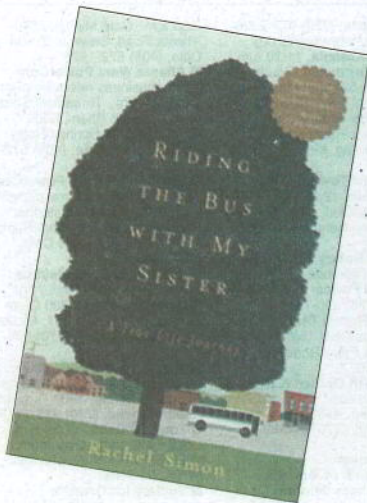


## Courage to write

Bestselling author to lead writer's workshop at Book Fair on the Square



Photos special to the Marietta Daily Journal

Author Rachel Simon, above, wrote the bestseller 'Riding the Bus with my Sister,' left. Simon will lead writing seminars at the Book Fair on the Square.

By Ashley Hungerford  
Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

**MARIETTA** — The first step to writing, author Rachel Simon says, is courage.

"Fear is what stops most people from writing," she said. "Don't let your fear stop you."

Simon, author of "Riding the Bus with My Sister," a bestselling memoir published by Plume in 2002, will be featured at the inaugural Book Fair on the Square on Saturday.

Simon will teach two seminars on creative writing. The book fair, on the Marietta Square, is sponsored by the Cobb County Community Services Board.

"Riding the Bus" chronicles a year Simon spent with her sister, Beth, who ventures around a Pennsylvania town each day by city bus. "Cool Beth," as she is known, has developmental disabilities. Simon recounts poignantly Beth's interaction with the familiar bus drivers and her fellow riders, who take Beth's kindness and craziness in varying strides. As she does with theirs.

Rosie O'Donnell starred as Beth in a 2005 Hallmark Hall of Fame movie of the book.

In June, Simon expects to publish "Building a Home with my Husband." Readers of "Bus" will remember her husband, "Sam," as Simon profiles their efforts to renovate a house. The book parallels the renovation of a house with the renovation of love, Simon said.

Simon said three significant relationships in her life — with her mother, sister and husband

### Words of wisdom

**What:** Book Fair on the Square creative writing seminars with Rachel Simon

**When:** Saturday, 1:30 p.m. Family/caretakers focus, 3 p.m. Writers focus

**Where:** First Presbyterian Church, 189 Church St., Marietta

**Cost:** Sessions are \$25, which includes a copy of Simon's "Riding the Bus with My Sister."

**Information:** To register, call (770) 429-5036.

— went through significant breaks and required repair, much as parts of a house need repair when they break.

On Saturday, Simon, who has taught writing at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania and published "The Writer's Survival Guide" in 1997, hopes to encourage local writers in her writing seminars.

The first seminar, at 1:30 p.m., is geared toward family members of people with disabilities.

"Many have powerful stories to tell, and they don't know how to organize their thoughts," she said. Family members of people with disabilities are often looking for validation and encouragement to write their family story.

She said she's always asked how Beth felt being written about. "It made her immensely happy and feel unique that her sister put four years of her life into writing her story," she said.

The second session, at 3 p.m. Saturday, is for anyone who's

### Book Fair on the Square

**What:** Book Fair on the Square call (770) 429-5036 or e-mail dfields@cobbcsb.com.

**When:** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

**Where:** Four venues: Glover Park; Theatre in the Square, 11 Whitlock Ave.; Council Chambers, Marietta City Hall, 205 Lawrence St.; and First Presbyterian Church, 189 Church St. NE

**Featuring:** Autism author Roy Richard Grinker, Ph.D., the author of "Unstrange Minds: Remapping the World of Autism," will be the special guest of a Book Fair dinner at 7 p.m. Friday night. The event will include a catered dinner and an autographed copy of the book, as well as a chance to meet the author. The event will be at Turner Chapel AME Church, 429 North Marietta Parkway. Tickets are \$100. For more information,

**Highlights:**  
■ Children's parade of characters, 10:30 a.m., Glover Park main stage  
■ Rachel Simon, 11 a.m., Theatre in the Square  
■ Writers of the New South, 1 p.m., City Hall  
■ Kids on the Block puppet show, 2 p.m., Glover Park gazebo  
■ Doug Crandell, author of "Hairdos of the Mildly Depressed," 3 p.m., Theatre in the Square  
■ Tony Grooms and Rebecca Burns, on the South's Civil Rights era in history and fiction, 4 p.m. City Hall

**For more information:** www.bookfaironthesquare.com

interested in writing, she said. "If you haven't started to write, but you've given yourself permission — come," she said. Bring a notebook and "tons of questions."

Both sessions will focus on four main topics — the process of writing, the craft of writing, the business of publishing and how to get people to pay attention.

Anyone who wants to start writing but has not started should commit to seven hours of writing a week, she suggested. Writing takes time and dedication, like practicing an instrument.

But Simon, who has published both fiction and non-fiction, advises against jumping right in on that masterpiece swirling around in your head. Start with something insignificant, and

work up to the masterpiece, she said. She offers more tips at her Web site, [www.rachelsimon.com](http://www.rachelsimon.com).

Fiction is all about addition and creating something that's not real. Non-fiction is about subtraction and peeling layers away to find the real story, she said.

"I have this hunger to do both because they use the same techniques, but they work inverse parts of the brain," she said. "To be a whole self, I need both."

With the success of "Riding the Bus with my Sister," Simon said she's now enjoying every writer's dream — writing fulltime at her home in Delaware.

And "Cool Beth?"  
"She's great," Simon said. Still riding the buses.  
ahungerford@mdionline.com