

The Word Weaver



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A newsletter for writers and editors
produced by
The Writers' Circle of Durham Region
April/May 2002 Vol. 8 No. 2

Spring Brings Words to Whitby

This is the week you've been waiting for! Lovers of all things literary come together this week at Words in Whitby, the celebrated reading series.

Perennial favourite Ted Barris plays host to the annual event, which kicks off Friday, April 6, with a reception at historic Trafalgar Castle School featuring Governor General's Award-winning novelist Richard B. Wright, author of the Giller prize-winning *Clara Callan*.

Barris and son Alex then play off one another as the consummate broadcasters flex their interviewing muscles together in a discussion of their recent collaboration, *Making Music*.

Two of Canada's best and brightest authors, London's Joan Barfoot and Regina's Sandra Birdsell, are featured in the morning reading section on Saturday.

Barfoot's novels include the Books in Canada First Novel Award-winning *Abra*, *Dancing in the Dark*, which became an award-winning entry in the Cannes and Toronto film festivals, and, most recently, *Critical Injuries*. She also writes a weekly column for the *London Free Press*.

Birdsell was born and raised in Manitoba, the fifth of 10 children, and began publishing at the age of 40. Her works *The Two-Headed Calf* and *The Chrome Suite* were short-listed for the Governor General's Award. *The Missing Child* was awarded the Books in Canada First Novel Award.

At Saturday's gala luncheon, Dave Broadfoot, an original cast member of the Royal Canadian Air Farce and a genuine original, takes centre stage. Prepare to roll in the aisles while Broadfoot gets on a roll. Nothing is sacred when this

ACTRA and Juno award-winning audience favourite takes to carrying on about culture, health care, drugs and many of Canada's most volatile "isms" — regionalism, nationalism, socialism — as well as our national obsession, hockey.

Words in Whitby made a smart move booking Broadfoot. How else can you get a cast of many — Big Bobby Clobber, Sergeant-Major Renfrew and The Member from Kicking Horse Pass — all for the price of one?

Start nurturing your angst now for Saturday's Q & A session with this Order of Canada recipient.

After lunch, Whitby's own Susanna Kearsley, the internationally known author whose novels include *Named of the Dragon*, *Season of Storms* and *Shadowy Horses*, appears, followed by Canada's eminent historian, Pierre Berton.

The Whitehorse-born Berton is widely regarded as the premier popularizer of Canadian history. His newspaper career included stints at the *Vancouver News-Herald* (where, at 21, he was the youngest city editor on any Canadian daily), the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Toronto Star*. He has also worked at *Maclean's* magazine and has long been a staple on Canadian television, both on his own shows and as a panelist, perhaps most notably on CBC's *Front Page Challenge*. His books include *Klondike*, *The Promised Land* and the hugely successful *Vimy*.

Berton has won numerous awards and distinctions, including three Governor General's Awards and the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour.

He is a Companion of the Order of Canada.

Ode to Gwynn Scheltema

By Philippa Schmiegelow

Oh Gwynn you have done such a wonderful deed

In getting our *Word Weaver* out as decreed;
Without a complaint, or a sigh, or a sob
You have gone right ahead
and got on with the job

Now this may be painting the picture too rosy
By making it sound altogether too cosy;
But from my perspective (and I've been in the know)

You have always delivered
While making it grow

Into something worth reading:

We turn to it quick
To discover the dates
And the deals and the trick
Of writing a journal that's never too heavy
But somehow miraculously always is ready

You've set a hard standard for others to follow;
That retreat dish up more than memories so mellow

For Annette came along and
Liked what she saw —
And now you have handed her
Over the store!

So to both of you women so beautifully tressed
I deliver this randomly wandering address;
My apologies for daring to call myself Poet
But Annette dished out deadlines

And wouldn't you know it
I couldn't resist rhyming off
This short ditty;
Perhaps there'll be those
Who will say "what a pity",

But thank you, dear Gwynn,
For those days and those nights
When you toiled for us all
Yet stayed gracious and bright

And welcome Annette,
May you never regret it,
As the Sun and the Moon
Turn to blood —

And you sweat it!



