

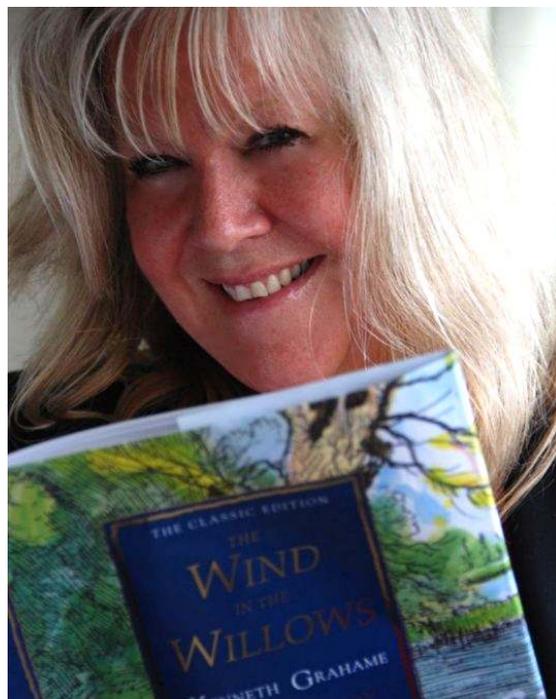
The Dames of Dialogue

Carrie King

Interview

by

Christy Tillery French



1. Tell us about *The Circles Trilogy* and what inspired you to write this series?

Many times I have related this story but this is the first time that I have ever written it down.

I was born into a Middle Class, totally Anglo-Saxon, English Family. When I was eight, my parents moved us into a beautiful Edwardian Villa, with fifteen rooms and three acres of fabulous garden. Of course, this meant I had to change schools. I was given an 'intelligence test' and was duly put into a class with eleven-year-olds.

As I was three years younger than the rest of the class, this meant that the girl, whose desk was adjoined to mine, was decidedly more mature, more sophisticated and unquestionably, more chic, than the wild, untamed Carrie; whom I couldn't help but be! She was called, *Glenys* and she was absolutely everything I so desired to become. How worldly did that sound, 'Glenys'? Her very name evoked experience, class and style. She was quiet and judicious: I was noisy and rash. She was rounded, not plump, with soft, white skin. Her hands were padded and pliable, not like mine, scrawny, tight and always tanned, from constantly being outdoors. Her hair was platinum blonde, neatly bobbed, with no fringe and a metal grip that securely kept every hint of hair off her perfect face.

It wasn't just her appearance that was perfection; the interior of her desk was the personification of orderliness and orthodoxy! When she lifted up the lid of this embodiment of every teacher's dream, what wonders met the eye! All of her exercise books were neatly stacked in a symmetric pile, with the largest on the bottom and the smallest on the top. Her text books stood in a similar tower, mirroring the precision of a ziggurat. Lying in a regimented line, from shortest to longest, were her exquisitely pointed, perfectly sharpened pencils. Her set square, slide rule and compasses were placed carefully in one corner, alongside an assortment of incredibly clean erasers. Clean erasers? Is that possible?

My desk, on the other hand, was ever so slightly different! When my lid was raised, a range of errant papers flew into the air! Everything lay jumbled in a chaotic mess, forming a wonderful cocktail of text books, broken pencils, grubby erasers and torn and crumpled exercise books. How I longed for my desk to be like that of my dearest friend, *Glenys*!

Our differences strayed also into the manner in which our bodies were shaped and attired. Her stout figure was always immaculately dressed: nothing ever seemed out of place. Her uniform couldn't have looked better. Her grey school skirt always hung in exquisite, even pleats. Her cardigan never lacked and never displayed undone buttons and her socks always stayed up, all the way, right to her chubby knees. She also wore, which I was particularly in awe of, a shiny, brown, small, leather purse on a long strap that stretched diagonally across her body; it reminded me of the banner our Queen sometimes wore. It gave *Glenys* such an imperial look.

Sadly for me, I was the total opposite of the Majestic *Glenys*. I was this skinny rake with loads of feral, strawberry blond hair. It was (and still is), never tamed. My parents were both Professionals, so they employed a Nanny to take care of me and she took great pains on my appearance, before sending me off to school. I was always neatly coiffured in two organised plaits, securely tied up with red ribbons and I was smartly clad in a white blouse, with a red and grey striped, neatly knotted necktie and a carefully buttoned up, knitted, red cardigan. Nanny also checked my long grey socks were pulled up straight and my grey school hat was very firmly on my head (not to mention the effort and time she had taken, the night before, to ensure my sensible school shoes were so highly polished that she could clearly see her reflection in the toes). However, despite all these stringent endeavours to present me as a well-turned-out, well-cared-for and well-groomed pupil, invariably, I would arrive in the school playground, totally dishevelled, scruffy and grubby.

The problem was a simple one; it was solely my love of Nature! Getting to school afforded me this wonderful walk through fields, teeming with wild flowers. Granted there was a block paved path that wended its way through these meadows but why would I use that when I could plunge myself into the long green grasses, heaving with masses of pink, white and purple Columbine, brilliant yellow sunbursts of Coltsfoot, white spray heads of Giant Hogweed and the mauve and white towers of Bear's Breech?.....I could go on and on! It was

nothing other than Flowers Ville, Bloomsbury or Scent City for me! I would be so busy gathering up a few precious specimens of these beautiful flowers, to take home and press in the current book I was reading, that I would forget the time and it would only be when I heard the school bell tolling from across the field that I would realise, yet again, that I was late. I would hastily stuff the flowers in my School Satchel and head off toute suite; catching my hat, hair, skirt, socks and blazer, on the trailing brambles, in the process.



Columbine



Coltsfoot



Giant Hogweed



Bear's Breech

How ever many times I was scolded for not being in the Playground at the bell, it made no difference to my daily sojourns across the fields; even in the rain.....mud and all! As a child, I never understood why the teachers used to cast an 'almost smile' at me when I walked into the classroom, squelching across the beautiful parquet flooring in mud-caked shoes and with long grass stalks sticking out of my school bag. I think my academic achievements dispersed any serious concerns the teaching staff might have had about my tardiness: fortunately for me!

Breaktimes and Lunchtimes were simply wonderful, as I spent them totally in the company of the Glorious Glenys! We used to pretend to be horses (yes, the equine sort), whinnying and neighing as we trotted around the Playground. I simply adored school and highly esteemed my wonderful companion. Neither of us ever missed a day, we just loved being there and just loved being together.

One Friday, I couldn't understand it, Glenys wasn't in school. I was lost and lonely and simply walked round the playground on my own. It was the only day I could ever remember, not enjoying school.

On Monday morning, taking the path to school, I got enticed, as usual, by the beautiful flora that beckoned me from amid the tall grasses. Over I went into the meadow and I remember quite clearly picking a handful of pretty coloured campion and stacking it carefully into my satchel, most unusual for me. Then came the ringing of the School Bell, resounding around me, reminding me that once more, I had forgotten the time and reminding me, once more that I was late! I grabbed my hat and sprinted off.

I ran as fast as I could, across the field, back on to the path that eventually formed an alleyway between a shop in the High Street and Mrs Hubbard's walled orchard. I legged it the last few hundred yards up towards my school, only to discover, to my horror, that as I approached the school gates, I could see, standing in front of the green painted railings, none other than my Head Teacher. What mortification! I stopped dead in my tracks. My first thought was to turn around and run straight for the alley that led back to the meadows and hide in the soaring grasses but I dismissed that idea, as I loved school. I quickly plonked my school hat, very wonkily on my head, did up my buttons, pulled up my socks and made sure none of the delightful columbine was sticking out of my satchel. I decided that the best course of action was to keep walking and completely ignore The Iron Battleship that stood between me and my Port of Call. Attempting this brave feat, steaming on with head held high, I took a sideways glance, only to be disarmed by the look on Miss Major's highly made up, taut face. She always struck terror in my heart. She was the embodiment of Spinsterhood and only accepted excellence from her students, particularly 'Her Girls' and oh joy, once more, I was late! However, she didn't scold, she didn't remonstrate; she gently put her head on one side, extended a very thin arm and smiled at me, very, very strangely.

"Carrie," she said quietly, encasing my muddy mitt within her beautiful, elegant hand with long, slender fingers and highly polished, scarlet painted, pointed nails.

She led me, bemused and uneasy, straight through the front door of the school and into, could you believe, the School's Holy of Holies, The Sacred Staff Room? This was a room no pupil would ever dare enter, normally. It was the unknown place; the secret space where we would try and catch a glimpse of one or two members of staff, smoking a cigarette, something we thought was really daring and totally exciting (how things have changed)!

I remember looking round anxiously as Miss Major sat me down, very gently, on a huge, black armchair. The arms, either side of me, seemed to tower up to the ceiling and I could smell the strong aroma of leather all around me. I looked straight ahead and saw familiar members of staff looking at me in such a peculiar way. I wondered what on earth was going to happen to me and for once, I, Carrie King, was lost for words; utterly speechless and chronically terrified.

I remember my Headmistress then getting on her knees in front of me and speaking very softly and as she did so, she systematically undid all of my buttons and re-buttoned up my cardigan that I had obviously done up the wrong way.

"Carrie," she whispered, "you remember Glenys wasn't in school on Friday?"

I nodded, not daring to speak. Was I allowed to, in this place of such sanctity?

