

About H. A. and Margret Rey



Hans Augusto Rey



Margret Rey



Hans Rey and friend

Margret Rey and her cocker spaniel, Scoopy, circa 1956

Hans Augusto Rey was born on September 16, 1898, in Hamburg, Germany. He grew up there near the world-famous Hagenbeck Zoo, and developed a lifelong love for animals and drawing. Margarete Elisabeth Waldstein (who would be known to most of the world as Margret Rey) was also born in Hamburg on May 16, 1906. The two met briefly when Margret was a young girl, before she left Hamburg to study art. They were reunited in 1935 in Rio de Janeiro, where Hans was selling bathtubs as part of a family business and Margret was escaping the political climate in Germany. Margret convinced Hans to leave the family business, and soon they were working together on a variety of projects.

Hans and Margret were married in Brazil on August 16, 1935, and they moved to Paris after falling in love with the city during their European honeymoon. It was there that Hans published his first children's book, after a French publisher saw his newspaper cartoons of a giraffe and asked him to expand upon them. *Raffy and the Nine Monkeys* (*Cecily G. and the Nine Monkeys* in the British and American editions) was the result, and it marked the debut of a mischievous monkey named Curious George.

After *Raffy and the Nine Monkeys* was published, the Reys decided that Curious George deserved a book of his own, so they began work on a manuscript that featured the lovable and exceedingly curious little monkey. But the late 1930s and early '40s were a tumultuous time in Europe, and before the new manuscript could be published, the Reys—both German Jews—found themselves in a horrible situation. Hitler and his Nazi party were tearing through Europe, and they were poised to take control of Paris.

Knowing that they must escape before the Nazis took power, Hans cobbled together two bicycles out of spare parts. Early in the morning of June 14, 1940, the Reys set off on their bicycles. They brought very little with them on their predawn flight — only warm coats, a bit of food, and five manuscripts, one of which was *Curious George*. The Nazis entered Paris just hours later, but the Reys were already on their way out. They rode their makeshift bicycles for four long days until reaching the French-Spanish border, where they sold them for train fare to Lisbon. From there they made their way to Brazil and on to New York City, beginning a whole new life as children's book authors.

Curious George was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1941, and for sixty years these books have been capturing the hearts and minds of readers throughout the world. All the Curious George books, including the seven original stories by Margret and Hans, have sold more than twenty-five million copies. So popular that his original story has never been out of print, George has become one of the most beloved and recognizable characters in children's literature. His adventures have been translated into many languages, including Japanese, French, Afrikaans, Portuguese, Swedish, German, Chinese, Danish, and Norwegian.

Although both of the Reys have passed away — Hans in 1977 and Margret in 1996—George lives on in the Curious George Foundation. Established in 1989, this foundation funds programs for children that share Curious George's irresistible qualities—ingenuity, opportunity, determination, and curiosity in learning and exploring. Much consideration is given to programs that benefit animals, through preservation as well as the prevention of cruelty to animals. The foundation supports community outreach programs that emphasize the importance of family, from counseling to peer support groups.