This, That and The Other Thing

Nominations for the **WCDR advisory board** are now being accepted. Three directors are needed for the 2002-2003 session. Nomination forms outlining the guidelines are now available. For information contact the secretary at 905-259-6520 or secretary@wcdr.org.

TWUC 6th Annual Writing for Children Contest. Up to 1,500 words. Call 416-703-8982; visit the TWUC Web site or e-mail projects@writersunion.ca. Deadline: April 23.

2002 Great Canadian Short Story Contest from *Storyteller*, Canada's Short Story Magazine. Length 2,000 to 6,000 words. Stories must contain a uniquely **C a n a d i a n** element (theme, setting, history, institution, politics, social phenomenon, etc.). Prizes up to \$400. All stories that appear in the issue will receive a copy of Corel WordPerfect 2002 Suite (worth about \$500.) Get details at www.storytellingmagazine.com. Deadline: April 30.

Victoria School of Writing Postcard Story Competition. Fiction up to 300 words; up to two entries per person. Prizes are full and partial scholarships to the July 15 to 20 Victoria School of Writing. Winning stories will be published in the

Victoria Times Colonist. See www.islandnet.com/vicwrite/infofair/postcard.html or e-mail vicwrite@islandnet.com. Deadline: May 1.

CPA Annual Poetry Contest. Up to 50 lines. Six cash prizes up to \$50. Prize winners will be published in *Poemata*. See <http://www.mirror.org/cpa>. Deadline: June 30.

Fiction publisher Bollix Playhouse is seeking to add to its roster of literary, quirky and unusual **children's picture books, epics and chapter books**. For more information call 309-676-6522, send a fax to 309-676-6557 or e-mail thekrauses@earthlink.com.

The editor of *The New Life Times*, produced by The New Life Christian Centre in England is looking for **testimonies, poetry or stories** (fiction or non). Non-paying. Contact editor Debbie Paddock at dpaddock@cableinet.co.uk.

The Toronto Book & Magazine Festival is seeking a contract **festival co-ordinator** for Word on the Street, Toronto's annual one-day book and magazine festival.

The festival co-ordinator works closely with festival suppliers, exhibitors, book and magazine publishers, and volunteers.

Contact Trish McGrath, executive director, at wotstoronto@sympatico.ca.

Durham Life, a local weekly publication, has requested that WCDR members send short **book press releases** if you have published or self-published a book. Please submit a 60-word press release about you, your book and its availability to Lynda Allison at the WCDR address on back page or by e-mail to publicrelations@wcdr.org.

CBC Radio One continues to offer opportunities for writers who **love radio**. Visit <http://todmaffin.com/reallife> for details.

Signal, a bi-annual **literary arts** magazine is looking for submissions for its spring issue. *Signal* wants work that pushes for artistic excellence and that is well crafted, imaginative and original.

Send poetry and prose (limit 2,500 words, non-fiction okay) by April 15 to Milan Parab, *Signal*, 371 Blackmarsh Rd., St. John's, Nfld., A1E 1T3 or to signal-magazine@hotmail.com.

The Toronto Sun is looking for community-oriented **columns** about Durham Region for monthly section. Pays \$100.

Get details from Sharon Aschaiek via e-mail at sharon.aschaiek@tor.sunpub.com.

News From The Board

Aprille Janes, president

Those members who missed the last few breakfasts also missed some of the most wonderful news I've presented in quite a while. The Ontario Trillium Foundation approved our application for a grant to help with administration needs and expanding our presence in the community. There are exciting plans being put into action even as you read this.

First, we welcomed Anna Therien as our administrative assistant. Anna's job will be to help the board carry out regular WCDR business and the new initiatives we have outlined. Only one month into the job and I can't imagine how we ever got along without her.

