

# Writer from old country blazes trail in Colorado

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From Page:  
20  
1/11/2008  
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**G**REENWOOD VILLAGE — After a few side trips, Kathleen Pelley realized writing was the path she should take.

On her journey, she learned that written words — her own — made her heart lighter.

It was a good move. Pelley, 52, received the 2007 Colorado Book Award in Children's Literature from Colorado Humanities, a nonprofit that promotes Colorado's cultural diversity and inspires people to learn about a lot

of things — history, law, philosophy.

Pelley's trip to writing began in the old country. She grew up in Scotland.



**Pelley wrote short stories for children's magazines.**

her life, too, so that we could get to school and do stuff."

Entertainment was inexpensive Pelley listened to stories — from her family and on the radio — so she had to use her imagination to fill in the visual. She also read — a lot.

"Our summers were spent in Ireland," she said. "That's where my grandparents had a farm. There was no electricity. So you sat around at night and heard the stories. Being Irish, you're just

**"We had a modest lifestyle,"**

Pelley said. "My dad worked three jobs at one time. My mom worked all



**Gary Massaro**

**Pelley listened to stories — from her family and on the radio — so she had to use her imagination to fill in the visual. She also read — a lot.**

brought up with this love of stories."

Her parents were high school dropouts.

But Pelley went to college, studying history at the University of Edinburgh.

That was her first sidetrack. She studied history.

**"I was good with it at school,"** she said. "I liked learning the stories of other people's lives."

She taught school briefly.

"I went circuitously into teaching," she said.

For a while, she was going to be a children's nurse.

"That was a disaster," she said.

"I like children. I didn't like sick children."

That doesn't mean she didn't like them because they were sick, but that she didn't like being unable to cure them.

"When I go to school, I tell children I'm kind of a nurse because stories heal you from inside."

Pelley married an American and settled in Colorado in 1991.

But she missed the old country.

**Her father had died.** And she moved to America a week later.

"Writing was great therapy for the homesickness," she said.

She wrote short stories published in children's magazines.

In 2003, she wrote her first book, *The Giant King*, which was published by the Child Welfare League of America.

Then she wrote *Inventor McGregor*, for which she won the Colorado Humanities prize.

"The true source of my inspiration is love," she said. "I got the idea for *Inventor McGregor* when I was surrounded by the things I love to do — read, write, calligraphy, cook. If I'm not careful, I use up all my energy. And then I have no energy to write. But love is like a magic well inside of you. As long as you keep using it, it will never dry up."

Deadline to enter the 2008 Colorado Humanities book awards is Jan. 31. Information: coloradohumanities.org.

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BARRY GUTIERREZ/ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

**Kathleen Pelley** reads some of her latest work at her Greenwood Village home Thursday. She is a prize-winning author for her book *Inventor McGregor*. Pelley, who grew up in Scotland, moved to the U.S. a week after her father's death. "Writing was great therapy for the homesickness," she said.