"Well, unfortunately, she was very poorly but you know Glenys, she never complained."

I nodded again.

"It wasn't until Saturday that her Mother realised that Glenys was so ill."

I began to feel slightly perturbed, which Miss Major obviously sensed and as, by this time, all of my cardigan buttons had been duly pulled through the correct holes, she took both of my hands in hers.

"By the time the doctor was called, Glenys was very ill, indeed," she continued then she took in a deep breath. I can still hear that air being dragged into her lungs, it was so loud. "She was rushed, in an ambulance, to Luton and Dunstable Hospital but sadly, Carrie, so sadly, she had a condition called Peritonitis. It was her appendix, you see, it needed to be taken out, as it was poisoning her body.....but it was too late."

My heart within my little bony ribcage felt like lead, it was so heavy but still I said nothing, dreading what was to come next.

"I am so sad to have to tell you this, Carrie....." the melted Iron Maiden paused, bit into her top lip and took in another immense breath of air, ".....but Glenys died yesterday."

I remember feeling nothing. The silly words this silly teacher was saying meant nothing, absolutely nothing. I remember jumping off that big chair and pulling my hapless mistress out of the Staff Room, across the corridor and into my classroom. The room was empty. I dragged Miss Major over to my desk, pulled out my chair and sat her down on it. I sat down in Glenys' chair and pulled it up to her desk.

"Don't worry," I said, "Glenys will be here after Assembly. It's all right, she is singing, 'All things bright and beautiful', with the rest of the school, can't you hear her? She's in the Hall, right now." I then raised Glenys' immaculate desk lid, "See, everything is waiting for her! You have got it all wrong, she is not dead! It's fine, she will be here!" I remember the tears running down Miss Major's face as far as her ruby red lipstick. I stretched my hand forward and touched the tears. "Don't cry, Miss Major, please don't cry. She will be coming in, in a minute, you'll see! We will have lessons, it's Monday morning, it's fine...we will work hard, as we always do and

then we will have our bottle of milk and then we will go out into the playground....." I remember the tears. I didn't want them to come. I didn't want to feel anything and as they started to stream down my face, I kept brushing them away. ".....then we will play horses: we know it's silly but we don't care, we love it....." I continued, hardly able to speak coherently, ".....she will be here in a minute.....we just have to wait. I won't pick wild flowers anymore. I will come straight to school. I have some in my satchel but they are the last ones. I won't be late. I won't be late!" I shouted. I remember babbling on and on until, finally, the tide that I had been hoping to stem, could be held back no more and the floodgates burst open! I sobbed and groaned and my compassionate Headmistress stood up and pulled me into her, cuddling me in a way that I didn't think was possible for her. I didn't recognise this new creature. She was no longer the strict, unyielding, authoritarian I had always known her to be: she became this gentle, soft comforter, stroking my hair and gently rocking me from side to side.

Miss Major did not leave me all that hideous, horrible day. Apparently, I learnt later, her secretary had telephoned my parents, who were away on business and it was my Nanny's day off. Therefore, at four o'clock I was honoured to be ushered into the passenger seat of Miss Major's delightful, little green Morris Minor and she drove me home.



I wasn't allowed to go to the Funeral. They thought it wouldn't be 'good for me'. I was really upset but no begging or pleading would change my parent's minds.

Glenys was buried in our village Church. As soon as school was finished on the day of her funeral, I went to the Churchyard and found the fresh mound of earth that displayed a primitive wooden cross with the words, 'Our Glenys', written on it. I clearly remember the smell of the newly tossed earth as I lay beside my best friend. I presumed they had placed the temporary cross at her head. The mound was quite tall but I remember putting my arm over it as high as it would stretch. I spoke to my friend and I told her that I was so sad that I wasn't allowed to go to her funeral but that I would never, ever stop thinking about her (which, to this day, I haven't).

A Little green Morris Minor

I didn't pick flowers in the mornings anymore but that day, the day of the funeral, I went to the fields after school and picked some pretty yellow cowslips. I had put a tall, glass fish paste pot, from the conservatory, into my satchel before I left for school that day. There was an old tap in the Churchyard, so I filled up the pot with fresh water and placed the flowers for Glenys, by her head. There were other flowers there, of course but I pushed them to one side so she could see mine.



↑ Cowslips

hill together, hand-in-hand; I could not stop talking about Glenys. Our house was in the same road as the Church, so I didn't feel that I had strayed off, at all. My visits to the grave became a daily trip and I remember my Mother coming and hauling me away, day after day. The favourite flowers that I picked for Glenys were violets. I would place these delicate little blooms in tiny, glass, fish paste pots. Although, I never returned to picking wild flowers on my way to school, I did pick flowers again but the only ones I ever picked were for Glenys.

I didn't return from school on time, that day, so my frantic Mother came searching for me. I remember her calling my name from across the other side of the wall. It took me a little while to register, as I was talking to Glenys and telling her what she had missed at school. I remember lifting up my head and seeing my Mother's face, peering over the top of the Churchyard wall. She wasn't cross, she told me, she was just worried. We walked down the



Violets ↑

Eventually, I was forbidden to go to the Churchyard unaccompanied. I was devastated. I remember my Mother saying that 'four months was long enough and it has to stop'. She just didn't understand. Occasionally, on a



Saturday, when it was my turn to go to the Bakers to buy some fresh bread for breakfast, I would steal into the graveyard and leave some flowers for Glenys. By then, she had a grey headstone. I didn't care for that, I much preferred the original mound, which smelt so beautifully of fresh soil. (Readers of **Joni-Pip**, take note).

As my parents were Professionals, they hired a woman to help in the kitchen. She used to cook the most delicious cakes. Once she had put the cake mix into the oven, she used to pick up a round kitchen 'timer' and twist the knob until it pointed to a 'twenty' symbol. Immediately it would tick like a clock and the knob would slowly move back up, anti-clockwise, until it reached the zero symbol and then it would ring like an alarm clock. This was the signal for Cook to take the cakes out and they would be baked to perfection (as well as smelling so yummy)!

The first time I watched her do this, I asked her what she was doing and she said,

**Glenys' grave beneath the tree, ↑
beside the Church and the wall,
which my Mother looked over and called me**

"I am 'setting the time' for 20 minutes."

I asked her why she had to twist the knob round the dial and she replied,

"I am putting the 'time back'."

A Circular Kitchen Timer →



As the timer was circular, I asked her if Time was like a circle.

"Indeed it is!" she replied, "It just goes round and round and we never have enough of it."

"Is that why you always say that you are running round and round in circles and never get anything done?" I asked.

"Absolutely!" she said very seriously.

From then on, every time she used the timer I would say,

"Are you putting Time back? Are you putting the Circle back?" and Cook would answer, "Yes".

That got me thinking,

'What if I could, somehow, 'put the Time back, put the Circle back'? Then I could put it back to the Friday that Glenys was taken ill. I could take her to the Doctors on that very day and the doctor would send her to the Hospital and Glenys could have that nasty appendix taken out and she would be all better and not die!

This thought constantly plagued me and a few years later, I went to the Library and looked up books about Time being 'put back'. The one I found that had the greatest effect on me was, 'The Time Machine', by H.G. Wells. It astounded me, even though I was still so young. I determined, after reading it that one day, I would fathom out how to put time back, put the Circle back and get Glenys back.

Well, I didn't discover the secret of The Circle of Time and how to put Time back, of course but the memory of Glenys and my desire to save her from dying, continued so strongly in my heart and mind that I had to write about it!

The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip is the first book in The Circles Trilogy and in it, although it is not Glenys (she, I have kept safely locked up in my heart), somebody does die and I have invented a way to 'put time back', so that they don't die. I have changed bad things in the Past by intercepting the Circle of Life and starting a New Circle and I have turned them into good things for the Present and Future (with strange consequences)! I think, also, if you read **Joni-Pip**, you will recognise other things from the story of 'My Glenys'. I am so pleased that Dames of Dialogue have given me the opportunity to finally write down such poignant memories of my special friend, which gave me the inspiration behind the writing of **The Circles Trilogy**.

2. Please introduce us to your story and your characters in, *The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip*, the first book in the series.

The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip opens with the Bombing of the beautiful City of Bath, England, in 1942, during World War Two. Joni-Pip is the twelve-year-old, second child of Philip Garador, an American Banker, who has settled in England from his Native Portland, Oregon, after meeting and marrying, English Nurse, Sarah Regan. The family are comfortably off and Joni-Pip is pretty spoilt and selfish, to say the least. She has a sixteen-year-old brother, Alex, whom Joni-Pip adores, although he pays little attention to her and a four-year-old sister, Becky-Paige, who similarly adores Joni-Pip.



Alex, Joni-Pip's 16 year-old brother
(Drawn by the amazing James Boddy)



Joni-Pip aged 12
(Drawn by the incredible Paul Moon)



Becky-Paige her 4 year-old sister
(By Paul Moon)

In the middle of the night, Joni-Pip's Anglo-American family run to the shelter of their cellar. When the raid is over, Joni-Pip ventures out into the garden, looking for her beloved teddy bear, Ethelred-Ted. In the garden she sees someone, looking out through her shed window, wearing a grey hood. The figure then disappears. Two



These houses in Bath are like Joni-Pip's

low flying aeroplanes suddenly appear in the sky. The first one opens fire, narrowly missing Joni-Pip and the second one comes in so closely that Joni-Pip actually sees the face of the pilot. He looks vaguely familiar, smiles at her and then banks away.