She has already helped Kathleen organise and bring our membership records up to date. She is assisting Sue with the book-keeping. And she's a huge help to me with the day-to-day affairs of running an organi-

zation that now numbers close to 300 members. But that's only housekeeping compared with what she'll help us accomplish in the near future.

You'll soon be receiving information on how you and your writing business can be included in our first services directory. This little booklet will list members who write, edit, speak, teach — and probably other things I haven't even thought of yet. These directories will be made available to organizations such as school boards, libraries, service groups and other writers' groups to let them know what we have to offer.

Another new initiative will be an anthology of our members' works. See opposite page for guidelines on how your work can be included. We want to show the world the talent of WCDR writers. This is your chance to shine.

On top of this, we will be hiring an experienced editor to work with the anthology team. This means there will be an opportunity for members to learn about and gain real knowledge in putting together a publication such as this.

At the same time, plans are being laid to

initiate a Writer in Residence programme to help you polish that anthology submission, or any other piece you may have in the works. (If you don't have something in the works, it sounds like a very good time to get something started.)

It also sounds like a great time to be a member of The Writers' Circle of Durham Region!

In addition, we are acquiring a professional display unit for Word on the Street and other events, plus two laptops to keep everything (and everyone!) organised. The plan is to have one at the breakfast meetings to update memberships, register new members and even print nametags and membership cards once we acquire a portable printer.

Again, a big thank you to Trillium. Because of their belief in us we have an exciting future ahead of us. Make plans now to be part of it.



Paeans

Congrats to **Laura Suchan** on the publication of her article in the *Toronto Star* on Feb. 16. The piece, which was about memoirs and centred on **June Duffy-Smith** and her self-published book, *The Duffy's*, appeared in the Life section. Both Laura and June are WCDR members.

The fall/winter 2001 issue of *Signal* magazine, a literary arts journal out of St. John's, Nfld., features poetry by lichen literary journal board members **Steven Laird**, **Ingrid Ruthig** and **Ruth E. Walker**. Our hats are off to all.

It's a double-whammy for **Ingrid**, two of whose poems are appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Windsor Review*.

Looking In: Portraits of the Canadian Soul, an anthology of original stories by Canadian e-authors, features a short story by WCDR member **Judy Bagshaw**. You can download it free of charge at <http://ceauthors.com/ceanthology.htm>. That's e-terrific, Judy!

Frank Young's First Person Singular segment aired on CBC March 6th, and **Aprille Janes**, our own beloved prez, recently had her piece accepted.

Colour us impressed. Doesn't that bring the total to five? We're thinking *The WCDR Show* has potential!

Anna Therien, our administrative assistant at WCDR, had her first two articles published recently: in *Lives Lived* in *The Globe and Mail* and the spring issue of *At Home in York Region* magazine. That's quite a debut, Anna!

Jo Sorrill has an article in the March/April issue of *Fifty-Five Plus* magazine, including a throw on the cover no less! You'll find *Fifty-Five Plus* free on racks around town, including at pharmacies. Way to go, Jo!

Lois Gordon and **Gwynn Scheltema** have articles in the spring issue of *At Home in York Region* magazine and have both become regular contributors, along with **Aprille Janes**. What a team!

Dorothea Helms knocks our socks — or is that suits? — off yet again in the May issue of *Chatelaine*. "Speaking of Bespoke" takes a look at women having clothing custom tailored.

Dorothea asks that we all take heart in her experience — the woman who sends out the rejection letters knew her by name.

Editor's note: Sincere apologies to anyone whose news got overlooked in our editorial transition.

Please write to me and toot your own horn at wordweaver@wcdr.org.



An Anthology By Any Other Name

The WCDR is on the brink of putting out its first-ever anthology. All it needs is a name, a cover design and some content!

But first things first — the name.

