

Writers' Circle of Durham Region

THE WORD WEAVERS

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A NEWSLETTER FOR WRITERS AND EDITORS
 PRODUCED BY
 THE WRITERS' CIRCLE OF DURHAM REGION
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Perfect Pitch

By Dorothea Helms

My experience in the writing biz has taught me two things about getting a book published. One is that you have to write the book. (Bummer, isn't it?) The other is that if you want to do something other than self-publish, you have to pitch the book idea to agents and/or publishers. I have been researching how to do just that.



The first approach most writers use is the query letter, by itself, or included in a book proposal.

Best-selling author/speaker Nicholas Boothman says, "Your idea needs a hook, a point and legs - and a damn good title. A query is a form of marketing. Suggest who will buy the book. Why is your approach different, and why are you the one to write it?" He advises pointing out any statistics or facts that indicate your book will appeal to a substantial target market. His first book, *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less*, attracted the interest of one of New York's finest agents, Sheree Bykofsky, because the topic of developing instant rapport has widespread appeal.

Nick had self-published a limited print run of the book and used copies of it, along with a query letter and some information on marketing potential, as his proposal. He mailed that package to numerous agents, and Sheree was the only one who expressed interest. She

sold the book to the prestigious US publisher Workman - and Nicholas's third book with Workman, *How to Make Someone Love You Forever in 90 Minutes or Less*, was published this spring to rave reviews. In fact, it's already in its third printing. He recommends perseverance, along with the careful wording of your query letter. "Distill your idea down so that it can be expressed in a short sentence."

Best-selling Canadian author Ted Barris, whose most recent book, *Juno - Canadians at D-Day June 6, 1944*, has received wide critical acclaim, says his first book publishing success was the result of serendipity. In the early 1970s, he had the idea for *Fire Canoe*, which is about western steam navigation, and went through the lengthy process of applying to Canada Council for seed money so he could write the book. He received \$5,700, and says, "I thought I'd gone to heaven."

At that time, McClelland and Stewart was trying to establish an office in western Canada, and Ted lived in Saskatchewan. The western editor, David Scollard, saw Ted's name on a press release as one of the grant recipients, and called to ask whether he had found a publisher. Ted sent an outline and sample chapter, and David pitched it to the editorial board (upon which Pierre Berton sat). "Although my original pitch was to Canada Council," Ted says, "it opened the door at McClelland and Stewart."

Since then, Ted has had numerous books published, and he suggests you answer the following questions before you put together a non-fiction book pitch:

1. What is the subject, and what's unique about it? "Let them know you have something no one else has."

2. What's the book content going to look like? Have in mind the beginning, middle and end. Ted does a verbal and written table of contents with a few lines about each chapter. "This way, whomever I pitch to has a sense of the body of the book."

3. Who is going to buy it? "They always want to know this. What makes it salable? It took me five books to demonstrate that wartime Canadian stories are more than just a niche market. They sell to vets, military and veteran associations, libraries, schools, etc. Do a bit of legwork so you can demonstrate what sector of the marketplace will be interested, and in half a page, articulate for whom this book will mean something."

4. Blow your own horn. "Let them know you're the only person who can do this book, and why. Use whatever endorsements you have."

Award-winning Canadian author Gabrielle Bauer sold her first book, *Tokyo, My Everest*, in 1996 without the help of an agent. "As a first-time writer, I figured it might be easier to approach a publisher directly than interest an agent in the project," she says. Gabrielle headed to a bookstore



and made a list of publishers that had recent titles in the "literary travel" genre.

Then, she sent out a package to one publisher on the list every Friday, like clockwork. "This included a cover letter, resume, a page with marketing ideas for the book, a synopsis of the book, and seven short chapters (equivalent to about three chapters in most books). I got a nibble from the fourth publisher, the now-defunct Stoddart, who asked to see the entire manuscript. They passed on it, though, so I moved down the list. The ninth publisher, Dundurn, called to tell me they wanted to publish the book. Dundurn also published my second book, *Waltzing The Tango*, in 2001."

Her advice to first-timers: "Be methodical; a regular submission schedule helps mitigate the rejection doldrums. Don't submit your whole manuscript at the first pass, but have it ready in case the publisher asks to see it. Keep your cover letter brief and business-like. Try both the agent route

and the self-submission route. Stay positive, and at the same time rest assured that the odds in your favour are low enough that you don't have to worry about simultaneous submissions."

