier. This shows that even a simple act of kindness can turn a person's day around. While some groups hang candy canes on peoples' cars, other groups give bags of coins to random people in the dollar store, put coins in the laundromat machines, go to diners and sing Christmas carols, go to firehouses and police stations and give cookies and gift cards to the people working there, and go to senior centers in the area and do a craft with the residents there.

This past Christmas, I went to the senior center with my mom, brother, and some other kids in my group. We made Christmas ornaments with the friendly residents there. I got to make large, colorful ornaments with two elderly women who were very sweet. They appreciated us coming down to the senior center. I also felt good spreading cheer to others for the holiday season. Another year, my group and I went down to the firehouse and we gave the firefighters sugar cookies and holiday cards. The firefighters had a big smile on their faces while tasting our cookies and reading our cards. Everyone in the group felt good to see that they made the firefighters' holidays more cheerful. In return the firefighters gave us a tour of the fire station. We got to see the offices, fire equipment, fire suits, and the fire trucks, and each of us walked out with a fire hat. That day turned out to be a lot of fun.

RACK is a very rewarding experience and I enjoy participating in it every year.

## **Orchestra** By Pragya Seth (Cello) and Max Wolfe (Viola)

This year, in the 7th and 8th grade orchestra, led by conductor Ashley Baisch, we will be performing in concerts, making friends, and even going to Six Flags in Washington, D.C. The songs the orchestra is performing for the spring concert this year are "Spartacus," "Boreas," "Try Everything" (From *Zootopia*), and "Moonlight Tango." The orchestra this year is an above average size compared to other years' orchestras. There is a large amount of 8th (1st Violins) and 7th (2nd Violins) violins this year. There are only six 7th grade violas, but the 8th graders make up for it. The cellos, however, are the opposite. The large number of 7th grade cellos towers over the tiny amount of 8th grade cellos. Last but not least, our abnormally large amount of basses, four to be exact, are all 7th graders. With the winter concert in the books as a success, the rest of the year seems bright, even though we will not be a part of the String Jamboree.

## **Concert Band** By Griffin MacDonell and Conor Neal

In the second marking period, concert band is a bunch of kids in a big room practicing over and over until they play the songs decently. The band practices hard and loud so they will feel proud as they play for their parents. They have a big trip in the spring where the concert band and the marching band go to an amusement park in Maryland to play their hearts out. They all practice very hard and will never pass up a challenging song. The concert band's first concert in the winter was great with few errors. Now with spring coming soon and the songs getting harder, the band must work around the problems and, to the best they can, ready themselves for Maryland. During the winter concert a percussionist tipped over a metal tire and almost took off Conor's head. Luckily no one got hurt and everything went smoothly. Make sure you see their performance in the spring.

## **Talent Show** By Mackenzie Walters

There were a lot of performances during the talent show. For example, there was a tap dancer, singing, guitarist, dancing, and a pianist. They all were good! There was lots of help from the backstage people. They helped with the props and helped with the stage, and comforting the performances if they were nervous. Our director was Mrs. Gabel and she was a big help. Our emcees organized who was going next and going where. So we give our thanks to all the performances and the people who helped!

### **Performers**

Piano - Faryan Khandaker  
 Solo - Mary Keller  
 Dancing - Momin Ghouri  
 Piano- Mara McCarraher  
 Solo - Kelsey Needles  
 Dance and tumbling - Abby Sabin  
 Solo/Guitar - Blake Ralston  
 Dance- Keeley Davidson  
 Solo- Emily John  
 Tap Dance - Jocelyn Wright

### **Hosts**

Hannah Costello  
 Mackenzie Walters  
 Noelle Telep  
 Maeve Brennan  
 Kenna Mueller