First thing, the next morning, after spending all night in the cellar, Father decides to move his family to their country cottage in Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire, on the edge of Sherwood Forest (Robin Hood Country). Joni-Pip doesn't want to leave Bath and wails until they finally leave at lunchtime.

On the way there, the Garadors stop for a picnic by a river. Joni-Pip stubbornly decides to stay in the car. Three strangers appear, two

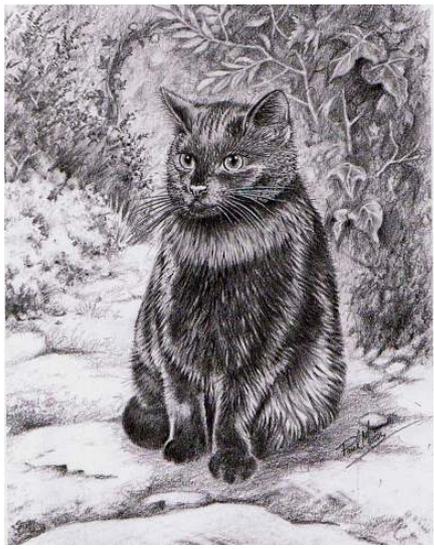
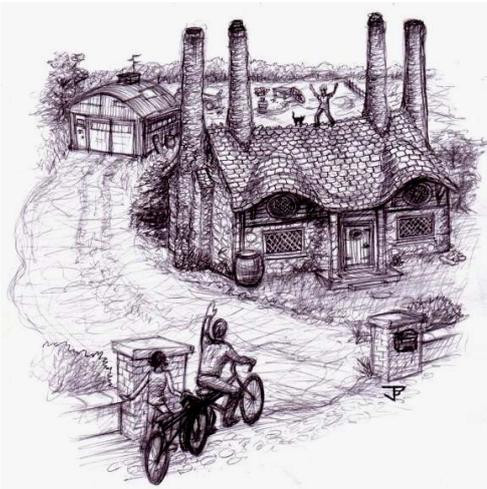
boys: Steve, 17, Craig, 15 and a girl called Flip, who is 14 and seems bizarrely familiar. They tell Joni-Pip that she must stop being a selfish girl or she will not have a future, at all! When they leave Joni-Pip, she sees odd stars going up into the sky and the face of the pilot, she saw in Bath, appears in the reflection of the car window: it then disappears.

Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire →

Once they arrive at Knotty Knook, their thatched cottage, Joni-Pip still continues her selfish behaviour: spoiling it for everyone else. Her Grandfather arrives from the other side of the wood and persuades Joni-Pip to walk back with them to his Cottage. On the way, he stops at The Ruin, the carcass of an Old Workhouse, which burnt down fifty years previously. Grandfather shows her a piece of paper he had found in the chimney of the Ruin: on it is written a note by, Amelia Plate, an eight-year-old Victorian girl, who died in the Fire.



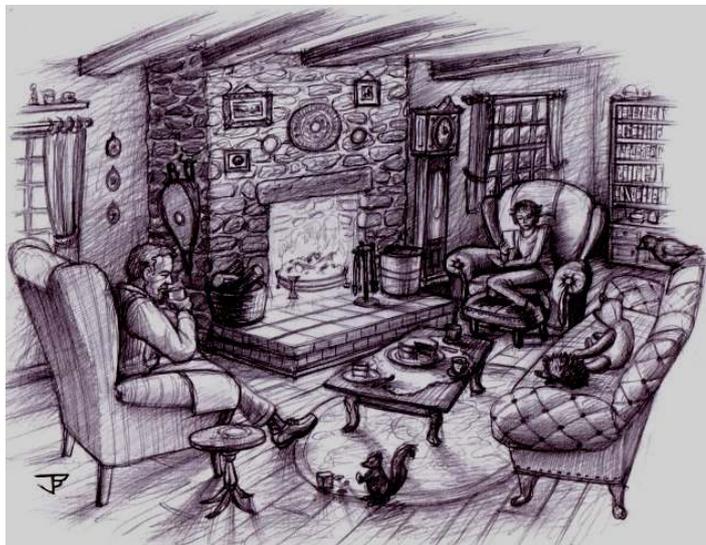
Later Joni-Pip discovers that, far from being an obedient, silent, stuffed toy, Ethelred-Ted is very much alive and is, on the contrary, a bossy, clever and ever-hungry bear, who is always after his next Munch Break! One day they get caught in a storm in Marley's Barn and during a flash of lightning they receive three visitors from the Future, who leave them with an amazing Gift. However, they have no idea what it is or what to do with it, so they enlist the help and brain of Archimedes Spindlethorp, a local Inventor, who lives with his cat, Eureka, in his cross-faced home, called Hideaway Cottage, just outside Edwinstowe. They all decide the Gift is the secret of Jumping in Time but they have no idea how to work it out or how to make it work! They plan, if they ever succeed in discovering how, to JIT (jump in time), and save Amelia Plate from dying in the Workhouse Fire.



Hideaway Cottage & The Quission Hut

Archimedes Spindlethorp, The Inventor

Eureka, Archimedes' cat



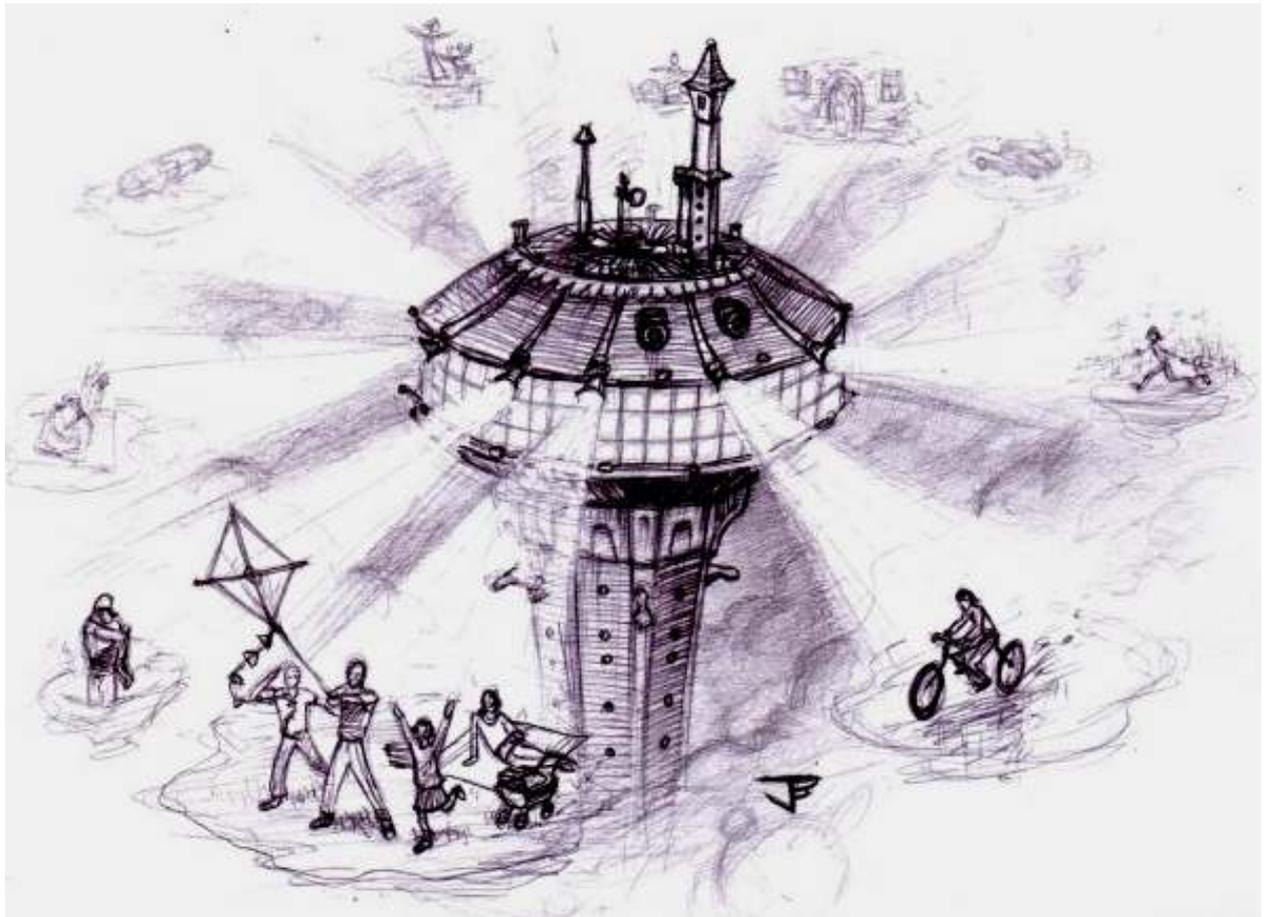
Therein begins an Adventure, full of twists and turns and...**Circles**, of course, which I do not want to tell you any more about! There are loads of things to discover, such as The Kaleidoscope of Life, The Observatory of Memories Unknown, The Wall of Time and.....well, you will just have to read **Joni-Pip** and find out the rest for yourselves! I hope you find the story is as unpredictable as The British weather! I hope you will, also, find **The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip** cosy, too, as James Boddy portrays in his beautiful drawing of Grandfather's Parlour!