In the March 2004 issue of *The Writer* magazine, there was a fascinating article by literary agent Andrew Zack about querying fiction books. He mentions that he and most agents receive dozens of queries every week, and that the chances of an agent representing a first-time novelist who has not completed the book are slim. In that same magazine, Sheree Bykofsky recommends finding out about the book marketplace so you can make an agent or publisher aware that you are approaching your book with marketing in mind. She stresses persistence, and reminds you that you will have to be willing to help promote your book once it is published. Sheree co-wrote *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Getting Published* with Jennifer Basye Sander. In it they describe the

submissions process, and they offer detailed advice on writing an effective query letter.

It all seems pretty straightforward: research the market, be professional, compose a knockout query letter, be persistent - oh, and write already!



Dorothea Helms, *The Writing Fairy*, connects people and ideas. Her new book, *The Writing Fairy Guide to Calling Yourself a Writer*, will be published this fall.

A Message From THE BOARD

By Sherry Hinman,
Membership Co-ordinator

The passing of the torch from June to July is transition time for WCDR as we say farewell and thanks to those board members who have contributed so much over the past year. What departing board members may not have realized was the magnitude of their roles as mentors to the incoming board. Kevin Craig, Dorothea Helms, Aprille Janes and Anna Therien passed along their wisdom, their time, copious notes and plenty of "stuff" to newcomers Carl Clark, Karen Cole, Barbara Hunt and Vicki Pinkerton. The learning curve is steep but we're staying on the path!

In for another year of fun are Annette McLeod, Rich Helms, Rose Cronin, Sue Reynolds and myself. I am in the unique position of being both mentor and apprentice as I pass on my breakfast co-ordinator duties to Karen Cole with one hand, while taking on the membership role from Anna Therien (as impossible as it is to fill Anna's shoes!). With all these comings and goings, the new board is the perfect blend of continuity and fresh perspectives.

In June, we kicked off the year with WCDR's first Summer Solstice Soirée. Thanks go to Kathleen Martin for finding us the perfect venue at The Whitby Yacht Club, and to Dorothea Helms and Annette McLeod who had us rolling on the floor. (What did we expect when they volunteered for the MC role?) The menu was outstanding and there weren't many dry eyes in the house as we listened to moving stories, songs, memoirs and poetry. For me, it was a reminder of how many truly gifted writers among us.

A few weeks later came another WCDR first, our editors' panel breakfast. While it was a bit of a challenge to find editors who were free on a July weekend, we were fortunate to be able to feature Rosemary Shipton, co-ordinator for Ryerson University's Publishing Program, and Robin Robinson, travel editor for *The Toronto Sun*. Members sent us thoughtful questions in advance, making this an informative and entertaining morning.

When was the last time you checked out our website? It's a fabulous resource for any writing-related information you might want. Watch the home page for important news; it lists **our new e-mail addresses!** Did you know it's now possible to renew your membership online? If you haven't renewed yet, the deadline has arrived! If you want to pay on the website, simply go to Join, click on WCDR Application, select Renewal Fee and follow the

instructions for PayPal. (If you joined after May 2003, e-mail us to find out your rate.) Prepaying your breakfast online can't be far behind!

The board met over the summer to plan a slate of activities to wow you over the next year. Already on the agenda are a whack of fabulous workshops and breakfast speakers, consideration of a second WCDR anthology, and a repeat of our highly successful trio of contests.



Paeans

Congratulations go out to:

Barbara Hunt is pleased to share the news of publication of a small piece entitled "We All Scream" in the September/October issue of *Our Canada* magazine. It is in the Traditions column where the publication asks people to share their favorite or unusual traditions with readers.

The Sunday Sun has a Durham section. On Sunday, September 5, new member **Linda Calder** had a photo and article about St. Vincent's Kitchen.

Nancy Rogers has become a regular (paid) contributor to a women entrepreneur's magazine, *Progressive Choices* based in Nova Scotia. They have three separate issues quarterly; Eastern Canada, Ontario and Western Canada. Nancy has had articles published in all of them.

Pamela Hamilton, a new WCDR member, is proud to have become a paean! Her article entitled "On Becoming a Gymnast Again at 40" was recently chosen to appear on the web site *AdultGymnastics.com*. This is her first published piece (and with pay). The article will be posted in the coming weeks for a period of up to one year.