We know you already can't wait to get your hands on a copy, but think how much more you'll cherish it if it has a credit inside that says you came up with the title.

Fill out the form below and send it no later than May 31, 2002.

The winning entry will be announced on the WCDR Web site on or about June 15.

Cover contest

Once it's been christened, we'll be calling all artists to submit cover designs. So call on your muse and watch the *Word Weaver* and the Web for details.

Call for submissions

This is your chance to be a part of WCDR history. Prose, poetry, essays, memoirs — anything that sparked enough passion in you to write it down.

Entries must be no longer than 2,500 words. Deadline for submissions is July 31, 2002. Submissions must be made by mail to address on coupon below. Standard mms format. Excellent advice for standard mms format is available at <http://www-2.csc.mu.edu/~mslee/format.html> — although we can't help but point out that it's an asteriSK, not an asteriX.

(For those online: Bearing in mind that hard copy entries are necessary to the reading process, but eventually must be retyped, simultaneous submission of identical electronic file is much appreciated. Send to: wcdranthology@hotmail.com.)

BUILDING

L Think about a country to which you've never been. Think about life there: the sounds, the architecture, the standard of living, the government, etc. Now write a diary entry as if it were the end of a typical day — and you'd been born and raised there. What is your life like? How much does *where* you live affect *how* you live?

S Do a little research if you've got the time, so you'll get the details exactly right.

I think the anthology should be called:

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail: _____

Mail to: Anthology Name Contest, WCDR, P.O. Box 323,
Ajax, Ont. L1S 3C5 no later than May 31, 2002

Odds and Eds

As my first order of business as the new *Word Weaver* editor, I'd like to thank Aprille Janes and the board of the WCDR for giving me this opportunity. I understand my qualifications were second to none. Also, that mine was the only application.

I invite you to join me over my tenure as we shape the *Word Weaver* together. It's my hope that it will continue to be the one envelope for which we can check the mail box eagerly and without fear.

Thanks, too, to the inestimable Gwynn Scheltema on behalf of the group for doing a stellar job on the *Word Weaver*.

On a personal note, thank you for your continuing patience.

For those who don't know me, I'm a fairly recent member, a Leo, a would-be novelist and a long-time staffer at the *Toronto Sun*.

But don't hold that against me.

As you can see, the look of the *Word Weaver* has changed some. When I sat down to begin my first issue, I discovered this newsletter is the best toy anybody ever gave me — it's a chance for me to trot my literary paces on turf untouched by advertising; to read and write about writing and reading, and to put a piece of myself into something that is an honour to mould. And once I sat down at the computer and started playing with it, I just played and played until it turned into this. You can tell me if you hate it, just please be gentle.

Along with the new look, you'll find a couple of new features, including "If I Do Say So Myself ...", a fun chance to get the answers to a few quirky questions from one of your fellow members. Each issue's victim, er, I mean subject, will interview the next issue's.

For its inauguration, I asked the questions of Dorothea Helms, to whom I'm forever indebted for introducing me to the WCDR and who is, let's face it, a pretty quirky gal.

Enjoy Words in Whitby; it's sure to be an awe-inspiring event. When it's all over, send me your impressions for the next issue.

If you read my limerick, you'll guess how much I detest the cold, so it gives me enormous pleasure to say good-bye for now with the words, "See you in the summer!"

Annette McLeod, wordweaver@wcdr.org

April/May Challenge

Who doesn't love a limerick? Okay, not everyone loves them, but you have to admit they're fun to write. And after all, serious writers can elevate any genre. Send your entries by May 15 to wordweaver@wcdr.org or by regular mail to the editor at address on last page.

In this spirit, we hail to the season
Your poem needs rhyme, but not reason
The object is fun
As we welcome the sun
And say "Hurry up, Spring, we're freezin'!"

