



# A conversation with Lois Spangler

author of

## *The Fort on Fourth Street*

### *A Story of the six simple Machines*

*When did you become interested in writing?*

Storytelling has been a part of our family. Growing up, I listened to stories told by my grandparents and parents. Many of the stories were about historical events, far away places, or science discoveries. We had many books in our home, but as I became a reader I especially enjoyed the adventure of going to the library and finding great books to read. As an adult, I have continued the family tradition of storytelling. Stories were helpful to explain concepts to my son and students. Now I enjoy writing stories. For me, it was a natural progression to go from hearing and reading stories, then to writing stories.

*What was your incentive to write this particular book?*

I wanted to write a book that was fun to read and would engage and inspire children to become interested in science, especially physical science. I also wanted a book that

would show adults and children having fun doing science together.

*How did you become interested in science?*

I think it was that I was just curious about everything. Science books were of interest to me. When I was in elementary school, I saw experiments in books, and I was fortunate to have parents who would allow me to do the experiments at home.

*What is most rewarding and/or challenging about writing children's books?*

The most rewarding aspect of having a book published by Arbordale is the connection that I am making with a company that has a comparable mission. I want to support children as scientists and as readers by engaging them in reading experiences and science activities that will motivate them. I want children to read books over and over again and develop their own science questions leading them to generate their own



investigations!

***What do you want children to learn from the Fort on Fourth Street?***

First, I want children to have a very enjoyable time reading about science. The Fort on Fourth Street provides children with an easy way to learn very important core physical science concepts that every child must know. As children read, they will see how the six simple machines - the lever, pulley, inclined plane, wheel and axle, screw, and wedge are used to build a real fort. The story also helps children realize that physical science is for everyone, including girls!

***What do you find the most rewarding about sharing the physical sciences with children?***

I have had many very rewarding experiences teaching science. Over the years I have conducted numerous surveys of elementary students pertaining to their interest in physical science. I found two main factors that relate to a student's lack of interest to initially study the subject matter. One is the student's perceived lack of relevance to their every-day lives and the second is the perception of the lack of connection between physical science and living-things. My lessons are designed to meet these needs and create an intrinsic desire to learn. It is extremely rewarding when I help children, especially girls, understand that physical science is relevant to their lives and help them make real-world

connections. The Fort on Fourth Street is written with these two factors in mind.

***Do you have any advice for parents to spark their children's curiosity in science?***

Parents play a very important role in helping their children develop the necessary science skills and knowledge to become scientifically literate. Scientific knowledge is cumulative so to learn new science concepts you must build on what your child already knows. You can begin by communicating regularly with your child's teachers and making sure you know the science units taught at the grade level. Discuss science concepts with your child and supplement your child's learning at home with experiments and frequent library visits. Seek out science learning opportunities in your community, at your child's school, and museums etc. Foster values that support science learning, such as responsibility, self-sufficiency, hard work, and the love of learning. Set aside time each night for family reading. Turn off the TV and read, and if done daily, you will be amazed at the positive changes this will make in your child and your in family!



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