Clive Lilwall is happy to announce the publication of his book *How to Stop Your 67 Worst Worries*, available from www.authorhouse.com or by phoning 1-888-280-7715. Many thanks to Ruth Walker for proofreading the manuscript and to Grace Stevenson's Tuesday writing group for its support.

Sherry Loeffler, children's author and clown, for landing a writing job with CreativeMedia. This company puts out the *Shoppes Newsletters* in Durham Region. Sherry is excited to find herself interviewing business owners and writing the articles to put in the newsletters.

Joyce Vale has had a poem entitled "September" published in *Good Times* magazine. Welcome to the WCDR Joyce, and congratulations.

Grace Stevenson has had an article accepted in the Durham section of the *Sunday Sun*. Grace hopes that they are

in an accepting mood because she has plans for several more and is ready to send them in. Congratulations, Grace.

Barbara Hunt was excited to have her poem "Out" make it to the semi-final round of *The Toronto Star*/Poet Laureate Contest. There were 750 entries this year.

Congratulations to **Susan Lynn Reynolds** for winning the Timothy Findley Creative Writing Prize from Trent University for a portfolio of two short stories and a poem: "Chickadee Blind", "Cultural Relativity", and "Milk Of Human Kindness". James Neurfeld, chair of the department of English literature made the announcement last week.

Also, Sue writes the "What's On" column for *The Durham Sun*, as well as doing feature stories with photography. One of her most recent articles is about another WCDR member -- Dorothea Helms, the Writing Fairy.

Judy Bagshaw is pleased to announce that she's just signed a contract with TreeSide Press for the re-release of her romantic suspense novel *Teacher's Pet*. This book was published first by Wordbeams in 2000. When they closed it was picked up by Real Romances until their closure. Judy hopes the third time is the charm!

Sue Reynolds and **Gwynn Scheltema** had two articles apiece and photos in the premier issue of *The Durham Sun* -- a special supplement to *The Toronto Sun*, to be published each Sunday

Robert Woodland, also a member of the Senior Scribes of Uxbridge. He has just had a family history book published through InstaBook Canada Inc, entitled *Our Children's Families*. This book traces the history of four families: the Woodlands, Rowes, Melendys and Winsors, all originating in West Country England, and migrating as mariners, fishermen and traders to Newfoundland in the 18th and 19th centuries. Through story and illustrations it follows their lives from the 16th century to modern times. The book is the result of more than five years research in England and Newfoundland, and was a year in the writing. Copies may be ordered from Robert by email at woodrowe@sympatico.ca, or by calling 905- 852-7982. The price is \$25.

Kevin Craig and your very own *Word Weaver* editor, **Deborah A. Rankine**, have cause to celebrate! We each have a poem published in the latest issue of *Quills Canadian Poetry Magazine*. Both my poem, "Risking Life", and Kevin's poem, "Douglastown Summer", can be found in the magazine's summer issue.

Judy Bagshaw is pleased to share the news that she has been named Canadian Liason for New Age Dimensions Publishing www.newagedimensionspublishing.com, a publisher based in Florida. She is available to answer questions from writers across the country interested in New Age Dimensions and e-publishing. You may contact Judy at JudyBagshaw@NewAgeDimensionsPublishing.com. As well, New Age Dimensions will now be offering Judy's book *At Long Last, Love* in trade paperback as well as ebook formats. And since things seem to happen in threes, *Grand* magazine, a new Canadian publication geared to plus-sized women, featured Judy's book *Lady Blue*, as its pick for Canada Day reading!

Collette Yvonne is thrilled to announce that her short story "Scarlet Runners" is one step closer to being made into a short film by Toronto filmmaker Teresa Hannigan. On May 15, Hannigan's screenplay, based on *Scarlet Runners* won the Screenplay Giveaway contest at the Worldwide Short Film Festival in Toronto. The award is worth \$30,000 worth of goods and services to be used in the production of the film.

Barbara Hunt has just had her poem "Mama Don't" published in the labour relations magazine *Our Times*.