Workshops

To register for workshops, contact Lois Gordon by e-mail at workshops@wcdr.org or by phone at 905-259-6520
The workshop calendar is posted on www.wcdr.org

Outrageous Writing

Workshop: Dorothea Helms
Saturday, April 27, 2002
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Location: Pickering Library
Members: \$45
Non-members: \$50

If your writing needs a creative shot in the arm, you'll find yourself jolted into uncharted fiction and non-fiction territory in this all-day workshop.

Based on Dorothea's popular eight-week Advanced Creative Writing course, this down-and-dirty writing day is not for the timid. Come prepared to participate in bold, courageous on-the-spot writing exercises and pry open your mind with a literary crowbar.

Workshop leader Dorothea Helms is owner of Write Stuff Writing Services, a thriving home-based writing/editing business.

She is also a college-level creative writing instructor, and has inspired numerous students to go on to get published and win writing contests.

I Do Different Voices

Workshop: Rachelle Lerner, PhD
Saturday, May 4, 2002
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Location: Pickering Library
Members: \$45
Non-members: \$50

Whether a budding or experienced poet, you'll enjoy this fascinating one-day poetry workshop, which offers participants hands-on exploration of a variety of poetic forms such as the lyric, dramatic monologue, confession, haiku and sonnet. Sharpen your poetic tools through practical exercises using imagery, simile and metaphor. Turn prose into poetry, poetry into prose. Bring your own poems to recreate in a different form. Additional poems will be available for use during the workshop.

Facilitator Rachelle Lerner, PhD, has been published in literary journals, and served as co-ordinator of *Descant* for several years. She has taught poetry, narrative, drama and other literary courses at the University of Toronto and Trent University.

E-Word Weaver

Thanks to those who have opted to receive the *Word Weaver* by e-mail. This helps the WCDR save printing and mailing costs. If you'd like to give it a try, contact Dorothea Helms to try the test PDF file, then let her know if you'd like your name added to the E-Word Weaver list.

February/March Challenge Winners

Last issue's challenge was to write a short story or poem about ending or leaving. All these submissions share a common thread — that ending something is always a beginning too. There were many beautiful and thought-provoking submissions — no one told me the hardest part of this job would be leaving some out! Thank you all.

The Finishing Line

By Pat Skene

I sit and wait
 Alone
 Cold cement seeps through my linen pants
 Arms hold quivering flesh together
 Court House noises with vacant detached faces
 Clacking feet pound a hollow beat through the halls
 Echoes of divorce
 On graffitti-grey walls of stone

Mahogany groans at the hinges
 Ceremonious announcements
 At the finishing line
 I walk the aisle
 Alone
 A chancel of black robes await
 I remove my ring

Promising shadows fade in sun blistered paint
 I was always
 Alone
 He never had the time
 Not even today
 To celebrate the wreckage
 Of his victory

Leaving

By Kathleen M. Martin

When I emigrated from Scotland, I left behind a feeling of belonging; a belonging where my name, heritage, family, friends, culture, work and dialect all declared my identity. I left with a sense of loss of the known, where my space and place with its familiar boundaries meant security. I left a city built on a hill overlooking the river Tay, an industrial city with foundries and jute mills with rickety machines, jam factories, narrow laneways, tenements and double-decked buses. I left with images etched in my mind where buskers entertained at street corners, vendors sold whelks, manicured parks beckoned long Sunday walks, purple heather carpeted distant hills, pipe bands stirred up pride, and where dancing at the Palais fulfilled my spirit. I left savouring the smells and tastes of sweets in paper bags, Macintosh toffee, fish and chips soaked in malt vinegar and wrapped in newspaper, currant dumpling with money hidden inside and scones with marmalade.

Newly wed, with my new identity recorded in my passport, I left the land of my birth with mixed feelings.

