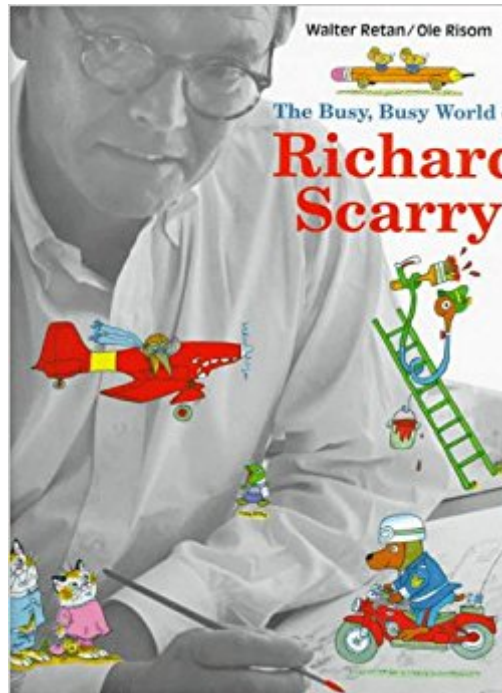




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# The Busy, Busy World Of Richard Scarry



## Synopsis

Tens of millions of children have grown up learning to count, to name things correctly, to behave well, to know what adults do all day, and to recognize cars and trucks and things that go because Richard Scarry taught them how. In dozens of books, with hundreds and hundreds of illustrations, and in witty, memorable words, Scarry revealed to kids that the everyday world was a place that could be understood - and that learning was fun. Although he died in 1994, Scarry has never been more popular, or better loved by those who read him. Such a man is worth knowing more about, and this first biography presents the debonair, humorous, charming figure that Scarry was. Illustrated with personal and family photographs and with the artist's own drawings and paintings, this book has been prepared by two old friends and colleagues - Ole Risom, who was the art director for all of Scarry's major books, and Walter Retan, his editor for many years at Random House and Golden Press. In words and pictures the book traces Scarry's life from his roots in Boston to a post-World War II art school training and a brief career in advertising. Bored with selling products, Scarry put himself forward as a children's book illustrator and began turning out pictures for other people's words. Soon, he himself was writing texts, and eventually he hit upon the magic touch that catapulted him to nearly universal popularity - a menagerie full of animal characters who behaved like humans, but with unfailing good humor and grace.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The narrative is dull--Scarry's was not an adventurous life--but the captions to the copious illustrations of Huckle Cat, Lowly Worm and the gang, and the discussion of technique and intent,

are filled with analytic insight.... Richard Scarry's legacy is glorious. -- The New York Times Book Review, Eden Ross Lipson

The best thing about this book, for parents or children who remember Richard Scarry's books, is the large number of full-size reproductions of pages from those books. These will bring back memories. There are also many photographs of Scarry and his family and friends. But this is not much of a biography; it's more of an extended magazine profile, in which we learn that Scarry's wife was "a wonderful hostess, always full of energy, never failing to look after her guests and making sure they had enough to eat and drink," and we hear boring anecdotes, like the time he climbed onto a neighbor's roof to retrieve an arrow his son had shot up there, and just as he was climbing down the ladder, the neighbors returned home! "Dick had the embarrassing task of explaining why he had been up on their roof." Yawn.

This is an amusing book written by a good friend of the original Richard Scarry. It's intended for adults and does a nice job of showing Scarry's mischievous wit and his optimistic life-is-an-adventure attitude. It's hard not to get caught up in the way he simply, happily lives life on his own terms. The book is also useful for anyone trying to figure out which Richard Scarry books were written by the original Richard Scarry, since now there are scores of books put together by his son, who also goes by "Richard Scarry" and seems to copy and trace much of his father's work but leaves out all the mischief, all the wit, and all those lovely backgrounds of Connecticut farms and European cities...As far as I can tell the real Richard Scarry books still available are: Best Wordbook Ever, Storybook Dictionary, Funniest Storybook Ever, What Do People Do All Day, and Cars and Trucks and Things That Go... Busy, Busy, World is available used for a small fortune. There are undoubtedly others--I think anything originally written before about 1975 is the real thing.

This is a professional-type biography intended for adults. There are many pages excerpted from Scarry's books, used to illustrate the texts, and there are lots of his drawings to just "cute-ify" the pages. It is not for kids, and it is not a personal-type biography. It was written by Scarry's editors/directors, who were also friends, at Golden Books and Random House, respectively; so you get an idea of his personality and of his career trajectory, but it does not go in-depth into anything, especially not his personal relationships. One thing I have noticed about Richard Scarry books is how there are multiple versions of so many of them. The book clearly explains how he left Golden for Random House, so with control of whatever Scarry had done for them, Golden set about trying

to keep making money off him after he had left by re-sizing, re-compiling, and re-hashing things he had already done. Anyone who loves Richard Scarry books and likes to read "behind-the-scenes" accounts would enjoy this book.

Having grown up with Richard Scarry's books, I naturally wanted to find out more about him. The book gives a well detailed background to his beginnings and some interesting vignettes. However, I wished there were more information on how he had developed his characters, in particular Huckle Cat and Lowly Worm. Did you know that Huckle Cat started out as a bear? I had a hard time explaining this to my daughter. Wished the book had explained this. But, nonetheless, for those who grew up with him, it is well worth the buy.

Although the book is chock-full of beautiful Scarry artwork, the text is dry and not very kid-friendly.

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