Notable Book Review -- The Boy Who Was Raised by Librarians

The Boy Who Was Raised by Librarians by Carla Morris; illustrated by Brad Sneed

Reviewed by Julie Tomlianovich, Youth Services Consultant, South Central Kansas Library System

Beginning with the title page, the reader enters the scene -- the Livingston Public Library. Go up the steps and through the doors to be greeted by three smiling librarians on the copyright and dedication pages; turn the page and the story begins. Melvin lives at the library, but not really -- it only seems like it because he has so many questions and librarians, Marge, Betty and Leola are more than willing to find the answers. Not only do they find the answers, they ferret out information from the Internet and books, because as the refrain says, "that's how librarians are." This energy-filled picture book is a homage to librarians and how important they are in the lives of the children who visit the library. Melvin's daily trips to the library also include storytimes, movie nights, a sleepover and of course the



summer reading program. But it is Marge, Betty and Leola who cheer Melvin through the spelling bee, geography bee, science fair, high school graduation, and the college years. Each double page spread follows Melvin as he ages and his interests expand. The relationship is not just patron/librarian, but a caring and nurturing one that the reader can see by the expressions of delight on all their faces.

Author Morris is a children's librarian and knows the connection between the librarian and child. Told with understanding and vigor, this is a perfect read-aloud for storytimes and explains to adults outside the library what it is that a child needs at and from the local public library.

Illustrator Brad Sneed has created an energetic, nurturing and fun environment. His sense of perspective captures a small Melvin with hi baseball cards laid out on a large round table, the delight of the librarians when Melvin wins the "So You Want to Be the Smartest Kid" contest, and seeing them age when a new small boy enters the library with his container of bugs to identify. The new librarian, a grown-up Melvin, kneels to take the container with a look of understanding (that will break the heart of any librarian) and says, "We can identif organize and catalog in no time.... That's how we are!" The illustrations flow off the pages. There are others that cross the gutter and border a smaller detailed illustration. Small details are there for those who take the time to look.

The Boy Who Was Raised by Librarians won the 2008 Read Aloud Book Award/Comstock Book Award (best read-aloud picture book for older children--ages 8-12) from the Curriculum Materials Center of Livingston Lord Library, Minnesota State University, Moorhead.

A perfect gift for a librarian you know or to treat yourself.