Having hot cocoa and cake in front of the fire in Grandfather's Parlour



I will finish this question with another one of James Boddy's amazing illustrations!

The Keep of Good Memories ↓
(Something I hope you will find intriguing)!



3. When can we expect Book Two and can you give us a brief description?

I had planned to finish Book Two by the end of 2009 but unfortunately, my family has suffered personal trauma this year and I have been spending much time with them. I intend having everything finished by the Summer of 2010!

Book Two is set two years on from 1942...so it is the summer of 1944 and World War Two is still raging on in Europe. I have moved Joni-Pip's family from Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire, to Merricliff, a village close to the sea, a few miles south of Barmouth, West Wales. I don't want to spoil it, too much, for those who have yet to read Book One, so all I will say is that Joni-Pip gets embroiled, yet again, in a Jitting (jumping in time), adventure, only this time it is one that spans seven centuries. Most of the characters from Book One turn up in one way or another and there are, as in Book One, plenty of twists, turns and Circles (of course), and loads of surprises. I left a few questions to be answered in Book Two, so I have done that.

I will give you a little taster, Christy:

Alex is worried because Joni-Pip and her two cousins seem to have gone missing, so he walks down to the beach to investigate. On the way down the cliff steps, he finds a strange metal flask with a lid. He takes it straight back to Two Beach View, his auntie's house, where Father catches him as he is just about to show it to Mother. Father gently takes the flask off him and goes into the garage, ordering Alex not to follow him but to go and join his mother. Alex goes into the Drawing Room to be with Mother and tells her he has just left Father and to his surprise she tells him not to be so silly as Father is in Bath.....a few hundred miles away.....she had just spoken to him on the telephone.....

Carrie King's only Cover Submission, which was hastily rejected! ↓



Here it is, I know it is 'childlike' but that's what I like!

I asked my Marketing Manager if Bothy Books would let you have a sneak preview of the new cover but he said it was a secret! Therefore, what I have done, especially for Dames of Dialogue.....no-one else has ever seen this (no laughing, please).....I am giving you a look at my **only** submission ever, for the cover of **The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip (The Circles Trilogy Book One)**!!! It was utterly rejected, of course! Bothy Books solely used Book Cover Illustrators, a specialised group, of which I am not a privileged member! Oh, Deary me! Oh, well, a bit about my failed cover design. As the Trilogy is called 'Circles', I used circles for everything. Sorry Ethelred-Ted is so closely beside Joni-Pip, you can hardly see him! Check out how many circles (or half circles), you can see! I want you to know that I drew all the orbits freehand! It was about the best thing I could do in Art Class; **draw** good circles! I hope now I can **write** about good Circles, just as well!

4. You use the Second World War as a backdrop to your series. Any particular reason why you chose this period in history?

I have a friend, whose father was fourteen when war broke out in Europe. He surprised me one day, when we were all enjoying a cappuccino in Starbucks, by saying,

"Oh yes, we had a lovely war!"

I didn't quite understand him, so I asked him to illuminate. He told me that, as he lived on a farm, his family never wanted for food, not like most others in the country who were on rations. At his farm they had plenty of eggs, milk, butter and cheese, as well as chickens to eat. He also said that although life was not normal for most people, as he lived in the countryside, they were away from all the air raids, search lights and soldiers etc.; so he and his friends had great fun. He said he remembered clearly a time when they got metal buckets and thick sticks and hid behind a hedge. There was a muddy ditch in front of this particular hedge. The boys knew members of the Home Guard (an army of volunteer civilians formed in the United Kingdom during World War II to help protect and police the country), always passed this way on their bikes, at this time of the day. When this little, motley group of men came pedalling up the lane, all the boys started circling their sticks in the

metal buckets! All the soldiers wobbled about on their bikes in panic, veering in all directions! They really



thought there had been an invasion and they were being attacked by machine gun fire. They promptly fell off their bikes and scrambled into the muddy ditch. Slopping about in the mire, covered in sticks, straw, brambles and mud, they cautiously peered over the top, in dread.

Naughty, naughty boys!

Britain became a Realm, battered by bombs and doodlebugs at this time, causing such indescribable destruction, devastation and distress but life still went on and I suppose, the sheer

↑Some members of the Home Guard (doing what all Brits do best), drinking freshly brewed tea (if you read Joni-Pip you will find me constantly doing so as I write).

resilience of the people of this Tiny Island is something that inspires writers and story-telling. I am in no way an advocate of war and **The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip** is not about war; it is, as you say in your question, Christy, simply set in this difficult time. I just wanted to portray how people did continue to live their lives, despite the horrors of that, which was going on around them.

I visited New York after The Twin Towers were destroyed. I spoke to many New Yorkers about the devastating effect this horrific and unexpected attack had on them. I remember speaking to an elderly gentleman in Times Square and I asked him how he felt about it. He smiled at me, took my hand and said gently,

This picture sums up everything this War Veteran was saying! →

This mobile Post Office was set up in a bombed area in 1941. You can just see the cashiers behind the screens, serving their customers as normal ↓



'I know you were not around in the Second World War but I was. I was drafted to England and I know that before the U.S. entered the war, Britain suffered terrible air raids that killed, sometimes thousands like 9/11, only yours went on and on, night after night. We can hardly cope with this one massive loss of life but your people suffered constantly and what did you do? The next day,

you picked yourselves up and started all over again.....and again and again!

My Mother told me that there was a camaraderie during the War, a feeling of close friendship and trust amongst everyone; a solidarity that we don't get in peace time. Never having lived in that time, I really wanted to use it, as it fascinates me that despite losing so much, everybody worked together and battled on, re-building and renewing. I am staggered that the Human Spirit never gives up, never dies!

We also had a family friend who told us that she was a child in Bath in 1942 and she remembered running through the streets of Bath in the middle of the night, when they heard the air raid siren. As they ran to her grandfather's house to shelter in his cellar, a plane came in so low that as she looked up, she saw the face of the pilot. I thought that would make a great story-line. I drove with her to visit her old house in Bath and I immediately fell in love with this beautiful City. I researched loads about the War and I thought it would make an interesting setting for my story.



↑ Red skies, like this in Bristol, were seen night after night in Britain (see chapter 1 in Joni-Pip)

5. You have also published a picture book connected to the first book in the series with your own illustrations, which are wonderfully portrayed using vibrant colors and heart-warming images. I further note that you are listed as an artist in the Text Edition. Which 'hat' do you prefer to don, artist or author?

Susan, Alice & Isobel at Hastings ↓
with Joni-Pip, Becky-Paige and me

What a great question, Christy! It is one I have never been asked before! Hmm, I must think long and hard before I answer this.

When I look at the brilliant work done by Mark Taute, James Boddy, Paul Moon and Danielle Taut, for **The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip**, I realise how my work pales in their shadow. Despite this fact, one of my biggest thrills (well, actually two of them), was at a Book Signing in Waterstone's Book Shop, in Hastings (yes 1066 and all that), earlier this year! Illustrator, Marta Munoz (www.martamunoz.co.uk), arrived and immediately, she said, she fell in love with the illustrations from the Picture Book. She, as it happens, asked if she might buy one of the Originals! She bought the **Joni-Pip Picture Book** and the novel and a few **Joni-Pip Greetings Cards**, which she said she was going to frame! At



the same Book Signing (I had sold out, two weeks previously and had been asked to return), another **Joni-Pip** fan, Susan Jenner and her two daughters, Alice and Isobel, whom I had met on my first visit, came in again and they bought several of the cards to frame and some more books. She said that the illustrations had struck a chord with her; she also bought me a beautiful plant that has flowered and flowered ever since!

I used the media of coloured pencils to do the illustrations and I really wondered if that was a wise choice as it took so long! (Quite often it took me three months just to complete one). I thought at the time I should have used water colours (sorry about the English spelling), then I could have finished one in an afternoon. Since

then, however, at Book Events people have sometimes bought the Picture Book, even though they have no little children and they say that they want the book just for the detailed illustrations! Perhaps using coloured pencils was a good choice, after all! I did worry, as I tried to illustrate in a childish way that people might think I couldn't draw. Therefore, in a couple of them, I simply added a feature, just to show I can draw a little! In Grandfather's Kitchen, I added my Trench Coat, hanging up on the wall, just to show off! When I drew the Illustration of Auntie Sylvia's Garden, where Joni-Pip and Ethelred-Ted are looking out to sea (there are in fact two beaches if you look carefully), I was actually sitting on the porch, in my sister's garden near Windsor, at the time and Candy, her cat, was sleeping on the wall and Cinders, her other cat, was watching a real mouse's nest. I drew them both: again simply to show off! Tut, Tut, Carrie!

Here is Grandfather's Kitchen and I added my Trench coat, hanging up, just to show off!



Auntie Sylvia's and Uncle Richard's garden

→
Cinders



←Candy

The following excerpt shows why I love writing: using language that almost sings to me.....

The Circles Trilogy Book One, The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip

Chapter 15

The Formula

.....
‘Archimedes went very red in the face, very red indeed, redder than he had ever been before: redder than the ripest red apple and redder than the brightest red poppy.

“So?” he bellowed.

Poppy was still perched on his matted mop of wiry, wayward, white hair. She looked as though she was nesting. Of course she wouldn’t have dreamt of settling for such an untidy nest! Ethelred-Ted, Hetty and Joni-Pip so wanted to laugh at how comical they both looked but they didn’t dare.

