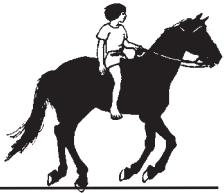


## Book Review

**TIGER'S FALL**, Written and illustrated by Molly Bang

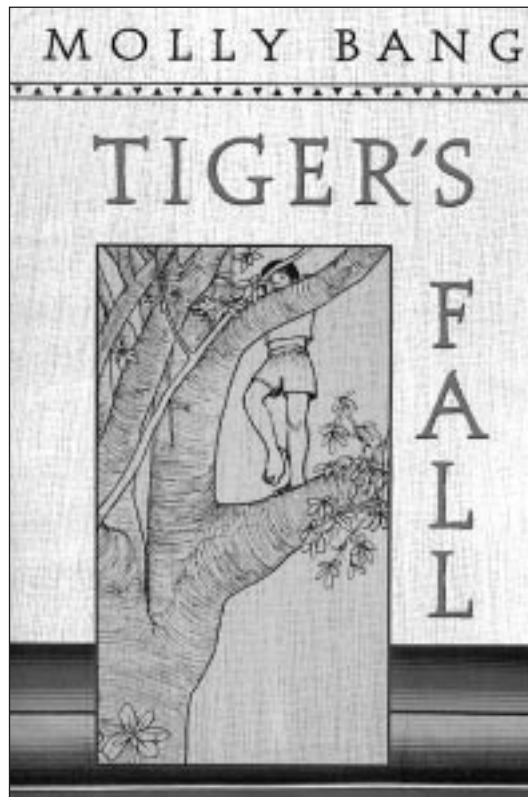
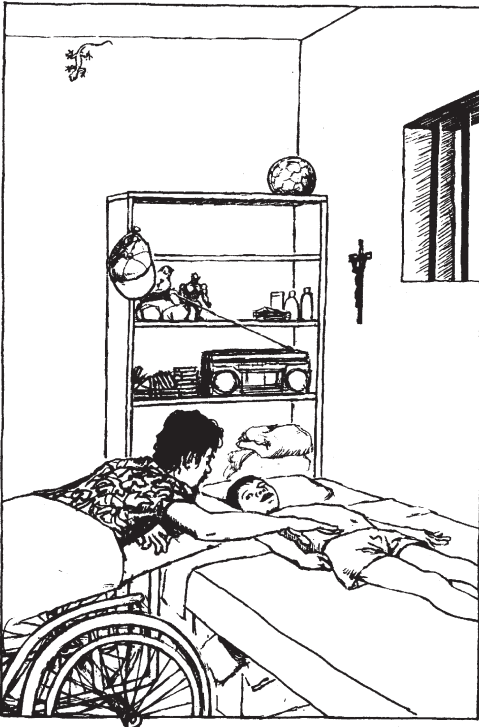
Henry Holz and Company, NY, 2001

Molly Bang, a highly acclaimed writer and illustrator of children's books, has just published a spellbinding story about a little girl named Lupe. A mischievous, high-spirited young dare-devil whom her father lovingly calls "Tigrilla" or Little Tiger, Lupe lives in rural Mexico. After a backbreaking fall from a giant fig tree, Lupe loses all movement and feeling in her legs. Soon she develops dangerous pressure sores. Feeling totally useless and miserable, she becomes angry at herself and the world. Her parents love her but



don't know how to help. Others pity her or pretend she doesn't exist. She begins to wish she were dead.

Lupe then finds herself in an unusual village rehabilitation center. This crazy place is run by cheerful people



in wheelchairs or on crutches, whom Lupe at first, with disbelief and scorn, calls "happy cripples." But where other people have treated her with pity, and expect nothing of her, this odd assortment of disabled young people at the center treat her with understanding, support, and even good-natured pranks. Through their example, they teach Lupe to become more self-reliant. The girl gradually overcomes her despair and discovers that becoming disabled need not be the end of a happy and purposeful life.

As Molly clarifies in the Afterword, "The 'center' in this story is based on a real place in the village of Ajoya about 80 miles north of Mazatlan, Mexico." This real place, of course, is "PROJIMO, or, in English, Project of Rehabilitation Organized by Disabled Youth of Western Mexico."

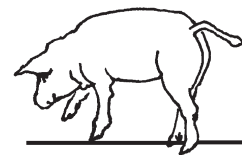
"I have set the story about 15 years ago when I first visited PROJIMO," Molly explains, "and began to visit some of the people who lived there. All the events in the story are

real and did happen there, though I've created some composites and have not used real names. There was one particular girl at PROJIMO whose courage and radiance served as my inspiration for Lupe. She was paralyzed from the waist down, she began her own rehabilitation when she healed the sore on a donkey, and she helped in the rehabilitation of a younger girl exactly as described in the story."

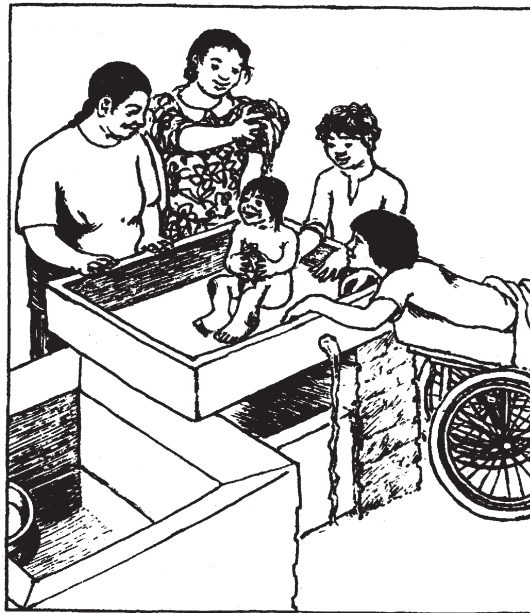
The real little girl on whom Lupe is based was Vania, whose actual transformation from a miserable child lacking self-confidence into a happy, very caring nursing assistant at age 10, was no less remarkable than in Molly's account. The story is a wonderful read, not only for children, but for anyone who can identify with the valiant struggle of children to maintain their vitality and spirit through difficult times.



