



NEIL THORBURN BIO

When Neil Thorburn was about 11 or 12 years old, he brought home a book about kites and begged his parents to help him make one. Using newsprint and splinters from the side of orange crates, Neil crafted his first kite which, much to his surprise and delight, actually flew! He's been hooked ever since.

Now 82, Neil has been designing and building his own kites for decades. Despite his lofty standard of flying only handmade kites, the materials he uses are down to earth: plastic garbage bags, transparent tape and wooden dowel rods from the do-it-yourself store. Not only do these commonplace materials make great kites; they make kite-making an easy project for anyone to do.

Born in Sun Dial, Alberta, Canada in 1916, Neil has lived in the San Jose area for the last 40 years. When not improving his own and other kite-makers' designs, Neil's wife, three children, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren keep him busy.

Neil was a teacher and educator by profession, experience that serves him well in kite-making classes at a local children's museum and in his books introducing novice and experienced kite-makers alike to improved versions of classic kite designs.

One of the things Neil loves about kites is how they bring people together. "You go to the park, take out your kite and you've got an audience," he says. "It's a great conversation-starter!"

It's also a great way build relationships and build confidence. Neil says his formerly shy great-granddaughter blossomed when he taught her how to make kites. "Don't you know her kite flew better than mine? She was so delighted at her success that she gave me a big smile and a hug," says Neil.

When not introducing kids and their parents to joys of kite-making, Neil works on perfecting his "super" kites. "I call them super kites because they fly super," exclaims Neil. His goal is to craft kites that fly 1,000 feet straight up in the air. And although he loves the challenge of the work, he does have one complaint. "Not many people are trying to make kites that fly straight over head, so I get lonesome," says Neil.

But Neil makes good use of the rare solitary moment by writing and reciting poetry. In fact, he jokes that his ambition is to become the poet laureate of kiting! For Neil, crafting kites and writing poetry are both of flight of fancy. Each requires balance and beauty, rhythm and rhyme. A perfect day, says Neil, is to go out to a field, sit on a chair, think beautiful thoughts and paint the sky with his kites.

This is great - go into super kites and connect it to his 3 books!

*why 3 books?
differences in books?
re publishing 1st book*

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Now 82, Neil has been designing and building his own kites for decades. Despite his lofty standard of flying only handmade kites, the materials he uses are down to earth: old bamboo blinds, transparent tape and plastic grocery bags. Not only do these commonplace materials make great kites; they make kite-making an easy project for anyone to do.

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When not introducing kids and their parents to joys of kite-making, Neil works on perfecting his "super" kites, as illustrated in this book. The reason he wrote the book, he says, is because he realized that when he retired he still wasn't famous. "Had to feed my ego," jokes Neil.

It's actually more a desire to share his love of his "super" kites that motivated him to put his years of experience down on paper. "I call them super kites because they fly super," exclaims Neil. His goal is to craft kites that fly 1,000 feet straight up in the air. And although he loves the challenge of the work, he does have one complaint. "Not many people are trying to make kites that fly straight over head, so I get lonesome," says Neil.

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Was 11 or 12 when i brought a kite book home and begged my folks to help me make a kite, and the darn thing flew and I was hooked! Made from newsprint and split sides of orange crates.

One day I was walking along side the railroad tracks, found some spacers and took them home to use for spars.

The San Jose Kite Man ! Interviewed by media around the world. I started working on classic designs to improve them.

The Wright Brothers had

I get a kite straight above my head 1,000 feet up. I want my kite to fly better than any other kite – straight up on a 1,000 feet of line

Super kite because they fly super

Writes poems about his kites want to be the poet laureate of kiting!

Melee Moon Kite – hard to make but beautiful

Kites are poetic You go out to a park and you've got an audience – it's a great conversation piece "Aren't you a little old to be flying kites?"

My great granddaughter had been shy before, helped her make her first kite, it flew better than mine, a light bulb went off in her head and she gave me a big smile and a hug

Love to see the kids be successful and see their delight and sometimes it's the first time the parents have made a kite, too. They're delighted too. I went to my great granddaughter's class, her stature increased because she knew how to do it and was my assistant.

It's a nice present to give I've made 500 to 600 kites in my life

Inspired by Native American art, as in my Thunderbird kite

Nobody's tried that two stack of my kite, it's hard to make!

Not many are trying to get their kites up 1,000, I'm lonesome!