“So?” he bellowed again, making the unwashed, empty milk bottles on the table rattle furiously. “So, you think that I am rude, do you? You think that I am thoughtless, do you? You think that I don’t listen to anyone but myself, do you?” he thundered, looking at each of his visitors in turn, who just stood and shook in terror....terror that they might burst out laughing as it was very difficult to take a man with a nesting bird plonked on his head very seriously.

“So?” he yelled again. “Will anybody answer me, for Goodness sake?”

The three friends stood motionless and silent.

“Yes,” came Poppy-Plump-Pij’s firm and loud reply, “and I think that I have made that quite clearful, haven’t I?”

“You do, do you, you think I am boorish?” screamed the old man.

The atmosphere at Hideaway Cottage was so intense that his friends thought that there might very well be another explosion....but there wasn’t! As if he had burst, like a big balloon, the old man suddenly became deflated: a soft, soggy old rubber shell.

The whiskered Inventor looked intensely at the plump little wood pigeon who was still staring into his bright red face and he slowly sat down in his comfy, old armchair by the fireplace.

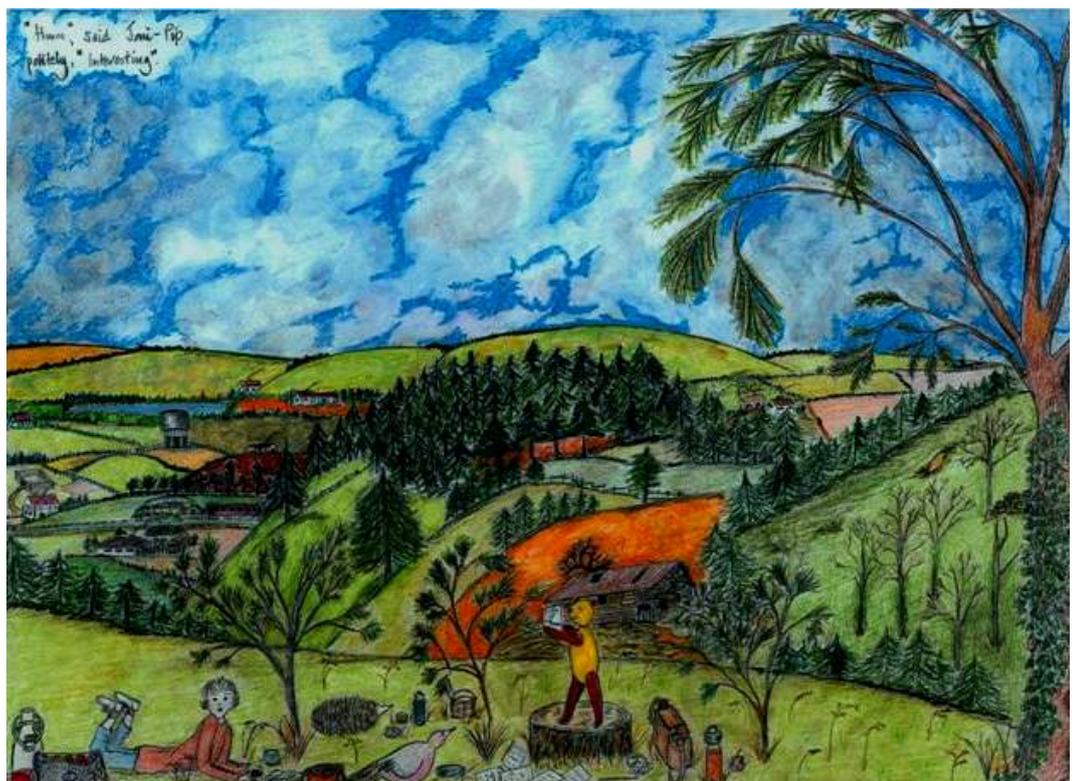
“You are so right! You are indeed, ‘rightful’! I am totally rufefish!” he laughed.

Poppy’s three friends had quite expected the old man to tell them to leave his house but much to their relief, they saw that he had completely changed. He put his hand up above his head and gently lifted the wood pigeon into his hands, cradling her softly. He ran his hand over her, somewhat ruffled feathers.

“My, my, you are a little fire cracker!” he said kindly. “Who would have thought it of such a sweet little creature? I think that I have a bit of apologising to do, don’t I, Pretty Poppy? Before I start, though....how about we put the kettle on and make a nice, fresh pot of tea. Hmmm?”

.....and this picture
shows why
I love illustrating!

Ethelred-Ted reads his
Song of the River on
the Clappers →



Above is an illustration of The Clappers www.geograph.org.uk/photo/418 , a hill covered in trees. I was born in the tiny village of Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire, England, just below this scene and a few hundred yards to the left. I remember the day I started sketching this picture. My daughter, Zoë, lay here on a blanket, in front of me, just as Joni-Pip is doing and Becky-Paige, her baby, lay sleeping in the shade of the tree on the far right of the picture. When I gave my daughters a choice of the originals, of course, this is the one Zoë chose! I love illustrating actual places, as they are a permanent record of real memories, smells, tastes and feelings. How indelible is the beautiful memory of that lovely day! It thrills me that some of you, thousands of miles away from here, will be able to see, in a tiny way, the incredible place that I was blessed to be born in. How I delight to have this opportunity to share it with you! Thank you so, Christy!

So, as for the question, 'which 'hat' do I prefer to don, artist or author?'

The answer is **both!**

6. Joni-Pip fans have formed a club called The Circleite Book Club. How thrilling! Do you find them an asset in promoting this series?

Absolutely! They are the most amazing asset in promoting **Joni-Pip**; they do it so much better than I do! I feel so blessed to have such a wonderful group of loyal people, both boys and girls and men and women, following **Joni-Pip**. Their ages range from 4 to 88, so far, although we did have some ladies from the Edwinstowe area who all love **Joni-Pip** and they belong to a Book Club, whose average age is 82, so we wonder if 88 might not be the top age! When BBC Radio 4 came on location to Sharpenhoe, my birthplace, they invited just 8 **Circleites** to be interviewed (they said they only usually have four but as so many wrote in, they doubled the number). Lots of other **Circleites** arrived, too; some of those were in their 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's! The **Circleites** have sent copies of **Joni-Pip** to Queen Elizabeth II, of England and The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown; both of whom have sent them back very gracious letters of thanks. Michelle Obama, your First Lady, was sent one, too.

Here is my favourite photograph I took on a day when loads of us were walking over The Clappers ↓



Jess, a **Circleite** said this proves **Circleites** live in trees!

Here are 8 **Circleites**, selected to be interviewed on BBC Radio 4; you can see the Clappers! ↓



We have had **Circleite** Events at Waddesdon Manor, The Dunstable Heritage Centre, Felmersham, Emmaus Village, Carlton, on The Clappers and in Barton Caves! The **Circleites** especially love roaming over the countryside, where I set **The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip**. At Waddesdon Manor, we had A **Joni-Pip Adventure Trail** as well as a **Joni-Pip Character Drawing Workshop**, we had so many that day! The Workshop was planned to last one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. Yeah right! It started at ten in the morning and carried straight through until four in the afternoon! Having the real Joni-Pip (my much-adored great niece), who is now 15, with Becky-Paige (my greatly treasured granddaughter; another character in **Joni-**

Pip), who is now 12, acting out parts of the book with other actors, really brought the Event alive!



← Here is my favourite picture from The Joni-Pip Workshop at Waddesdon Manor. We had so many that day! This is the real Joni-Pip, with Becky-Paige. Both girls sign as many books as I do at Joni-Pip Events. You can just see Joni-Pip's Circleite Badge is taken from the front cover of *The Life in the Wood* with Joni-Pip. So many Circleites write in to the website and say they are longing for Joni-Pip to be made into a Film, so that they can act in it (a Cast of thousands, obviously)!!

I don't know how many other books have such a following but I am so blessed to meet so many avid **Joni-Pip** fans!

7. Your writing has been compared to J.K.Rowling, a huge compliment. How do you feel about that?

I am an absolute, total admirer of J.K. Rowling. She has achieved something no-one will ever emulate; she is utterly unique and I don't feel anyone will ever reach the incredible heights that Ms Rowling has attained. Although people have said I write like her, I have never, ever felt this to be true. Sadly, I don't feel my work to be remotely similar to her astounding writing. Oh, I wish.....



Becky-Paige signing a Picture ↑
Book in Waterstone's Book Shop

To be compared with a Children's Author of such unfathomable acclaim, has to be a massive compliment but I assure you, Christy, I am so unworthy and it simply is not true!

Joni-Pip is nothing like **Harry Potter**.