As an introduction to disability awareness, or to help non-disabled children appreciate the strengths and abilities of a disabled child—rather than looking at such a child with pity—this little book is invaluable.

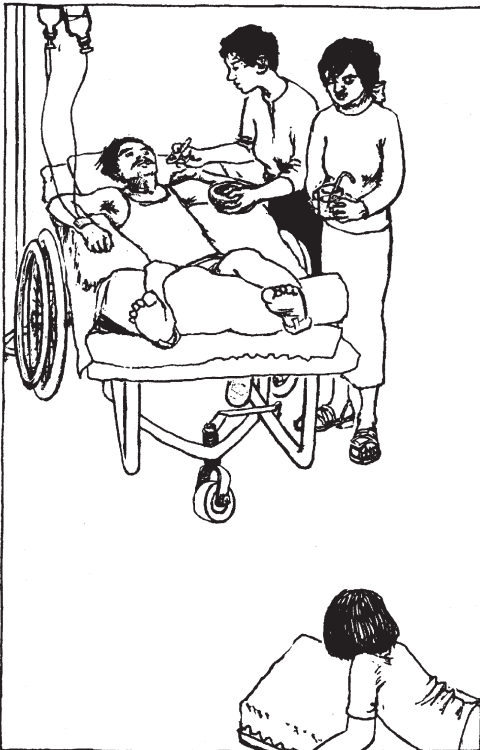


Without being sentimental, Molly's story traces the dynamic events in the lives of her characters with sensitive yet psychologically astute precision. Molly Bang describes the turmoil of Lupe's physical and mental battle to cope with her limitations, and to rediscover joy of life, in a down-to-earth way that any child can understand. A rich sense of humor and childlike freshness gives a silver lining to even the saddest moments. Finally, the way that Lupe manages to overcome her difficulties and regain her fiery spirit and self-esteem provides an uplifting conclusion to the story.



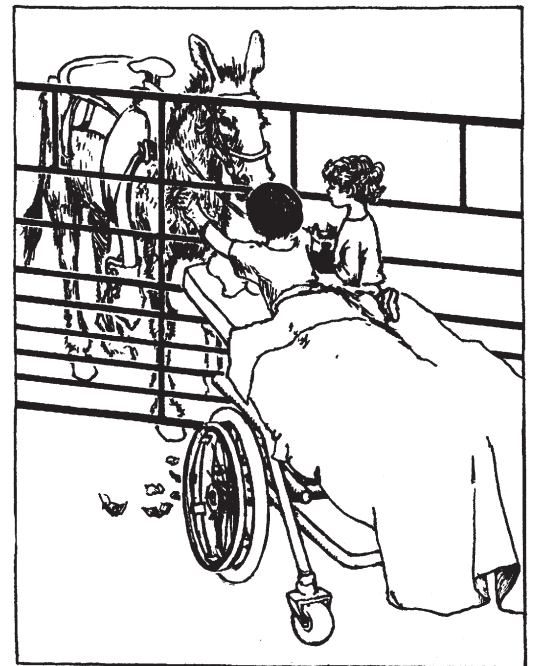
heart of the tale is "Tiger's Rise." It is the amazing saga of the child's return to a vigorous and adventurous life, thanks in large part to the help of the remarkable team at PROJIMO, that makes the story so memorable and inspiring.

In sum, this is a beautiful book that kindles our sense of equality, human dignity, and understanding—whether we be children or grown-ups. Recently Molly said to me, "I hope a lot of kids read this book." We hope so too—and that adults do so as well. We will all be wiser and more understanding for having done so.



huts, porches, courtyards, and gardens, and to PROJIMO's "playground for all children." We guided her to the rocky ledges along the riverbank, and even to a freshly killed rattlesnake. Finally, we escorted her to a grove of giant fig trees near the river, until she found just the right tree for Lupe's fall. Now, when I look at her drawings in the completed book, I recognize each tortilla grinder, rocking horse, or poinsettia as clearly as I do the workers in PROJIMO and Vania (alias Lupe) herself.

On finishing this small gem of a book, the reader realizes that its title, "Tiger's Fall," is misleading. True, the story covers in heart-rending detail the tragedy of Lupe's fall from a tree. But the



Adding to the magic of this captivating tale are Molly Bang's life-like, heart-warming drawings. To anyone familiar to Mexican village life, the drawings ring exquisitely true. When Molly returned to Ajoya last year to complete her drawings for this book, I and a pack of village children accompanied her in her quest for lively subject matter. We led her to an array of adobe



"Tiger's Fall" by Molly Bang can be found in bookstores or from Henry Holt and Co. (ISBN 0-8050-6689-6) for US\$15.95. Or you can get copies through HealthWrights for US\$14.00 + US\$3.00 for mailing. To order, contact us at our e-mail or postal address. Credit card purchases are possible.