Odds & Eds

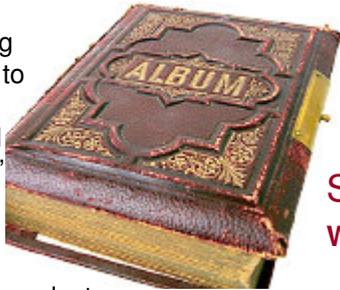
By Deborah A. Rankine,
Word Weaver Editor

Who better than Dorothea Helms, a WCDR member who knows the writing business inside-out, to address this issue's topic, "The Nuts and Bolts" of being a writer? Dorothea's article, "Perfect Pitch", is right on the money.

Writing, for me, has been like a 12 step program. It began with the understanding that I was powerless over my addiction... I NEEDED to write! I am now at step 12 in my writing career, trying to carry my message (THE BOOK) to the masses. For me, "Perfect Pitch" couldn't have come at a better time.

In today's publishing world it's not enough to be *just* a good writer. Now you're expected to be "self-contained" as well.

A self-contained writer is one who not only has a wonderful product - the 'what' - but knows the where, when, why and how to market it successfully. In short, they've done *everyone's* homework. Whatever your genre, you need to find out who your



readers are, where they live, what interests them, and why they would choose to read your work over another's. And after you have all of these questions answered, then you get to do the pitch. Talk about shameless self-promotion!

So, while we're on the topic of pitches, I would like to invite members to send in their stories for the November/December issue. The theme, **Simple Abundance**, will remember the people, places and things that swell our daily lives with thanksgiving.

Word count should not exceed **800** words.

DEADLINE is October 20, 2004.

SUBMISSIONS TO:
WCDRWORDWEAVER@WCDR.ORG



A Warm WCDR Welcome

Our newest members

April 2004

Steven Douglas
Irene Poole
Susanne Caskie
Allan Hynd
Marnie Newson
James Dewar

May 2004

Diane Hardiman
Joan Young
Jill McWhinnie
Bruce Tuck
Gairey Richardson
Colleen Zoellner
Mary Wilton

June 2004

Raissa Chernushenko
June Johnstone
Joyce Vale
Betty Nodder
Ingrid Schmelter
Deborah Lynn Harkness
Liisa Salzman
Cathy Thomson

July 2004

Amelia Griffin-Goldie
Dave Lynch
Cindy Cembrowski
Linda Calder
Anne McGouran



Professional Development Fall/Winter 2004

For More Information Check Out www.wcdr.org
To Register
Contact wcdrrworkshops@wcdr.org or 905-686-0211

MAKE IT WORK ON-LINE! EDITING FOR WRITERS

by Susana Gomes

September - October 2004; 6 online sessions, course delivered via e-mail

Susana Gomes is an editor and indexer. She is a member of the Editor's Association of Canada and the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada. She edits for the legal and corporate markets and also works with fiction, non-fiction and poetry writers. She is also a "just for fun" writer whose poetry and short fiction have been published in various literary journals.

Event Fee: \$60

Event Register: Contact Susana Gomes editingink@rogers.com

THE WRITING FAIRY BUSINESS OF WRITING WORKSHOP

by Dorothea Helms

Saturday, October 2, 2004 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Location TBD)

Event Fee: \$100 (\$90 for WCDR members) Fee includes coffee, juice, snacks and course materials

Workshop leader **Dorothea Helms** is co-owner of Write Stuff Writing Services, a thriving home-based writing/editing business, as well as a brand new business, The Writing Fairy. An experienced business trainer, she teaches creative writing at Durham College and facilitates a number of other popular writing-related workshops. In 2000, Dorothea was nominated for a prestigious Rotman Canadian Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Her workshops present a delightful combi-

nation of left-brain advice and right-brain inspiration.

Event Register: Contact Dorothea Helms at 905-852-9294 or fairy@thewritingfairy.com. Pre-registration and pre-payment are required.

Mail cheque made out to "The Writing Fairy" to:
Dorothea Helms
S10895 Sideroad 17 RR #1
Sunderland, ON L0C 1H0

THE WRITING FAIRY WORKSHOP FOR BEGINNING WRITERS

by Dorothea Helms

Saturday, October 23, 2004 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Pickering Central Library Auditorium, The Esplanade

Event Fee: \$100 (\$90 for WCDR members) (includes coffee, juice, snacks and course materials)

This self-proclaimed "Writing Fairy" has been coaxing closet writers to emerge and make their magic known for the past decade. **Dorothea Helms** has had hundreds of articles published in newspapers, magazines and books, and is also a published poet. She teaches creative writing at Durham College, and is a popular workshop presenter. Dorothea has started The Writing Fairy series of books, workshops, keynote speeches and products to encourage writing

through the use of outrageous humour. As she says, "Why should kids have all the fun?"

