

>> From the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

>> This this Jennifer Gavin at the Library of Congress. Late September will mark the 11th year that book lovers of all ages have gathered in Washington, DC to celebrate the written word at the Library of Congress National Book Festival. The Festival which is free and open to the public, goes to 2 days this year, Saturday, September 24th and Sunday, September 25th, 2011. The festival will take place between 9th and 14th Streets on the National Mall rain or shine. Hours are 10:00 am to 5:30 pm, Saturday the 24th and 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm on Sunday the 25th. For more details visit www.loc.gov/bookfest. And now it is my pleasure to introduce author and actress Julianne Moore whose latest book for children is titled *Freckleface Strawberry Best Friends Forever*. Ms. Moore, thank you so much for joining us.

>> Well thank you for having me.

>> Most of our listeners know you for the lengthy list of films you've appeared in, about 60 from the sources I've seen. We're delighted to have you joining us as an author at the National Book Festival this year. Could you tell us how you came to write this series of books for young people?

>> Well it was actually a suggestion of a friend who works in the book business. And he said to me, you know, my children were very small at the time. And he said oh, you should write down something, you know, anecdotal about your childhood, your kids would love it. And I laughed at him because at the time he didn't have any kids. And I said children really don't care about your childhood, they only care about theirs. So but it stuck with me, the idea stuck with me. And for some reason I remembered this nickname that I had when I was 7 which is the age that my son was at the time, *Freckleface Strawberry*. And sort of from that, that nickname kind of came this character and the first book. But really it was also in reaction to my son at 7 who I thought was an absolutely perfect child [inaudible] looking in the mirror and saying mommy I don't like my teeth, my teeth are too big. And 7 is the age when children first become self-conscious. And so that was what, that was the [inaudible] *Freckleface Strawberry* because that was when I first started really getting my freckles and hating my hair and not liking any of that. So the book is really about how all kids kind of go through that at that age. But you grow up and those things don't necessarily go away as they do in like fairy tales. But we just get used to them, you know. Our hair or our ears stick out or our crazy height or our freckles or whatever. You know I still have all this stuff but I could care less because I have other things to worry about.

>> Yeah well I certainly remember those days of my own. Well not only has the book series been well received but I understand this story became a musical. I enjoyed a video I saw of it with the title character being tormented by her singing and dancing freckles. Tell me a little bit about the musical.

>> Yeah that was a really lucky circumstance for me. It was a, you know, a woman read my books and she happened to have a theater in Manhattan and

asked permission to develop [inaudible] musical. And it's just going to be a workshop for children at this theater that she ran. And then the workshop went so well that they developed into a full-fledged off Broadway musical. And it ran for just about a year off Broadway. And I think it's going to open again in November at MMAC on West 60th Street. But it was just, it was kind of amazing to sit there in the audience and watch your, you know, your picture book turn into a full blown musical.

>> Well and that was you. What sort of feedback do you get from kids about your books? I'm sure everyone can relate to this kind of a story because everybody's self-conscious about something.

>> Yeah I mean, it's been, it's been one of those, I think the most rewarding thing about writing the books has been talking, you know, reading in schools to kids and talking to kids about it. Because, you know, with the book is that issue of kind of I don't know self-confidence and, you know, how you feel that [inaudible] personally. And the second book is about, you know it's called Dodgeball and Freckleface Strawberry and the Dodgeball Bully. And that's really about children dealing with their fears. One child has a fear of physical things and one child has a fear of imaginary things. So, you know, within both instances I start talking to kids about like with Dodgeball I said what are you afraid of? I say, you know, I'm not, I say personally I'm not afraid of the dark and I'm not and I like scary stories and I'm not afraid of spiders. But I don't like balls and I don't like things going fast and I don't like anything coming toward my head. And then they laugh and they say I'm not afraid of spiders but I, you know, I am afraid of the dark. And we just kind of go around the room. We talk about it that way, so. You know, all these books are just about hopefully what's happening in their lives. You know, what's the social emotional fabric of these children's lives. And kind of the sweet spot for these stories are like 6 and 7. So even though they are picture books and kids and adults can read them to littler kids where they really start articulating their own feelings around these issues is around 6 or 7 years old.

>> I see. Many of the films in which you've appeared were based on well-known novels. For example, *The End of the Affair*, *The Shipping News*, *The Hours*. Do you tend to go for scripts after you read a novel or do you prefer to follow the film director's take initially and find out what the author really meant later?