I am not good with scary material and forces of evil. When I was a little girl my mother took me to see the amazing Disney Cartoon, **Snow White** and I spent much of the time crouching down behind the seat in front of me! I hid from the Mirror, The Wicked Queen, The Trees, whose branches grabbed Snow White as she ran through the Forest, The Huntsman as he raised his knife, The Witch, The Vultures..... Oh dear, apparently, I had to sleep with the light on in my bedroom for three months, after that particular visit to the Cinema! Hence, **Joni-Pip** has none of those things within her pages; although in saying all that, my Editor-in-Chief insisted, under pain of death or something worse, **Joni-Pip** had to walk through **The Keep of Bad Memories!** In the original story, the First Draft, I wrote about that awful place but kept it very securely locked up and bolted. It took me two weeks to pluck up the courage to even think about it. Then I had to draw on a real-life experience. It was a time when I was so ill that I hallucinated. Ooooh, that was really horrible! While I was writing all about those monsters in my head, I had to keep stopping and then I would walk in the garden, thinking about nice things. Eventually, I completed the chapter and I can truthfully say, Christy, I am so glad my Editor made me do it. We have had quite a few boys (I wonder why), tell us at **Joni-Pip** Events that **The Keep of Bad Memories**, is really cool! Some have even said it is the best chapter! Ah, the joys of being under the jurisdiction of an Editor! I am pretty sure Jo Rowling doesn't have that problem with the fantastic material she

writes!

I must share with you something that made me smile. Seen in a Book Shop in England was a big sign which read,

Is C.K. from M.K. the next J.K.?

(My city is called Milton Keynes and it is known as M.K.).

Some smarty pants had handwritten, in very big letters underneath,

'O.K.!'

8. You speak to a wide variety of groups, as well as make appearances at schools and libraries and Joni-Pip Events. Tell us about these events, and what you think works best for you in regards to promotion?

What a lovely question, Christy!

I think one of the nicest things about being a writer and an illustrator is speaking to people about the things I love to do. As I primarily aim my writing at children (and those still children at heart), then really getting in among them, is such a joy. I find Author Days at schools really hard work as I am usually on the go and talking, literally all day but it is so rewarding! I generally start the day by speaking to the whole school in Assembly and then I spend an hour or sometimes more with each class. I talk about reading and writing and then I might do a bit of work with the children (I am always amazed at how much the teachers join in, too)! I then introduce them (if they haven't already started reading it privately or as a class), to **Joni-Pip** and read a few selected excerpts, which I follow with my favourite: a question and answer session. That usually proves to be such fun! I love the feedback from schools; we get e-mails from both members of staff and students, sent in to the website for months after a visit. I must quote an email from a Headmaster, after I had spent two days at his school.



At this school I visited, over 50% of the children ↑ bought a copy of Joni-Pip. I was so thrilled!

Good morning Carrie,

Thank you for the Circleite newsletter - I'll print some off for the children to read.

We have lots of the children reading their Joni-Pip books on the playground - even during the cold blast!

Many thanks again for your visits,

Mark

Mark Welch (Headmaster)

I love giving talks in Libraries as people who use Libraries love books and people who love books, love reading and Writers, obviously, love readers; they are so, our type of people! In Libraries, I do similarly as in schools but I usually speak with a much older audience, so I talk more about my life (well, they ask me lots of questions

about it, anyway), more about my writing and more about their writing. I suppose I am able to talk more freely with adults as they ask more personal questions.

One of the best things I like to tell them (it is my pride and joy, in actual fact), is that I had a letter from Best Selling Author, John Le Carre and in it, he congratulated me on becoming a published author, since becoming a grandmother!

Here I am on a panel of Authors, in a massive library! The place was packed. I always seem to be the only children's author at these events (can you see the cover of *Joni-Pip* pinned on the board)



I just want to share something with you that is very personal to me and that has caused a great deal of aggravation, all of my lifewell, it's just that wilful piece of hair, there, which will never stay put!



Check out me at six (← 2nd left), when I was dancing on the stage.....
Yes, that wayward piece of hair has never, ever come under control; it still won't do what it is told!!! A reflection of Carrie, methinks!



This is at the famous Edén Project in Cornwall
←

↑ Carrie, the constantly uncoiffured !

I also enjoy speaking at Writer's Groups. They are always great fun. I know how hard it is to be a struggling but aspiring writer and I love recalling my many failed and humorous attempts at getting published and telling them of other writers, who have had far more rejections than I have had (8). Best Selling Author, R.J. Ellory has had 500: that has to be a record! I always try and read some excerpts from *Joni-Pip* at these events and then follow it all with a book sale and signing. I have always managed to sell books. Martyn, my Marketing Manager, says I am their best marketing tool. What I think he means is that I talk too much! I am rarely lost for words: so, to any reader of *Joni-Pip*, I think you might find a lot of me in Ethelred-Ted. These talks are really special occasions: it is so worthwhile giving up my time for these events. I would like to show you a copy of a letter I received, after I had spoken to a Writer's Group (they had paid £8 to come and hear me...I didn't get any money: the Organisers did)! I don't think I am worthy of her beautiful words but I just wanted to show you that when people take the time to write, if they have enjoyed an event, it is so appreciated and really makes everything even more inspirational.

Hi Carrie

I've been meaning to email you since your visit to Speakeasy to say that in my opinion, it was the best guest speaker evening I have ever had the pleasure of attending. If your books keep me as enthralled as did your talk then I think success will be banging hard on your door.

We are all such diverse beings; some are withdrawn; they build walls to hide behind. Some appear to be outgoing, gregarious, but hide their uncertainties behind the loudest laugh. You however are none of these; you are not afraid to open your soul; even though you may be vulnerable and you have a warmth that is precious and rare in the society we live in today.

Listening to you that evening was mesmerizing and I felt a deep sense of empathy when you spoke of your lovely husband and dearest friend to the point I could feel your pain which is still with you. I'm not sure of the others listening but it made me feel special that you had shared such still very raw emotions with people you had never met before.

The descriptive way you spoke of your childhood; the graveyard posies, the old double school desks; falling in love - a delirious feeling most of us have either forgotten or heaven forbid never experienced and then there is the abounding love you have for your daughters and grandchildren; how incredible is that.

You are a true story teller Carrie and a lovely person and I know you will go from strength to strength. I would really like to wish you well in your writing; who knows; perhaps I too will have a book on someone's shelf one day.

A Poster for an Event in Waterstone's Book Shop

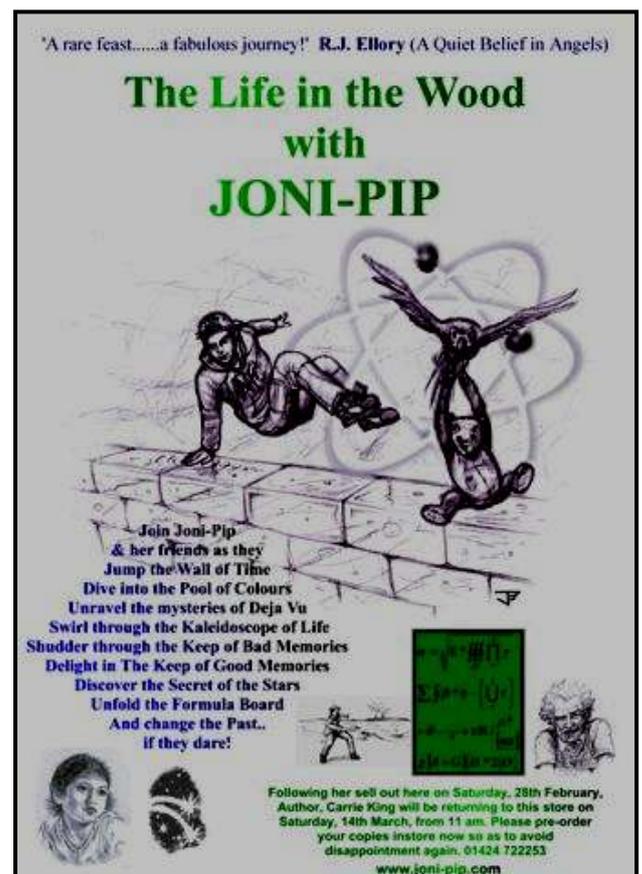


Fondest regards,
Jenny Gleeson

My Media Team has organised the most amazing **Joni-Pip** Events in Book Shops, Heritage Centres, Stately Homes, Parks...you name it; we have been there. I had a Book Signing in Starbucks Coffee Shop, in Sherwood Forest, last year: that was yummy, the Staff fed me with toasted black olive and stilton paninis and heaps of cups of tea and cappuccinos. It was such a successful event! Oh.....and I sold a lot of books, as well!

Joni-Pip, herself, has been round my house, today and she reminded me that every time I have a Book Signing, I am always anxious that I will not sell a book. It's not my fault. The reason is this. A very famous English Aristocrat wrote a book, which was released recently and she told of a time she had a book signing arranged in Asda (Wal-Mart, to you). She said she stood in front of this massive stack of her novels, from ten o'clock in the morning, until four o'clock in the afternoon and didn't sell one book. She said just before four, a woman approached her and said,

'Excuse me,' the Lady Writer was thrilled and smiled from ear to ear. "Could you possibly tell me where the party hose are?"



This experience always haunts me! However, Joni-Pip also reminded me, today that I have always sold books at **every** event, so she says I am a Nolly! (I hope that is not a bad word in the U.S.. I made it up in **Joni-Pip**: it just means I am a silly sausage).

Having Joni-Pip and Becky-Paige at events makes for amazing Promotion of **The Life in the Wood with Joni-**

Pip! One lady at a Book Event said that if she had been around when **Lewis Carroll** had written **Alice in Wonderland** and she had asked Alice to sign a copy of her book, then she would be elated and she would own a very valuable edition of his Masterpiece! She then said how thrilled she was to ask Joni-Pip and Becky-Paige to sign her book. It's funny how the girls take it all in their stride and don't even tell their friends at school, what they do on some of their weekends. The girls have been in so many newspapers and on BBC Radio but they don't bat an eyelid when photographers and reporters arrive and autograph hunters ask them to sign their books.

