



Maria Montoya Martinez: Master Potter

Elsie Kreischer

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At age ten, Mariċ'½a Montoya

Martċ'½nez was stricken with smallpox. Near death, she lay limply in her mother's arms, unable even to swallow the herbal teas offered her. All the attempts to revive her seemed to have failed. Trying one last remedy, her aunt and mother filled the hearth with thick green cedar boughs and smoked the room, waving the fumes towards the sick little girl. Mariċ'½a's mother desperately prayed to Santo Niċ'½o, the children's saint, promising that if Mariċ'½a lived, she would send her on a pilgrimage to see him. Mariċ'½a lived to make the pilgrimage and enjoy a long life. But she was forever marked by this event.

Mariċ'½a's pilgrimage to the Santuario in Chimayo, New Mexico, becomes a symbol of her life. It is a journey towards humility, hard work, and perfection. She feels special since she was favored to live. And so she constantly strives to create the most worthy pots she can, always keeping in mind Old Grandmother's prowess with clay. The clay connects her to the earth, and the clay links her to her future husband, Juliċ'½n, who becomes a painter of her pots. Throughout the years, she is blessed and blesses her whole pueblo with money and, more importantly, love.

Mariċ'½a Montoya Martċ'½nez: Master Potter is the biography of a very sick little girl who grew to be a strong and talented woman. She won many awards through the years for her pottery, so many that some of them were lost. This story beautifully depicts her exemplary life. She represented her people and her art well.

Elsie Karr Kreischer was a personal friend of Mariċ'½a Montoya Martċ'½nez. A writer based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, she is also the author of *The Navaho Magic of Hunting*, which won the 1992 National League of American Pen Women Children's Book Award.

Roberta Sinnock is the owner of Seven Oaks Studio, a 20-year-old company that specializes in book design and illustration. She earned her B.F.A. from Arizona State University with a specialty in graphic design and currently resides in Tucson, Arizona.

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