Untitled

By Barkley Fletcher

Leaving is not ending
 But I want it to end
 The beginning was good
 The middle fair
 But the end
 Will be unfriendly
 But I do not care
 Let it end
 Then I'll leave

Graduation

By susana gomes

It's over. Four years. Twenty courses. One degree. Sixty-two books — forty-eight second-hand. One dog-eared Shakespeare's Sonnets. Eight poems read at the pub on Friday's Open Mike. Thirty or so friends - three good ones. Five lovers. Two one-night stands. Four words of wisdom. One Pontiac Sunbird — used, but red. Five macaroni and cheese lunches per week. One roast beef dinner each Sunday. Twenty-one days no dinner at all. Six weeks tree planting near Dryden each summer for three years. God knows how many trees. Two black bears in the middle of the night. One native hunter. No bears at all. One summer cruise on the Ottawa River at sunset. One airplane ride to Portugal. One grandmother's funeral. One long flight back home. Eight weeks job hunting and eight weeks considering a second degree. Eleven job interviews. Three-hundred and nineteen dollars in my bank account. Eight thousand dollar limit on Dad's credit card. Fourteen boxes stacked in the corner of my dorm room. Two narrow beds. One look back at me, over your shoulder, your golden hair loose and shimmering in the summer morning sun against the black of your graduation gown. It's over. It will never be like this again.

The End

By Judy Bagshaw

Shari sat filled with apprehension, and surveyed the bounty before her. It had been Edward's suggestion to come here, to celebrate their anniversary in high style at their favourite place, a place filled with warm memories of happy times. She had balked at first but then, seeing how much it meant to him, relented. How could she explain to him that she needed to forego these small pleasures, that she needed to be strong? He wouldn't understand, not really. He never did. At these times when she fought so hard against her own weak nature, he merely expressed how much he loved her, how beautiful he still found her. He didn't understand that it wasn't enough. And now, here she sat, the moment of truth arrived, when she must make the decision forced upon her. Slowly, with shaking hand, she lifted the fork to her mouth and tasted the succulent richness of the Alfredo sauce. There it was, the end of another diet.

Upcoming Breakfasts

May 11, 2002

Featured Guest: **Carol Anne O'Brien**

O'Brien will cover the captivating subject of copyrighting, along with other interesting tidbits about the legal aspect of writing and publishing, as well as use of work on the Internet, a topic on which she has published numerous papers.

O'Brien graduated from Queen's University in 1982, and received her Master's degree from the University of Toronto in 1984. She has worked as a university librarian, a business information analyst and a library manager, and graduated from the University of Ottawa's law school in 1996. She articulated with a boutique communications and administrative law firm and was called to the bar, and joined Cassels Brock in 1998.

June 8, 2002

Featured Guest: **Neil Crone**

Join us in June for our annual general meeting and then a real treat, Neil Crone.

Crone is an actor and writer who lives with his wife, two small boys, two psycho cats and one very patient dog. Crone has performed in dozens of television and radio commercials and TV shows, and is the voice of numerous cartoon characters every Saturday morning. He has also done a number of feature films including the soon-to-be-released *Red Sneakers*, with Gregory Hinds.

You can catch him on YTV's kids' series *Screach Owls*, on CTV's *Power Play*, the hit children's show *Noddy*, and as the weirdly friendly Mr. Crawford on *Eerie Indiana*.

A Second City veteran improviser, host and stand up comic, Crone also loves to write poems and stories for "big and little kids." His first book, *I Am Dead at Recess*, is currently published on the Internet. He writes a weekly humour column for the Metroland papers and is a contributing writer for CBC Radio's new *Real Life Chronicles* programme. Once he meets Don Knotts and Dick Van Dyke, he figures he can die.

See opposite page for breakfast details.



