

book | *news*

from North Carolina

The University of North Carolina Press

116 S. Boundary St. | Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514-3808

March 2007

For immediate release

Note: For images see end of release.

Taffy's 50!

(Chapel Hill, N.C.) Although it's hard to imagine the thirteen-year-old heroine of Nell Wise Wechter's beloved novel *Taffy of Torpedo Junction* ever growing up, Taffy Willis will celebrate her 50th anniversary in print this spring.

Taffy has been a favorite of young and old alike since it was first published on May 9, 1957. It reaches the mid-century mark with seven paperback printings and nearly 21,000 copies sold from the University of North Carolina Press.

The book tells the thrilling story of a teenage girl who, with the help of her pony and dog, exposes a ring of Nazi spies operating in Hatteras Island, North Carolina, during World War II.

Wechter, an Outer Banks native who died in 1989, was a widely admired author, storyteller, teacher, historian, and journalist. *Taffy* was her first—and some think her best—children's book. It won an American Association of University Women award for best children's book by a North Carolina author the year it was published.

As a schoolteacher in Buxton on Hatteras Island during World War II, Wechter could look out her classroom window and see ships being sunk by the Germans. Her story was inspired by these real events and the courage of the people who lived through them.

When the book's original publisher decided in 1995 that it could no longer keep *Taffy* in print, an outcry ensued, probably sparked by Raleigh *News and Observer* columnist Dennis Rogers, who wrote that the book was "perhaps the best piece of children's literature ever produced in this state and that, "there must always be room for the adventures of a 13-year-old from North Carolina."

Rogers's column lamenting the loss of *Taffy* didn't go unnoticed by editors at the University of North Carolina Press, who contacted Wechter's daughter and literary executor, Marcia Wechter Kass,

[more]

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about the possibility of obtaining reprint rights. Shortly thereafter, the Press received a flood of letters from schoolchildren and even some prominent citizens like former Senator Terry Sanford. Local author Bland Simpson, who'd read *Taffy* as a schoolchild in Elizabeth City, offered to write a new foreword.

"I think it's really great that this book is still in publication, and *Taffy* deserves a big celebration," said Wechter Kass. "Mother would be tickled pink to know that *Taffy*, the story of a survivor, is something of a survivor, too."

Manteo Booksellers on North Carolina's Outer Banks is planning a birthday party for *Taffy* in late June.

Taffy is available in paperback for \$10.95 from booksellers or from the University of North Carolina Press. Toll-free credit card orders: 1-800-848-6224 or www.uncpress.unc.edu.

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Publishing details:

Taffy of Torpedo Junction

By Nell Wise Wechter

With a new Foreword by Bland Simpson

ISBN 978-0-8078-4619-3; \$10.95 paperback

151 pp., 4 illus., 1 map

<http://uncpress.unc.edu/books/T-140.html>

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Materials for media use, including a jacket image and author photo, are available at:
www.ibiblio.org/uncp/media/wechter/

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