Event Register: Contact Dorothea Helms at 905-852-9294 or fairy@thewritingfairy.com. Pre-registration and pre-payment are required.

Mail cheque made out to "The Writing Fairy" to:
Dorothea Helms
S10895 Sideroad 17 RR #1
Sunderland, ON L0C 1H0

NOTE: REGISTRATION CUT-OFF is Wednesday, October 13th. Workshop will be cancelled and cheques mailed back to registrants on this day if there is insufficient enrollment.



WORKSHOPS, CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

THE WRITING FAIRY HUMOUR WRITING WORKSHOP

by Dorothea Helms

Saturday, November 6, 2004 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Uxbridge Public Library (downstairs room)

Event Fee: \$100 (\$90 for WCDR members) (includes coffee, juice, snacks and course materials)

In addition to her successful freelance writing business, Write Stuff Writing Services, **Dorothea Helms** offers The Writing Fairy series of books, workshops, keynote speeches and products to encourage writing through the use of outrageous humour. As she says, "Why should kids have all the fun?" Dorothea has served on the faculty of a U.S. humour writing conference in Nebraska. Her style appeals to people who appreciate corn.

Event Register: Contact Dorothea Helms at 905-852-9294 or fairy@thewritingfairy.com. Pre-registration and pre-payment are required.

Mail cheque made out to "The Writing Fairy" to:
Dorothea Helms
S10895 Sideroad 17 RR #1
Sunderland, ON L0C 1H0

NOTE: REGISTRATION CUT-OFF IS Wednesday, October 27. Workshop will be cancelled and cheques mailed back to registrants on this day if there is insufficient enrollment.

TEXT, SUBTEXT & CONTEXT

by Jane Bow

Saturday, November 20, 2004 from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Location TBD)

Jane Bow's first novel, *Dead And Living*, published by Mercury Press in 1993 and short listed for the Arthur Ellis First Novel Award, has been selected for a Carleton University course. Her first play, *Through The Fire*, produced in 1993 and published in 1994, has been studied in India. *Soul Skin*, a narrative-dance play, was produced in 1996. Her short stories have been published in a variety of literary journals. At The Foot Of The Rapids, Jane's history of Peterborough, was published in 2001. Her work has also appeared in *Chatelaine* magazine, on CBC Radio, and in newspapers.

Event Fee: \$75 (\$65 for WCDR members)

Event Register: Sue at 905-985-8389 or e-mail wcdrworkshops@wcdr.org



WCDR offers an exciting lineup of workshops. The leaders for each workshop are specialists in their fields. We're always looking for ways to better serve our members (and non-members, too!). Popular workshop topics span a wide range, from inspiring right-brain creativity, to learning the left-brain nuts and bolts of running a writing business. Whether your interests lie in poetry, short fiction, novel writing, non-fiction or even what writing-related receipts to keep for tax purposes, you'll find workshops that will help you along your literary journey.

For additional information, or to register for any of these workshops, call the **WCDR HOTLINE at 905-259-6520** and leave a message for our **Workshop Co-ordinator** or send an e-mail to wcdrworkshops@wcdr.org

GrammarPuss

Are you talking to me?

One of the things GrammarPuss loves best about this language of ours is its fluency. Not only does English have the largest vocabulary of any language, but it's constantly evolving, with new words being added to standard dictionaries yearly.

While GrammarPuss isn't convinced of the necessity to officially recognize "bootylicious", it's certainly to our benefit that the dynamism of the language allows us to express ourselves in unprecedented ways, practically making it up as we go along. Why, it's faboo! Positively fantabulous! But no matter how much artistic licence we take with the words themselves, when writing dialogue, there are certain rules to which we adhere to make ourselves clearly understood.

The first involves that most fluid of punctuation participants, the comma.

As our southerly neighbours are fond of repeating, God bless America. This well-used phrase has a clearly understood meaning. Insert a comma, and the meaning changes: "God bless, America." This phrase bestows a blessing on the country itself. "God, bless America" is a plea to Him (or Her) to look after said neighbours.

In much the same fashion, "Shut up John" is a request to someone, presumably with the power to do so, to make John stop talking. "Shut up, John," while certainly rather rude, is an actual command to John himself. "Please Jane" has a much naughtier connotation than "Please, Jane," doesn't it?

