

# place of her own



## Adventures in Writing

In her favorite room, a Chattanooga author drafts books set in exotic locales.

Suzanne Fisher Staples often revisits foreign lands while seated at the round table that anchors her dining room. The octagonal room in the north Chattanooga home she shares with husband Wayne Harley features mementos from Suzanne's 13 years in Asia.

It also serves as a favorite writing spot for the author. "Three of my five books are about young people in foreign countries, two in Pakistan and one in India, and I'm about half-way finished with a novel set in Afghanistan," says the writer. Published in 12 countries, her award-winning fiction introduces different ways of life to children. Suzanne's interest in other cultures began while she was serving as UPI's bureau chief in South Asia.

For her latest book, she traveled

back in time to her childhood home in Pennsylvania. *The Green Dog* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$16) comes out this September. "The year before my mother died, she and I spent a lot of time on the phone," Suzanne says. As they reminisced—Suzanne in her Chattanooga dining room, her mother at her Pennsylvania home—Suzanne drew on their conversations to craft the memoir.

"The room sits at treetop level, so there's a lot of bird and squirrel activity," she says. Her two standard poodles, Bogey and Mango, provide plenty of petting and pampering moments throughout the day. "I love

being close to the outdoors even when I'm working," adds the author, a hiking and canoeing enthusiast.

Artifacts from her travels inspire Suzanne's flights of imagination. The rug is from Turkmenistan, and a Thai standing Buddha rests on the table. Chinese screens from the early 1800s serve as shutters on the room's plentiful windows.

"When I was a child, I loved words such as Istanbul and Kashmir, just exotic-sounding names," she says. In her Tennessee home, Suzanne continues to honor her adventures in far-flung locales, both real and fictional.

NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON

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*Suzanne Fisher Staples*