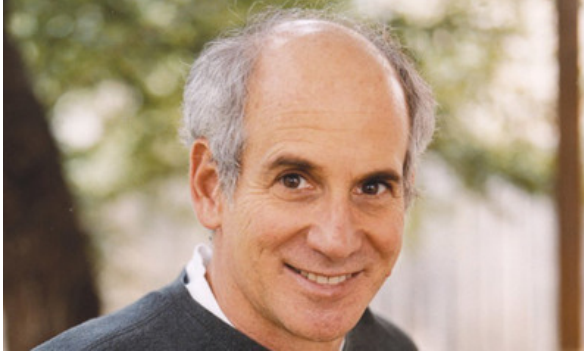


## About the Author



I was born in East Meadow, New York on March 20, 1954 and lived there until third grade. My dad worked on the 78th floor of the Empire State Building, and maybe that somehow inspired *Wayside School*, who knows? When I was nine years old, we moved to Tustin California. At that time, there were orange groves all around, and the local kids would often divide up into teams and have orange fights. The "ammo" hung from the trees, although the best ones were the gushy, rotten ones on the ground. Now most of the orange trees are gone, replaced with fast food restaurants, and big box stores.

I enjoyed school and was a good student, but it wasn't until high school that I really became an avid reader. J.D. Salinger and Kurt Vonnegut were the authors who first inspired me. Some of my other favorite authors include E.L. Doctorow, Margaret Atwood, E.B White, Richard Price and Kazuo Ishiguro.

After high school, I attended Antioch College in Ohio. My father died during my first semester, and I returned to California to be near my mother. During that time, I had a short but surprisingly successful career as a Fuller Brush man. For those of you too young to know what that is, I went door-to-door selling cleaning products.

I returned to college, this time to the University of California at Berkeley where I majored in Economics. On campus one day, I saw the unlikely sight of an elementary school girl handing out flyers. I took one from her. It said: "Help. We need teachers aides at our school. Earn three units of credit." I thought it over and decided it was a pretty good deal. College credits, no homework, no term papers, no tests, all I had to do was help out in a second/third grade class at Hillside Elementary School.

Besides helping out in a classroom, I also became the Noontime Supervisor, or "Louis the Yard Teacher" as I was known to the kids. It became my favorite college class, and a life changing experience.

When I graduated in 1976 I decided to try to write a children's book, which eventually became *Sideways Stories From Wayside School*. All the kids at Wayside School were based on the kids I knew at Hillside.

It took me about nine months to write the book. I wrote in the evenings. In the daytime I had a job at a sweater warehouse in Connecticut. After about a year, I was fired (my enthusiasm for sweaters was insufficient), and I decided to go to law school. *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* was accepted by a publisher during my first week at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco.

I finished law school, graduating in 1980, passed the bar exam (which was required to practice law) and then did part-time legal work as I continued to write children's books. It wasn't until 1989 that my books began selling well enough that I was finally able to stop practicing law and devote myself fully to writing.

My wife Carla was a counselor at an elementary school when I first met her. She was the inspiration for the counselor in *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom*. We were married in 1985. Our daughter, Sherre, was born in 1987. We live in Austin, Texas along with our dog, Watson. Sherre now has a job as a zookeeper. Over the last five years, she has, at various times, taken care of tigers, lions, bears, great apes, giraffes, and a variety of smaller animals such as porcupines and sea otters.

I write every morning, usually for no more than two hours a day. I never talk about a book until it is finished. I spent two years on my latest novel, and nobody, not even Carla, Sherre or my editor knew anything about it until it was finished. Then they were the first to read it.

That book is *Fuzzy Mud*, although the original title was *Frankengerms*.