Writers' Circles

To join one of the circles below, please call the contact person indicated

For general information, write to Sherry Loeffler at loeffler@primus.ca or call her at 905-640-6315

Group leaders, please notify editor of changes to dates, times or locations



Circle for Children's Writers

First Wednesday of each month

May 1; June 5

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Oshawa Library, Northview Branch

250 Beatrice St. E., Oshawa

Mike Ward, wardswords@hotmail.com

Durham Write-On

Tuesdays, every other week

April 16, 30; May 14, 28

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Call for location

Ruth Walker, 905-728-7823

Inkwell

Formerly Bowmanville Writers' Group

Third Tuesday of each month

April 16; May 21; June 18

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Boardroom, Hamilton and Mutton

1 Division St., Bowmanville

Lynda Allison, 905-623-0365

Markham Village Writers' Group

Monthly

Send e-mail for times and dates

Donna Marrin, katnip40@sympatico.ca

Newcastle Poetry Club

Third Monday of each month

April 15, May 20, June 17

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Philippa Schmiegelow, 905-987-4856

Northword Edition

Every two weeks

April 16, 30; May 14, 28; June 11, 25

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Uxbridge Public Library

Dorothea Helms, 905-852-9294

Actively seeking new members

Oshawa Scribes

First and third Tuesday of each month

April 16; May 7, 21; June 4, 18

1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Oshawa Library, Northview Branch

250 Beatrice St. E., Oshawa

Grace Stevenson, 905-725-0760

Richard Ferrier Writers' Circle

Formerly Volume Two

Third Tuesday of each month

April 16; May 21; June 18

2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

History Room at Pickering Central Library

Tina Ivany, 905-427-1270 or tdivany@sympatico.ca

Ron Dixon, 416-284-5673 or retro@pathcom.com

Senior Scribes of Uxbridge

Second and fourth Friday of each month

April 12, 26; May 10, 24; June 14, 28

1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Township Hall, Uxbridge

Joyce Whitney, 905-852-3414

Word Players

Newcastle Writing Group

Call for dates

7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

261 Mill St. S., Newcastle

Philippa Schmiegelow, 905-987-4856

Write in Whitby

Second and fourth Tuesday of each month

April 9, 23; May 14, 28; June 11, 25

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Whitby Public Library

Lloyd Blair, 905-430-0075

Write Now

A group for on-the-spot writing

Every second Thursday

April 11, 25; May 9, 23; June 6, 20

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Uxbridge Public Library

Sue Reynolds, 905-985-1962

Writers' and Editors' Network

Breakfast meeting

Third Saturday of each month

April 20; May 18; June 15

9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Stemms Eatery

3300 Bloor St. W., Etobicoke

Mickey Turnbull, 905-824-5035

or mickeytc@ica.net

If I Do Say So Myself ...

Q: Annette McLeod ♦ A: Dorothea Helms

I recently ran across this quote from George Orwell's 1946 essay, *Politics and the English Language*: "A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible." Does that resonate with you? In what way?

As much as I love all things grammatical, I find Orwell's quote unnecessarily negative. In his essay, he misuses the word "which," among other grammatical transgressions. By today's standards, taking advice on grammar from him would be like taking advice on weight loss from me.

Language changes, even for the British. (When's the last time you heard a Brit say the word "forsooth"?) There are George Orwell thinkers in each generation who subscribe to the, "We learned language this way, so it must be the right way" school of thought. I was one when I took creative writing in 1992. Teacher Marge Green opened my mind to the fluidity of language, and encouraged me to start a sentence with "But" for the first time in my life.

Ouch! But once I did it, I admit it became easier a second time. Now I start sentences with conjunctions when I feel it helps the flow of a piece.

Plus, I find it liberating to break grammar rules for effect. Would you fill a Michael Ondaatje book with red marks for the liberties he takes with language? How about Annie Proulx and the sentence fragments

that carry the reader through *The Shipping News*, or Margaret Atwood's bold omission of quotation marks in *Alias Grace*?

Both ugly and beautiful ideas have been expressed using the same language for centuries. As clichéd as it seems, I refer you to author Margaret Wolfe Hungerford's famous quote, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

But there's a limit to my open-mindedness. Despite the political correctness trend, I do not accept sentences with singular nouns and plural pronouns. To me, "Each graduate must provide their own cap and gown" sounds ignorant.