### **Stage Crew**

Alaina Marchesani  
 Alex Moore  
 Sara Smokowicz

## **Birds: Robin Edition** By Conor Neal

Birds: the most elegant creatures on the planet Earth. There are between 9,000 and 10,000 different species of birds. In this article, I am going to teach you about the majestic robin. The robin is red, yellow, and black. These birds enjoy the spotlight. Robins are most common in Limerick, Pennsylvania and Royersford, Pennsylvania. These birds hide in the trees and warn other robins that a stray cat is on the hunt and looking for birds. If you want to be friends with these birds, make a bird bath with their colors. I love these birds because they have the most elegant and stunning poses. Even if they are in the trees, they make themselves known. Below on the left, are the birds doing its most common "I am not looking at you" pose. On the right, is a picture of the same bird taking a snack break.

## **Fahrenheit 451** By Dustin Campbell-Waldeck

*Fahrenheit 451* is a novel written by Ray Bradbury. It was published on October 16, 1953. Since then it has won many awards including a "Retro" Hugo Award, one of only six Best Novel Retro Hugos ever given, in 2004. The book is about a fireman - not a normal fireman (in this dystopian future Fireman means someone who burns books for a living) - named Montag. They do this because literature is now seen as an inferior form of time and education. This continues until he meets a girl named Clarisse McClellan who shows him the amazing things that literature can offer. As a result, he questions his job and entire way of thinking. Since this book has been released, it has turned into a cult classic. If you look at any list of the most well-known and influential books of all time, *Fahrenheit 451* will be on it. Now, you may be wondering why I'm suggesting you read one of the most read books of all time. It's because even though it has over 10 million copies sold, not enough kids our age have read it. I personally believe that we are in the perfect stage in our lives to truly see the beauty that literature really holds. While Harry Potter and Diary of A Wimpy Kid have charm and are good books for kids, we are at the age where we should read some classics. *Fahrenheit 451* is a great book to start. So, if you're up to it, find *Fahrenheit 451* in a library or buy it online. If you've already read it and are looking for more classics, I recommend going to Mrs. Rotondo's room and taking a peek at her poster above the smartboard. That smartboard is what got me on my journey of reading classics, and hopefully it will encourage you.

## **The 61st Street Gang continued from page 7**

### **How did it feel when your book was first published?**

I was thrilled because one of the things that really excited me was the fact that I finally put my money where my mouth was. I mean there are a lot of people who go through life saying I should've done this, I should've done that, only if I had done this, and I've been threatening to do this for years. Finally, my students really started pushing me to the point where I had to get it done. And then Mrs. Betsy Fulton encouraged me last year, at the end of the year, to "just get it done Kent" she said, "just get it done." And so by July 11th it was finished and over to the publishers electronically.

### **What is your advice to other writers?**

I would say write from your own experience as much as you can. Remember what Dorothy said - "don't look too much further than your own backyard" - because if you write from your own experience then the people and the culture that you know, you'll never get lost.

### **When did you decide you wanted to write a book?**

About 20 years ago. I've been saying for this for twenty years, that I should really write it, cause I didn't want to lose that experience. I didn't want it to just go up in the ether, and then nobody would know how we lived, so I had to put it down.

### **Do you hide any secrets - or easter eggs - in your book, that only specific people will understand (any inside jokes, references, etc)?**

Yes. There are at least two characters and two major events that I created from scratch in order to make the novel flow more freely. I challenge any reader to discover which characters or events are the product of my imagination.

### **Is there a story behind the title?**

I chose that title for two reasons. The first is my homage to the old "Our Gang" comedies featuring Spanky, Stifey, and Alfalfa. They were a diverse group of kids who got along very naturally despite race and cultural distinctions. The second reason was to debunk the notion that a gang is always a violent group. We were anything but. In fact, we got along like one big family. We were also very funny in our own way.

### **What's something you're really proud of with this book?**

I am proud of the fact that I have touched on many memories for people in my generation, and have unveiled a way of life quite different from what youngsters know today. I hope that they can learn a few things about life from the way we lived.