Here are my girls! ↓

Exclusive to Hastings Waterstone's MEET JONI-PIP & BECKY-PAIGE

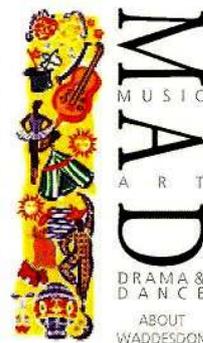


JONI-PIP & BECKY-PAIGE

will be making a special appearance on Saturday 28th February in this store. **The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip** was written especially for Joni-Pip and both she and Becky-Paige have had characters named after them in the Time Travel adventure. Why not get either your **Joni-Pip** novel or your **Joni-Pip Picture Book** signed by Joni-Pip and Becky-Paige themselves? They will be in-store from 11 am. Both girls have been on BBC Radio 4 and local radio and in the Press frequently, talking about their love of **Joni-Pip** the novel and they performed characters from the Book on The Joni-Pip Trail at the

WADDESDON MANOR MUSIC, ART & DANCE FESTIVAL

www.joni-pip.com



Joni-Pip has worked so hard! She writes, compiles and sends out all the Circleites Newsletters, herself and puts so much enthusiasm into everything! She is a joy to be around and a joy to have around. She attends Stage School and is always singing. She sings the song, 'Popular' from **Wicked**, like no-one else and often performs with Paige, Elle and Beth (my 3 granddaughters), on my decking. She always asks if ever **Joni-Pip** is made into a Movie, that she can play the part of Flip (Becky-Paige wants to play the part of Joni-Pip, as she did at The **Joni-Pip** Event at Waddesdon Manor).



Here we are at a Book ↑
Signing. This picture was
taken by The Luton News
and I love it!

She has started a blog but the **Circleites** prefer to receive her personal newsletters: so, under pressure, she is continuing to write and send them!

Here is the link to her blog if you want to follow her or become a Circleite www.circleites.blogspot.com
Here is the link to my (very neglected and very new), blog www.carriekingsblog.blogspot.com and here is the link to Twitter, if you want to follow me (I am not too good at keeping it up-to-date, sorry):
www.twitter.com/CarrieKing1

9. Describe a typical writing day for you.

I have two types of typical writing days, Christy. I spend eight months of the year, from the beginning of April until the end of November, in my Mobile Home in a field, near the river in Bedfordshire. I am an early riser, when I am there. Nothing gives me greater joy than to wake up to the sound of the birds singing and the sun streaming in through my bedroom window. After walking bare foot through the dew, I have a couple of cups of tea and then make some toast and either have mashed banana on it or grilled cheese with back pepper. I brew another cup of English Breakfast Tea, which I take out on to the decking and then I connect up my laptop and go online (it's pretty slow out there as I only have a mobile connection and we are right out in the countryside, so it is dial-up instead of broadband), after checking my mail (and answering it, as best I can), I start writing. I will just mention that all of my electricity is solar powered by the panels on the roof of my mobile home! I write for a couple of hours and then I brew another pot of fresh tea (I am a total tea addict, I am afraid), I possibly have an apple as well. I continue to write for another two hours and then it is time for a swim! My Mobile Home is only yards from the river and I try to swim at least once a day (if not twice, in the height of Summer): it is really refreshing and so relaxing. Invariably someone walks past, over the bridge, while I am swimming and they always stop and talk. It amazes me how many teachers I have met in this way! The local Fishermen call me 'The Mermaid'..... I remember one particular occasion, last Summer. A young man stopped on the bridge and called down to me,

"You're Carrie King, aren't you? My sister, Debbie, has read your book. She says it is a cracking read. She is bringing it over, so I can read it. She is a teacher." Needless to say, I was thrilled!

When I am alone in the water, I go over the morning's writing, in my mind, re-adjusting or tweaking and it isn't unusual to come up with some new idea for the story. I feel so blessed to have the river to swim in; it's almost like my own personal swimming pool! After my swim, I have a shower and then add or change anything or write down any thoughts I had while I was swimming against the current!

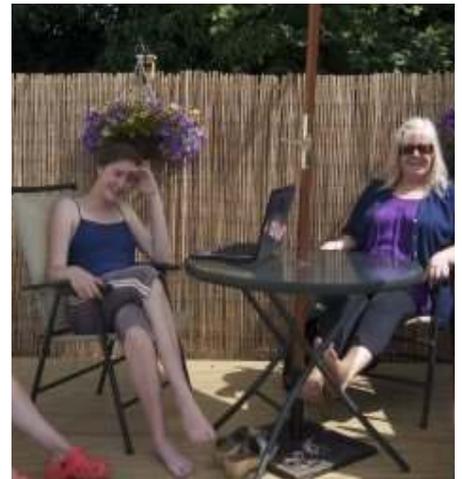
I have included this mad photo of Joni-Pip and Becky -Paige to show how our mobile homes are well & truly, deep in the countryside!



Two views of the river showing how clear it is!



10 days ago →



↑ Here I am on the decking with Joni-Pip: not working, I see but my laptop looks ready!

This is where I swim most days!



This was taken in the snow



The other four months of the year I live at home. I don't get up as early, as it is so cold and dark! I have a first cup of steaming English Breakfast Tea, then I feed my cat and my chicken and after a second cup of tea, I take a shower and have some toast and then commence my working day. I start by checking my e-mail, then memos from my P.A. and Marketing Manager (I am usually in trouble for forgetting to do something). Sheena is my executive P.A., she is so posh and very bossy but she keeps me in line. When I go to Events she always sets up the books with a colleague and when all is prepared, she allows me to enter! She is, actually, a gem and I couldn't function nearly so well without her, if at all!

I try to write for two hours at a time, as if I do any longer, without a break, I feel a bit stale. On goes the kettle and once I have sipped another cup of tea or had a glass of freshly squeezed juice, I am away again. I cannot write all day, I have too many other things to do (so many visitors love to come to my Sanctuary in the beautiful English Countryside), but on a good writing day, I can write for four hours: five if I am particularly charged up!

10. I was sorry to learn you lost your husband due to an accident. Tell us how you met and what you loved most about him.

My sister is much older than I am and one day, when I was eight, she brought home a young man she had been seeing for several months. The moment I saw him, I fell hopelessly in love with him, as many eight-year-olds are wont to do! This crush was so strong that whenever he came to the house, I would just stare at him in admiration. The thing was, I happened to adore classical music and her boyfriend was an amazing pianist! I never spoke to him; I was so in awe of his marvellous talents and dare not! I would sit on the floor outside The Music Room in our house, with my ear pressed heavily against the thick oak door and listen to him playing. He would play the entire Moonlight Sonata and I would be away in my world of fantasy, in blissful ecstasy. I would imagine he was my Prince and I was his Princess and we would live in this white, marble castle and he would wear a white suit and I would wear a white wedding gown. He would play music all day on a white grand piano and I would listen all day, stroking a white, Persian cat (not much of an imagination for an eight-year-old)! Soon it became obvious to all of us that he loved my sister. I wasn't jealous, I was happy that a pianist was to join the family. I decided when I was still eight, that as I could not marry my sister's boyfriend, then I would most certainly have to marry his brother. I didn't actually know if he had a brother. Therein followed a courageous act.....I actually spoke to the Paragon of Perfection, yes real words. I stumbled a bit but finally I managed to ask him if he had a brother. To my delight he said he had three!!! What joy, what rapture, what heaven! I then realised that they might not all be suitable, so I asked him how old his brothers were. One was 13 and one was 11. I decided I would marry the eleven-year-old, so I asked if he might bring in a photograph. He was pleased to do so and the next time I saw him, he handed me a photo. Hmmm.....what I beheld was not a pretty sight but, having no alternative I thought it would suffice.

I did not meet the Pianist's brother until I was eleven. My sister used to take me roller skating twice a week: on a Monday after school and on a Saturday afternoon. She arranged for her boyfriend to come to the Skating Rink one Saturday afternoon and bring his brother. I remember first meeting him. He came walking down the stairs of the double-decker bus we were travelling on. Wow! As our eyes met, I knew, just knew, this was the person I would marry. I fell hopelessly in love: he was totally gorgeous. While I was wild and noisy, he was calm and quiet. His shy smile utterly disarmed me and I was smitten, besotted, obsessed and completely love-struck! So, for all you sceptics out there who don't believe in 'love at first sight', come and talk to me because not only did I feel like this all through our courtship and marriage but he said that the moment he saw me, he knew he would marry me! We are proof that these strange things can happen!

My sister went on to marry the Pianist and I married the Pianist's yummy brother. My sister then had a son, who grew up and got married and had a beautiful baby girl!.....**Joni-Pip**: so Joni-Pip is The Pianist's granddaughter and another character in the book, **Becky-Paige**, is my granddaughter!

What did I love about my husband, Christy?

I never, ever, remember hearing him raise his voice. He never made dramas out of anything. If anything ever went wrong, he would never get angry or ruffled; he would sit me down and talk to me quietly and reason on things with me and best of all, he was so witty, he would come up with some quip that would make me roar with laughter; completely defusing the situation. What did it matter if the pipes had burst and we were swishing around, ankle deep in water in the kitchen? He thought it was about time I 'washed the floor anyway!' I can remember countless situations like this and I remember fondly how he always and I mean without fail, made us laugh and we simply got on with getting on and sorted it all out.

