

## My Place: Children's Book Author Heather Vogel Frederick

by Margaret Foley

Heather Vogel Frederick always wanted to be a writer, and she began her writing career as a journalist. In 1992, she, her husband and two young sons moved sight unseen from the Boston area to Portland. "We wanted a place with a good quality of life, and our research led to Portland," she says. When her sons started elementary school, Frederick began writing novels. She has written 14 books, but is best known for the *Mother-Daughter Book Club* series about a group of very different girls who become friends after their mothers form a book club for them. Frederick writes from her home office in the Garden Home neighborhood. "I live in a 1950s ranch," she says, but we're slowly remodeling it into an English cottage."



Photo by Jon Jensen

**WRITING SWEET SPOT:** Frederick's office desk is not her preferred writing space. "My desk is where I take care of business," she says. "I write in my comfy chair by my desk. All my books are written in that chair."

**EARLY BRUSH WITH FAME:** A childhood neighbor was friends with children's book author and illustrator, Barbara Cooney. "My mom heard Cooney was visiting, so

she tore a piece of butcher paper off a roll and asked her if she would draw me a picture,” she says. “She did. It’s been hanging in my house since I was four.”

**FOUND IN TRANSLATION:** A storage bench holds copies of all Frederick’s books. “Some editions are in other languages,” she says. “I have *Spy Mice* in Italian, German, Czech and Thai.”

**ON FAN MAIL:** Most of Frederick’s reader mail comes from fans of the Mother-Daughter Book Club series. “I answer all my fan mail,” she says. “People send me wonderful things. I recently received handmade friendship bracelets, where each bracelet was based on the books’ cover colors. I also get letters from young writers, and I like to encourage them.”

**IT’S ABOUT FAMILY:** Frederick’s home is filled with family mementos — photographs, inherited items, a teddy bear her father once gave to her mother. “The idea for my first book, *The Voyage of Patience Goodspeed*, came from an uncle telling me about my great-great grandfather who went off on a whaling ship,” she says. “I used a photo of my Great-Great Aunt Olivia as a model for the main character. I like to have things around me that remind me of home and family.”

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