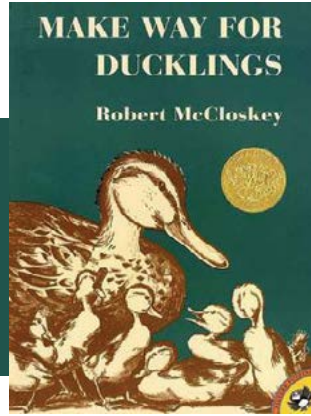


JUST DUCKY

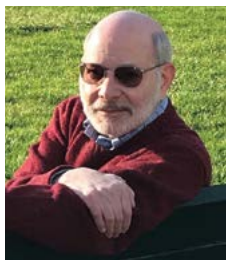



THE STORY OF *MAKE WAY FOR DUCKLINGS*, THE BOOK AND THE SCULPTURE

Many of us fondly remember hearing *Make Way for Ducklings* read to us in childhood. Some are now reading the book aloud to our own children. The 1941 picture book with text and charming illustrations by Robert McCloskey and published by Viking Press would become a classic, go on to win the prestigious Caldecott Medal, be the subject of a beloved sculpture and a musical, and remain in print for 82 years.

It tells the story of the Mallard duck family which is searching for a place to live. Tired from their search, they settle in the Boston Public Garden where riders on the Swan Boats feed them peanuts. But when Mr. Mallard is almost run over by a bicycle, they go off to find a place safe from bikes "and other things with wheels." Mrs. Mallard builds a nest on an island in the Charles River and hatches eight ducklings whom she names Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Ouack, Pack, and Quack. She teaches them how to swim, dive, and walk

in a line. When they are ready, she leads them back to the Public Garden, but their journey is blocked by speeding cars. A kindly policeman, Michael, calls for reinforcements to hold back traffic so the ducks can cross the highway and Boston streets to arrive at their destination safely. They reach the Public Garden where they are met by Mr. Mallard and settle permanently on an island in the lagoon.



 Bill Curtis

One of the great charms of the book is McCloskey's brilliant illustrations in sepia based on charcoal drawings and how accurately they depict Boston buildings and landmarks as they might appear from a duck's perspective. McCloskey wrote and illustrated eight picture books including another classic, *Blueberries for Sal*, which was a Caldecott Honor award book in 1949.

When Nancy Schön created the *Make Way for Ducklings* sculpture in the Boston Public Garden, she

was already an established artist. She exhibited in gallery shows (including the Bristol Museum of Art) and began to design small bronze sculptures. Schön writes, "When I first started doing Public Art, I noticed that people from ages 2 to 92 looked at sculptures in parks rather casually, and then went on their way. Then, one day, I saw a sculpture of a child with a cat. The child was not noticed, but the cat was patted, hugged, and smiled at. This gave me a profound insight. I decided from that event that I wanted my sculpture to be interactive and touched."

In a 30th anniversary interview for WBZ-TV, Schön said she made the sculptures at the insistence of a friend. She studied Robert McCloskey's illustrations and original sketches he had donated to the Boston Public Library to give each duckling an individual pose and personality as they possess in the book. The statues of Mrs. Mallard and her brood were dedicated on October 4, 1987 in the Boston Public Garden as a tribute to McCloskey. They have become every bit as beloved as the book which inspired it.

It has become a Boston tradition to outfit the ducks in various costumes for Christmas, New Year's, Marathon Day, seasonal holidays, and to salute Boston sports teams, so much so that Schön compiled a book of amusing photos, *Ducks on Parade!* (Brandeis University Press, 2021). Each spring on Mother's Day, Boston hosts an annual Duckling Day in the Public Garden where children and parents parade dressed as ducklings. If you want to join in the fun, the next Duckling Day will be held on Sunday, May 14, 2024.



| Nancy Schön on Mrs. Mallard



| Robert McCloskey