>> Well, you know, it's a, it's, when you make a film, yeah I'm a huge reader. I think that's the reason I'm attracted to scripts that are based on novels. In some ways the material is better. So if you're lucky enough to be in, you know, the movie version of *The End of the Affair*, I mean it was just, it was such a gift. That was, you know, Neil Jordan made a really beautiful adaptation of the novel. So what I always do is, you know, you have the script screenwriter, often it's a screenwriter director has written. And then you also have the novel and you kind of look at them both. And you talk to the director. And most, you know, most the director's I've worked with are always very interested in doing [inaudible] adaptation of the book. You know, there's, it's highly unlikely that somebody wants to take something and tear it apart. So, so generally they're in sync, the books author and the screenwriter. In the

case of *The Hours*, I spoke to David Hare and Michael Cunningham about the book. And thought the, you know, Mike Cunningham's book is so dense and worrying and also so incredibly internal, I really didn't know, I couldn't figure out how David was going to be able to communicate that in the screenplay and yet he did. I mean, he did actually beautifully. There was just a way that, I mean especially in my section, the Laura Brown section, I mean the woman's depressed, she barely speaks. But he was able with very minimal dialogue to communicate everything that Michael communicates.

>> That's very helpful to know that old saying that the book is always better than the movie may not be true in every case.

>> Well I think it's, I mean, you know, it's interesting because they're both completely subjective experiences, films and movies, I mean, I mean books and movies. And books in particular because it's such a [inaudible] internal isolated experience. So your personal imagination is always going to be better than what anybody else's imagination is. I mean, I think where you can go, you know, inside your own mind is, it's surpass everything.

>> Well as we speak your movie *Crazy Stupid Love* is doing well in the theaters. And I see that within a few months you're going to be reunited with Jeff Bridges in a movie based on the young adult books series, *The Seventh Son*. What can you tell us about that?

>> Well it's a fantasy series for like you said young adults about a boy who's the seventh son of the seventh son. And of course had magical powers. And Jeff plays a character called Spook whose sort of, who apprentices the boy to get rid of all these evil witches. And I play Mother Malkin who is like the most evil witch of the 17th century. So like I played, you know, an outright old fashioned evil witch. And it'll be great to get to do it with Jeff. And I'm really looking forward to it. And I haven't read the series of books for kids yet but we don't shoot until next year, so I'm going to read it before we start shooting.

>> Speaking of Jeff Bridges, my husband who's a great Coen brothers fan will divorce me if I do not ask you whether you've been surprised by the cult like interest in your film *The Big Lebowski*. You played Maude Lebowski of course.

>> We have all been very surprised. I mean, I love that movie and was so thrilled to be a part of it. And one of the interesting things was that when it came out it kind of came out with a thud. You know, people just didn't think or critics or whatever, [inaudible] to respond to it. And we all loved it and we were like well, you know, whatever. And then over the years it just became this, as you said this huge sort of cult like film. And I mean where there's actually even in August in New York City there was going to be this sort of gathering of *Lebowski Fest*. And Jeff's going around boating and Steve Buscemi and John Turturro and John Goodman and, you know, they have these sort of celebrations all over the United States every year for the *Big Lebowski*. So yeah it has been incredibly surprising. But I'm thrilled because I feel like the film, you know, the

film does warrant it. It's a wonderful, really, really wonderful, really rich funny film.

>> Yeah my husband was telling me that he was twitterer and he says there's something called the bot Lebowski. That if anyone mentions the word Lebowski you'll get a message from the bot Lebowski with a quote from the film.

>> Really? Okay, I'm going to tweet something about it then.

>> In view of your successes in all through now, have you considered writing for other age groups?

>> Well it's interesting. I mean, I haven't considered writing for other children's age groups. I am working of an adaptation of a short story that I'd, you know, the screenplay that I'd like to direct someday. If, you know, if I ever finish it. But I was really struck by something that Maurice Sendak said in a documentary that [inaudible] not so long ago. Somebody asked him why did he, why did he write children's books? You know, why did he write these picture books? And he said it comes out how it comes out. I laughed so hard but I thought yeah, I don't think anybody really intends to write the way they write. It's, you know, suddenly this story comes out and it's a story geared towards, you know, 3 to 8 year olds. He didn't really mean it. It's just that's how it came out.

>> I see.

>> So I don't know that writing has a whole lot to with intentions. Just sometimes it's just about where, you know, where it emerges.

>> That's interesting. I don't think I've ever heard quite like that before and I'm fascinated.

>> Well that's, that's, you know, that's Maurice Sendak. I mean, he was the one. I completely took that from him.

>> Yeah and it sounds like it rang true for you.

>> Yeah, yeah it did.

>> Well I have to say we've excited about seeing you at the National Book Festival this year. And on behalf of the Library of Congress and the National Book Festival team, thank you so much for joining us for this 2011 National Book Festival Podcast.

>> Thank you so much for having me. I really enjoyed talking to you.

>> I can guarantee you the signing lines when you go to sign books are going to be quite lengthy.

>> Oh well that's exciting. I'm glad to hear that.

>> Thanks.

>> All right, thank you so much.

>> We've been hearing from author and actress Julianne Moore who will appear on Saturday, September 24th in both the children's pavilion and the family storytelling stage at the 2011 National Book Festival on the National Mall.

>> This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress. Visit us at loc.gov.