By inserting the comma before a person's name, we are addressing them directly. "Hello, ball," as Norton would say, addresses the ball itself. Even if omitting the

comma creates no ambiguity, it is good grammatical form to make sure it's there. "Hello, Mother" rather than "Hello Mother."

Then there are the sticky bits of the dialogue itself. GrammarPuss offers this crash course:

One always opens dialogue with quotation marks.

Quotes within quotes use single quotation marks. (Those of us who read novels from over the pond have seen single quotation marks bracketing speech, and therefore double quotation marks within, but for her purposes, GrammarPuss will assume we're using the double variety - dear old 66 and 99.) We may then proceed with the conversation of our characters. When one pauses for attribution, we do so with a comma, then close the quotation marks. We put our attribution here, followed by a period. (As a general rule, one puts the name of the speaker before the action: John said, as opposed to said John.)

While GrammarPuss has noticed a trend towards incomplete quotes on either side of the attribution - "If you've done a lot of reading," GrammarPuss continued, "you've probably seen this done." - she usually frowns upon it, and it certainly should be used only in moderation to establish a specific speech pattern. In general, we finish one sentence with the attribution, and start another by re-opening our quotation marks.

If indeed our characters have more to say, we open the quote again, proceed with speech, then a period, then close the quotation marks.

If we go on to a new paragraph while the same character is still speaking, we don't close the quotation marks, but rather start the new paragraph by opening the quotations again.

In dialogue, the punctuation goes inside the quotation marks, almost without exception. (Even while wracking her brain,

GrammarPuss can come up with only obscure exceptions, and so will save them for another time.) It may sound confusing, but GrammarPuss is confident you've seen it many times, and it will prove easier the more one does it.

"One must always open dialogue with quotation marks," GrammarPuss said. "It's of the utmost importance that we pay attention to punctuation in all cases. In particular, putting the commas and periods in the right places, and opening and closing our quotation marks correctly, will help ensure that we are clear in our meaning. "And as GrammarPuss has said many times, 'Clarity is always our goal'."

You will see this last traffic jam of punctuation done two ways -- as above, and with the period preceding both the single and double quotation marks thusly: 'Clarity is always our goal.'" GrammarPuss leans towards the former. With modern typography being what it is, as kerning (the spaces between letters) is different with every font, it's always a good idea to skirt the issue of smoochy punctuation rather than risking having it smooshed. GrammarPuss trusts that "smooshy" is one of those made-up words with which she may take liberty.

God bless written dialogue.



CALENDAR^{OF}EVENTS

October 9 WCDR Breakfast Meeting Speakers: Ted Barris. Iroquois Sports Centre, Whitby 8:30 to 11 a.m call 905-686-0211 or [email wcdrbreakfast@wcdr.org](mailto:wcdrbreakfast@wcdr.org)

November 13 WCDR Breakfast Meeting Speakers: Barbara Turner-Vessalago. Iroquois Sports Centre, Whitby 8:30 to 11 a.m. Call 905-686-0211 or [email wcdrbreakfast@wcdr.org](mailto:wcdrbreakfast@wcdr.org)

August/September/October

Challenge

Tea With the Queen
By Kevin Craig

The last time... I had tea with the Queen of England I desperately needed to pee. I tried looking uncomfortable, to infer upon Her Majesty my dire need of a lavatory. It seemed, however, she would not take the hint and offer me pardon. I don't know much about etiquette, but I was pretty sure I shouldn't ask the Queen for the use of her toilet.

I squirmed in my seat while the Queen sat across from me, smiling diplomatically. I listened in shock as she luridly slurped her tea.

"Would you like me to sign anything?" she asked, attempting to fill the silence between us. I declined to answer, taking in the room around me as though she hadn't addressed me.

"I said would you like me to sign

something? A memento? Hmmm?" she smiled again, less diplomatically this time...a little desperately, in fact.

"What have you done lately?" I asked irritably, squirming in desperation.

"My good man. I am the Queen of England! I don't do anything!" she said without a trace of irony. Not only would she not invite me to use her facilities, but she also wanted me to be awed by her questionable celebrity status.

"I'm the Ambassador of Canada," I said, pointing to the I AM CANADIAN logo across the front of my beer shirt. "Would you like me to sign anything?"

"Well," she said, taking a noisy gulp of tea. "You cheeky little devil."

