What's Your Story, Kristine O'Connell George?

I was born in Colorado and later moved to Texas, Oregon, and Ohio. Six different houses in four different states by the time I started college.

Growing up, one of my favorite possessions was my skate key. I'd tighten my skates onto my Ked's tennis

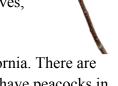
shoes and skate as fast as I could up and down the sidewalks in our neighborhood. On windy days, I'd hold my jacket up like a sail and let the wind push me along. One of my

first published poems, "Skating in the Wind," was inspired by this experience.

When I wasn't skating, I headed for my backyard playhouse, which I converted into a laboratory. I loved doing experiments – growing seeds and making concoctions such as stink bombs with my chemistry set.

At school, I was one of the "good kids" and very, very shy. I studied hard, got good grades, and read voraciously. (Voracious: What a funny word! Doesn't it sound like some kind of prehistoric meat-eating beast?)

In the spring, we'd collect tadpoles – something I still do. We had pets: dogs, fish, and a parakeet. One year, an old desert tortoise lumbered into the backyard. I loved camping, fishing, rock hounding, exploring caves, and spending time in Colorado at my grandparent's house.



Now, I live in a rural area in the Santa Monica Mountains in California. There are hawks, coyotes, and an occasional mountain lion. Oddly, we sometimes have peacocks in our front yard.

Did you play an instrument? Which one(s)?

I took piano lessons for many years although I wasn't very good. Recitals terrified me! At my last recital, I played "The Spinning Song" at warp speed and returned to my seat in record time. The teacher wasn't pleased, but the other kids were -- I was the last player and everyone wanted to get to the cookies!

Did you have a nickname and if so what is it? Is there a story behind your nickname?

My nickname was, 'Sprinter' because I walk so fast and was always walking ahead of everyone else.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

scientist. A drummer in a rock and roll band!

If you weren't a writer, what would you like to be?

A brain researcher or someone who helps people recover from brain injuries. I'm fascinated at how our brains work.

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Do you have a special place where you write your books?

I like to work outdoors – on my patio, in a park, under a tree. My dog, Riley, often keeps me company while I'm working.



Have you ever thrown a manuscript away?

Rarely -- I tend to save everything. I have an old map cupboard that is packed with manuscripts and scribblings.

Do you listen to music while you write, or do you like silence?

I like music, but almost always work in silence. That's because I read my poems aloud to myself as I'm writing.

Do you have any children or pets and have you ever used them in a book?<u>Little Dog Poems</u> and <u>Little Dog and Duncan</u> were inspired by dogs I loved. There are poems about other dogs I loved in *The Great Frog Race* and *Toasting Marshmallows*.

Quick Picks: Choose 4 – 5

• Favorite stationary item?

Creamy white paper with no lines. Beautiful journals. Drawing paper. Pens that write with thin, black ink. Smudgy drawing pencils. (Oh, was I supposed to choose only one item?)

• Dog, Cat, Bird, or Fish?

Dog! Dog! Dog! Woof!

• Favorite or least favorite vegetable?

Frozen lima beans. They are dry and wrinkled. Bleech!

• Love revision or hate it?

LOVE revision. (Mostly!)

• Early Bird Writer or Night Owl?

Actually, both. Sometimes, I work very late at night. Sometimes, I'm already writing when the sun comes up.

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