

Tony Baloney is a Macaroni Penguin. Why a *Macaroni* penguin? Children and teachers seem to love penguins. I chose the Macaroni because of the breed's fanciful crest that could be illustrated as a "hair element." And I loved the whimsy of the name.

Is Tony Baloney based on anyone you know? He's a combination of many boys I know, or have known. My sons were like Tony: athletic, sweet, yet mischievous. And when they were very young, much of their play was directed by their sisters.

Tony Baloney seems to have a lot of heart, but always manages to get in trouble, despite his best efforts. There is a tag line in every Tony Baloney book. "Tony Baloney does not love trouble, but trouble loves him." Why?

Tony is like many children. He means well. But there are a lot of rules to follow and he gets frustrated. He often gets over excited about things and plunges forward without thinking. So when I say that trouble loves him, I mean that accidents happen in his life, he's often legitimately frustrated, and his best laid plans often fall apart. I think many children can relate to that. Sometimes they learn, the first time. Sometimes they need many reminders. There's resolution, though, in Tony Baloney's life, and he does move forward, just not as seamlessly as others might.

What inspired you to begin the Tony Baloney series? My editor had worked with Edwin Fotheringham on several nonfiction books. Based on his portfolio, she knew that he had a fun, whimsical style that was quite different from the books on which she'd worked with him previously. One day she asked me if I had any ideas for a quirky, animated-type character that might work well with Ed's style. I pulled out an old manuscript from years ago about a Macaroni penguin named Tony. My editor loved the idea. It needed a lot of work and polishing. But, that was how Tony Baloney was born.

What would you say you love most about the Baloney family?

I love that they aren't perfect and that every day does not go smoothly. The children make mistakes. They squabble. The parents sometimes change their minds. Momma and Poppa or a teacher often must have a little chat or a heart-to-heart talk with the children. There is an underlying community of love and respect. But the surface is messy. That's what I love!