My eyes scanned the pool. The change room will have a washroom!

"How 'bout we go swimming, your Maj.?"

"Ooh! I just love a good swim!" the Queen replied. "Shall we?" She rose and was off at a trot.

To my amazement there were no toilets in the tiny poolside change rooms. I wriggled into my swimsuit, knowing the water would only worsen my predicament.

We were soon immersed in what I thought was a friendly game of Marco Polo. I had even managed, momentarily, to forget my urgent needs. It soon became apparent, however, that the Queen of England was a terrible cheater. Every time I shouted, "Marco," there she was, tapping my shoulder with her prim white-gloved hand.

"Polo," she would haughtily announce.

She simply would not keep her eyes shut! I stormed out of the pool. Tramping through the palace, I quickly found a washroom, used it and was gone!

Needless to say, the last time I had tea with the Queen of England was the last time I will ever have tea with her. I can overlook her rudeness in not directing me to the facilities. I can even allow her the noisy slurping of the Royal Tea. But I cannot tolerate, for a single minute, anyone cheating at the sacred game of Marco Polo!



The Last Time
By Colleen Zoellner

The Last Time . . . we made love we told each other it would be the last time, never really believing it: We had said it so often over the years.

It was the same. Drunk on the cocktail of our passion for each other, and high on the rarified air of pent up desire over the relative celibacy of our normal lives, we threw ourselves into each other as if it was our last afternoon on Earth and we had all our lives to make up for. Then, as passion ebbed and was spent, we lay in each others arms, damp and naked, catching up on each others lives, breath to breath; lovers.

The last time we spoke it was I who

called him (he hardly ever called me—he would end up asking me to come to him and I would have to say no again). The aftermath of our love was always awful for me. I told him I tried not to call. Not wanting to lead him on, just missing him. Craving just the sound of his voice, his laughter. Addicted.

So the last time I called we were old friends again, the role we had played so well for so long: Friends just catching up on our plans for the holidays, he with his family, I with mine.

The last plans we made to be together were abandoned a long time ago in favour of a more comfortable, familiar path. Still we did belong to one another a little. We were joined in a small place in our minds and our passion for

each other was an unspoken connection.

And then, unbelievably, he was gone.

Suddenly, in a far away place, on a Saturday afternoon while I watched my children play with their Christmas presents, his heart stopped beating. Unbeknownst to me (I didn't even feel a shift in the movement of the Earth at that moment) strangers and his wife knelt over him, loosened his shirt, tried to restart his heart, but he was gone; far away already.

Continued, next page

I didn't hear of my awful loss until the next day. No one to tempt me. No voice to call. Gone forever. A black hole in the centre of my world that no one could know about.

The last time I went to a funeral, I couldn't cry too hard or say too much. I had to pretend until I wasn't pretending any more. And the pain from my loss wasn't mine any longer. It was theirs and it didn't, could not, compare to theirs: His wife's, his son's.

The *last time* really was. Some days, in the middle of a sunny

afternoon, I look at my phone and still can't believe it.



November/December Challenge...

a dance macabre

Since October 31st marks the eve of All Saints' Day (Halloween to you and me), your challenge for this issue is to pay homage to the master of horror fiction, Stephen King. We're looking for horrid, humourous horror. By all means scare us, but we want to be grossed out too.

Here's your prompt...

He's the kind of kid you know eats paste when no one's looking.

Deadline: October 20, 2004 Maximum word count: 500
send your twisted tales to

wcdrwordweaver@wcdr.org



OUTSIDE OF A DOG, A BOOK IS A MAN'S BEST FRIEND. INSIDE A DOG, IT'S TOO DARK TO READ. GROUCHO MARX (1895-1977)



Writers' Circles

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

Christians Who Write

The second Saturday of each month after the breakfast meeting

Call for location
Caroline Davidson
 905-683-4854

Circle for Children's Writers

First Wednesday of each month

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 Oshawa Public Library
 Northview Branch
 250 Beatrice St. E., Oshawa
Mike Ward
wardswords@hotmail.com

Durham Write-On

Tuesdays, every other week
 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 Call for location
Cynthia Green
cynwriter@rogers.com

Markham Village Writers' Group

Monthly
Donna Marrin
donna.marrin@staples.ca

Northword Edition

Tuesdays, every two weeks
 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 Uxbridge Public Library
Dorothea Helms, 905-852-9294