I'll rewrite a sentence before resorting to that technique.

Fact is, I care about grammar, but I'm learning to loosen up about it. After taking courses through the Editors' Association of Canada, I've found out how much I still have to learn. Who's "right," anyway? Even in Canada, publications use numerous styles whose grammar rules conflict. Add to that the fact that I grew up in the U.S. and still prefer to place a comma before the "and" in a series — and, well, you see why my feelings are mixed.

As an editor, I appreciate it when writers go to the trouble to use good grammar. I hope, however, that the propensity for language to make it easier for us to have foolish thoughts is irreversible. If no one ever dangled participles, humour writers would lose a lot of fodder for jokes.

Whose writing do you most admire for their style? For their ideas?

I admire Barbara Kingsolver's style and her versatility. She writes stunning fiction and creative non-fiction that leaves me awash in awe. When I read her work, I often stop and sigh, thinking, "I wish I'd written that."

Kingsolver's writing is soft and edgy; kind and tough; subtle and blunt; inventive and solid; serious and funny. I find the stark originality of her metaphors refreshing.

I'd have to answer Mark Twain for the author whose ideas I most admire. The man was brilliant, and *way* ahead of his time. Twain had the courage to challenge accepted societal norms, and he managed to do it through humour.

He was Stephen Leacock's favourite writer, as well as being mine. He's my literary idol, and if the Humber School for Writers could have found a way to get in touch with him in Heaven, I'd have him as a mentor in a flash.

What was the most memorable movie line you ever heard?

I have three. The first is from the James Bond classic *Thunderball*: "Jettison cocoon!" Whoever designed Largo's yacht was a natural-born lateral thinker!

The second is from *Caddyshack*, when Rodney Dangerfield meets the judge's wife and says, "You musta been somethin' before electricity!"

Oh, oh, and there's *Young Frankenstein*, when Inga gets caught behind the bookcase after freeing Freidrick and says, "Put ... ze candle ... beck!"



Jim Ferr,
photo

"They paddle. You steer."

Hamlin Grange, at the March breakfast meeting,
on the dynamics of a good interview

Breakfast meetings run from 8:30 a.m. to
11 a.m. at Iroquois Park Sports Complex
50 Victoria St. W.

(at Henry Street) in Whitby
Members, \$12; guests, \$15

Your place **must** be reserved no later than
the Tuesday prior with
Nancy Rogers at 905-259-6520
or at breakfast@wcdcr.org

By
Kathleen Wilkins Lamm

Time flies when we are having fun
Caught up with family and our friends
Time drags and crawls with certainty
When work-day's end is hours away
Time for you, time for me, time for us
A moment, a flicker, a heartbeat,
Eternity, tempo, timing, precious.
Time is restless; rushing to be gone
If only we could hold it still,
For when we need it; pin it down
For us, forevermore.
Time turns and twists away from us
Teasing, flirting, touching us
Until we think we have caught
Elusive time
Only to find, that wickedly,
Time has run out on us!



Calendar of events

April 5 and 6, 2002
Words in Whitby
 Featured Guest: **Pierre Berton**
 Writer, Broadcaster and Historian

April 27, 2002
Outrageous Writing
 Leader: **Dorothea Helms**
 Workshop

May 4, 2002
I Do Different Voices
 Leader: **Rachelle Lerner**
 Workshop

May 11, 2002
Breakfast Meeting
 Featured Guest: **Carol Anne O'Brien**
 Copyright Lawyer

June 8, 2002
Breakfast Meeting
 Featured Guest: **Neil Crone**
 Actor and Author

To register for breakfasts
 see page 7
 For workshops
 see page 4

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the Word Weaver

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 submissions at our discretion

Famous Last Words

Which is better — to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill? *Piggy*, *Lord of the Flies*