Here we are in Wales and in love! →

He was an amazing father, who simply adored our three daughters. He never got cross with the girls. If they were naughty, he would sit them down and reason with them and they would become like putty in his hands, they were always so sorry and so wanted to please him, by being good for the rest of the day!

My husband was strong and manly and yet he would always join in with anything I was doing. Whether it was washing up or preparing a meal or making the beds. He would always make everything such fun; he used to make us laugh until we hurt! He cared about others and took so much time looking after everyone, particularly older ones and children. When he was killed, we had over 700 at his funeral, which was thoroughly covered by the Media. So many people came up to us afterwards and told us lovely things that he had done to help their family. We were all so thrilled!



Rebekah in New Zealand



Hannah at my Mobile Home



**Our three beautiful
Daughters and three
beautiful granddaughters**

Zoe with my granddaughters in Paris



We were so in love, Christy: he used to telephone me from work and say, "I just needed to hear you breathe, Baby."

I miss him unbearably: we all miss him unbearably.

cat flap, passed by us all, totally ignoring us and walked into the kitchen to finish off his Tuna. We couldn't believe it! I was so happy because I really believed him to be dead....I said I felt he had been resurrected; to which everyone burst out laughing. Then we stopped and felt so sad for the family, from which came, the unfortunate killed cat.

**Hannah with our scrummy, fluffy teddy bear cat ↓
(What do you mean? This is his happy face)!**

I suppose I am a complete animal-holic, I love them all (not too keen on Iguanas and the like but I am sure they are very nice when you get to know them: I once came face to face with a Gecko Lizard while I was in a toilet cubicle in Tema Harbour, Ghana: that freaked me out a little)!

Joni-Pip has a beautiful dog, called Poppy. She is a 'Sprocker', a cross between a Springer and a Cocker Spaniel When they come over to their mobile home, close to mine, Poppy is always bounding in for her doggy snacks. She is so adorable. I love her so much.



I do have a special love for the magnificent Siberian Tigers but then, who doesn't?

12. We love to travel. Tell us about where you live.

I live in Buckinghamshire, England, in a City called Milton Keynes. Here are a few interesting facts about M.K.:- Milton Keynes has at least 40 million trees (it is known as, The City of Trees). On average, one hundred trees a day are planted by the Parks Trust. At least 17 ponds in Milton Keynes contain the scarce and protected Great Crested Newt. The Enigma Code was cracked in Milton Keynes - Bletchley, during the Second World War. Around 45% of the population in Milton Keynes is married. It is the fastest growing urban area in Europe. Milton Keynes has over 180 miles of dedicated bridleways, footpaths and cycle tracks, known better as Redways. Central Milton Keynes's shopping centre is in the Guinness Book of Records for being the LONGEST in the World. MK has THREE ancient woodlands, 4000 acres of parks and 400 acres of lakes. It is a growing city - there are twice as many births as there are deaths. Pollution is lower in Milton Keynes compared to other settlements of its size. Milton Keynes RARELY floods, down to the design of the balancing lakes, which absorb water from the drains and help to prevent flooding. Milton Keynes had the first 'real' snow slope at the Snow Dome. Milton Keynes Theatre is the most popular theatre in the UK. The National Bowl in MK is one of the biggest open air concert venues in the U.K. David Bowie, Queen, U2, Robbie Williams and Michael Jackson have all played at the National Bowl. An apprentice of the Stony Stratford boat builder Edward Hayes went on to help design the Titanic.



**The Great Crested Newt is our largest and ↑
also U.K.'s most threatened species of newt**

There has been a market in Stony Stratford since 1194. Jewellery from the Bronze Age has been found in excavations in Milton Keynes ((I thought I would just mention that I found a Roman Denarius in M.K.)). Around 13 people a DAY move to Milton Keynes. There is a Roman villa at Bancroft. The Royal Train is kept in the shed in Wolverton. Wolverton Football Ground is said to have the oldest football stand in the WORLD! With 2,800 pupils, Stantonbury Campus is one of the biggest schools in Europe.

Very close to where I live, is the magnificent Estate of Woburn, owned by The Duke of Bedford. A very English Custom, which I constantly include in **Joni-Pip**, is the drinking of tea and **Afternoon Tea** in England, is said to have originated with one person; Anna, 7th Duchess of Bedford. In the early 1800's she launched the idea of having tea in the late afternoon to bridge the gap between luncheon and dinner, which in fashionable circles might not be served until 8 o'clock at night. This fashionable custom soon evolved into high tea among the working classes, where this late afternoon repast became the main meal of the day. Woburn Abbey, comprising Woburn Park and its buildings, was originally founded as a **Cistercian Abbey** in 1145 Taken from its monastic residents by **Henry VIII** and given to **John Russell, 1st Earl of Bedford** in 1547, it became the seat of the Russell Family and the **Dukes of Bedford**. The Abbey was largely rebuilt starting in 1744 by the architects **Henry Flitcroft** and **Henry Holland** for the **4th Duke**.



It is only an hour north of London and so stunning with its great stately house of dove grey stone and a beautiful lake, surrounded by 3,000 magnificently tended acres, where herds of rare deer graze in the shade of the massive oaks.



When my youngest daughter, Hannah, was in full-time College and she didn't drive, I used to take her to College in Luton, twenty five miles away. I would come home to Milton Keynes and then drive back to Luton in the late afternoon, pick her up from College and finally take the fourth leg, back home; each of those four times, I would drive through the Duke of Bedford's magnificent Estate. It is always so peaceful with the herds of deer

munching on the lush, green grass, either side of the road. Sometimes we would have to stop and wait as a whole herd had decided to cross the road. It was truly a spectacular sight!

Here are a few deer crossing the road I traveled four times a day. It ↓ would take quite a few minutes for an entire herd to cross but we loved it!



I remember speaking to Louise, the American wife of the Marquis of Tavistock (the eldest son of the Duke), one day. (Her husband, who has since become the 15th Duke of Bedford, was born in Boston, Massachusetts and he was educated at Harrow and Harvard, where he received his BA Degree). She told me how she asked her Mother-in-Law, the Duchess of Bedford, if they could decorate Woburn Abbey (above) and really go to town with Thanksgiving?

The Duchess was highly indignant and replied, "I think not. Weren't the Pilgrim Fathers 'thankful' to God, to be away from England and in their New World!"

I laughed when she told me this. I don't think what she said is exactly true but I understand the Duchess' sentiment. Thanksgiving is not a British Holiday but I had to chuckle at Louise's mortification.

A magnificent deer by an old oak tree at Woburn →



← The tranquility of Woburn



The area in which I live is surrounded by beautiful English villages and when I travel from my house, to my mobile home, to write, I pass through really picturesque countryside. I am leaving you with a few of the lovely sights I see on my way.

It has been a real joy and an absolute pleasure, being interviewed by Dames of Dialogue and I hope as many of you as are able, will read **Joni-Pip** and truly enjoy it, as much as I have enjoyed writing it!

Joni-Pip often hurtles down this hill on her bike. It doesn't look steep but she really moves! ↓



This is a few yards from my mobile home No wonder I find it so inspiring! ↓

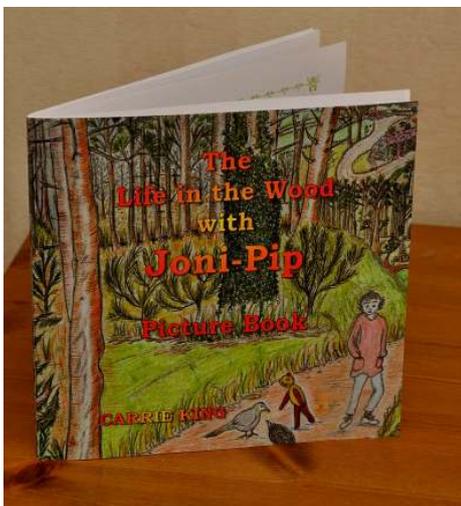


↑ This is Felmersham Bridge, just a short way from where I write. Is it surprising why I love it here?

My Mobile home is just a few yards further down the river from here, I realise how blessed I am ↑ to have such lovely countryside around me!

If you need any more information and I am able to give it, please feel free to write to me via www.joni-pip.com I really hope you have enjoyed my sharing with you some of the insights into the writing of **The Circles Trilogy, Book One, The Life in the Wood with Joni-Pip**, I certainly have!

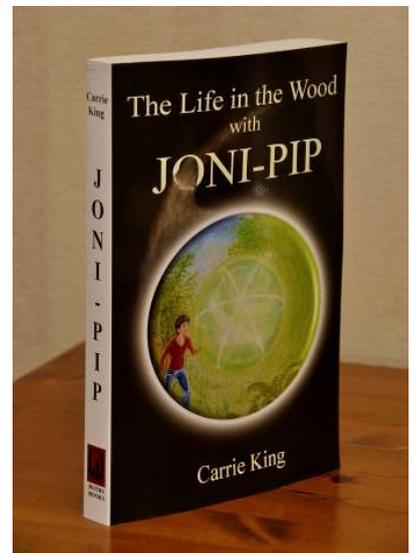
Very best wishes to all of you, in all you do!



ISBN:9780895524622

Carrie King

January 6th 2010



ISBN:9780895524646