Richard Ferrier Writers' Group

Formerly Volume Two
 Third Tuesday of each month
 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
 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
 Township Hall, Uxbridge
Joyce Whitney, 905-852-3414

Word Players

Every second Tuesday
 7 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.
 Oshawa Public Library, Northview Branch
Mike Ward, wardswords@hotmail.com

Write in Whitby

Second and fourth Tuesday of each month
 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
 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 Uxbridge Public Library
Vicki Pinkerton, 905-473-1284

Oshawa Scribes

First and third Tuesday of each month
 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
 Oshawa Library, Northview Branch
 250 Beatrice St. E., Oshawa
Grace Stevenson, 905-725-0760

Writers' and Editors' Network

Breakfast meeting
 Third Saturday of each month
 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
 Canadiana Restaurant and Banquet Hall
 5230 Dundas St. W.
 Six Points Plaza
 Toronto
Mickey Turnbull
905-824-5035
or mickeytc@ica.net

The Wordsmiths of Ajax/Pickering

Group meets every three weeks on a Tuesday evening 7 to 9 p.m. Group focus includes free-fall writing exercises and critiquing members work. Meeting location varies within the Ajax/Pickering area. Contact *Cathy Witlox, 905-421-0095*
cathy_witlox@editors.ca

Note to circle leaders: The *Word Weaver* wants to know about changes to meeting times/venues etc. Please send to wcdrwordweaver@wcdr.org

BREAKFAST INFORMATION

SEPTEMBER 11

Our speakers were **Lynn Philip Hodgson** and **Alan Longfield**.

Hodgson, a retired businessman, had a long-term ambition to write the story of the men and women of Camp X. In the 1970s he joined forces with Longfield, a retired educator, to solve the mysteries of Camp X. This partnership started a 25 year journey in research as they met and interviewed many of the people who had gone through Camp X.

The result was *Inside Camp X*, published in 1999. It has sold more than 30,000 copies. Longfield also co-wrote the wartime memoirs of Joseph Gelleny, a Canadian Secret Agent trained at Camp X, *Almost*.

Hodgson and Longfield presented their latest joint venture, *Camp X: The Final Battle*, which was released on September 11 of this year.

OCTOBER 9

Bestselling author **Ted Barris** in his latest book, *Juno: Canadians at D-Day, June 6, 1944*, tells the story of the Juno Beach landing in the voices of the men who were there - young farmers from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, fresh-faced high-school graduates from Ontario, workers from mines and factories in the Maritimes, and eager recruits from Quebec and Newfoundland.

Barris takes us back to those momentous few hours that forever changed the course of history, in what might be described as "Canada's longest day."

Ted Barris is an accomplished author and broadcaster. As well as hosting stints on CBC Radio and television shows on TV Ontario, CBC TV, and CTV, Barris has authored 11 books, including the bestsellers *Deadlock in Korea: Canadians at War 1950-1953*, *Days of Victory: Canadians Remember, 1939-1945*, and *Behind the Glory: The Plan That Won the Allied Air War*. Barris teaches journalism in Toronto and resides in Uxbridge, Ontario.

Breakfast meetings run from **8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.** at the **Sports Garden Café** in the Iroquois Park Sports Centre intersection of Victoria and Henry Streets
Whitby

Cost: WCDR members \$13, Guest \$16

If you are not on the '**regrets-only**' list, your place **must** be reserved no later than the **Wednesday** prior to the next meeting.

EITHER WRITE SOMETHING WORTH READING OR DO SOMETHING WORTH WRITING.
BEN FRANKLIN

THE NEW WCDR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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CARL
Gone are sparkling eyes
and whiskered witticisms.
The living suffer.

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wcdrmembers@wcdr.org

Karen Cole
Breakfast Co-ordinator
wcdrbreakfast@wcdr.org

We will feature a tribute to this
founding member in our next issue.
Thank you to Graham Ducker for the
haiku.

THE WORD WEAVER

The Word Weaver is published by The Writers' Circle of Durham Region as a service to its members and other interested parties. No one should act upon advice given without considering the facts of specific situations and/or consulting appropriate professional advisors. Publications are invited to quote from *The Word Weaver* upon obtaining written permission from the President, The Writers' Circle of Durham Region, P.O. Box 323, Ajax, Ontario., L1S 3C5
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