

The Word Weaver

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A newsletter for writers and editors
produced by
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So You Want To Write A Romance Novel

By Margaret Moore

I'm sure any of you who have tried to write more than a grocery list already know that writing anything creative can be difficult, frustrating and lonely work.

Unfortunately, romance writing comes with an additional hurdle that has little to do with the actual writing process.

Although romance sales account for more than 50% of mass market paperback sales in North America, romance doesn't get much respect.

Here are some of the notions romance authors have to deal with on a fairly regular basis:

A) Romance novels give women unrealistic expectations.

Uh huh, and men read Tom Clancy novels because they believe that one day, someone will tap them on the shoulder and whisper, "Hey, buddy, we're one man short for a covert op. How about it?"

I think most women realize romance novels are in the fiction section.

B) Romance novels are all the same.

I could take a hundred writers, give them a point-by-point outline for a romance novel, and I would get a hundred very different stories. Every writer brings his or her own voice, style, taste, history and beliefs to their writing. Every set of characters brings something different to a story, too.

C) But there's "the formula," isn't there?

I'm going to go out on a limb and reveal that magic formula here and now. A man and a woman meet. After conflict and complications, the story concludes with the couple in a loving, long-term relationship. That's it. I don't see that this is so much different from the mystery formula: there's a crime; by the end of the book, it gets solved.

Also, there is a vast number of sub-categories in romance. Romance novels can be set in any time from the Dark Ages to the present. They can be light romantic comedies or heart-wrenching stories dealing with spousal abuse and other serious issues. You can make it "long" (100,000+ words) or "short" (60,000+ words). Your characters can live on a ranch in Texas or a castle in

Scotland or Bugbait, Minnesota.

It's true that some times and settings sell better than others, but even within those frames, there are as many stories as there are writers and characters.

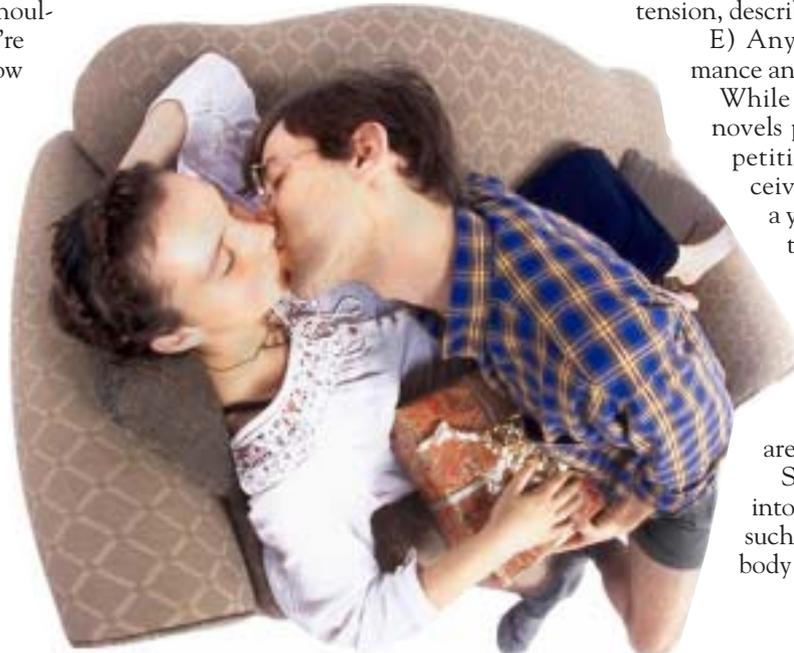
D) Once you announce that you write romance, you can be sure that at some point, someone will give you a leering grin and ask, "So, how do you do your research?" Sigh.

During a love scene, I'm writing about two characters, and like every other scene in the book, a love scene has work to do. I am not writing about my own life any more than I am at any other point in the story. A love scene must reveal character (and I don't mean describe them without their clothes), move the story forward, create tension, describe the setting, etc.

E) Anybody can churn out a romance and make a mint.

While there are several romance novels published per month, competition is fierce. Harlequin receives about 20,000 submissions a year, from which they buy between 20 and 25 from unpublished authors, according to Torstar's annual report. Romance Writers of America has more than 8,000 members, the vast majority of whom are unpublished.

So if it's so tough to break into and romance is treated with such disrespect, why should anybody bother?



Continued on Page 2

Writing Romances

Continued from cover

I like telling stories that require a strong female character in a major role and believe me, long gone are the days when the heroine sat around waiting to be rescued. Now, she's more likely to be cussing out the hero for getting in her way as she makes her own escape.

I like a story that ends on a positive note. Sure, life can be a vale of tears, but when I read fiction, I want to escape. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Apparently neither do millions of readers.

Once you do sell a romance, and if you can keep selling, it's possible to make considerably more than the dismal figure quoted for the average yearly income of Canadian writers.

Sometimes it's tough dealing with the smirks and the innuendoes and the mockery, especially around Valentine's Day when it seems the media dusts off every hoary old cliché about romance ever written.

But then I'll get a letter from a reader who loved my last book, and I realize that I have one of the most satisfying careers in the world.

I truly enjoy what I do, and I get paid for it. How many people can say that?

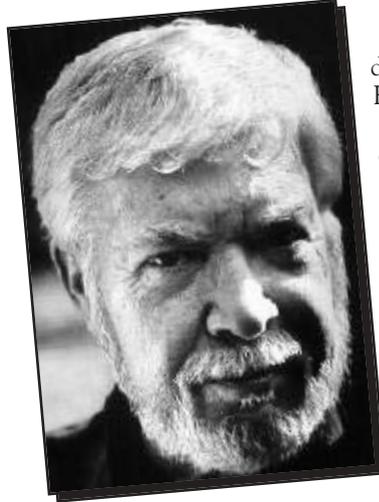
Margaret Moore is the author of more than 25 historical romance novels and novellas for Harlequin Enterprises Ltd. and Avon Books (a division of HarperCollins).

Her most recent releases are Gwyneth and the Thief, a Young Adult historical romance (HarperCollins, July '02), A Warrior's Lady (Harlequin, September '02) and All My Desire (Avon, October '02).

When not writing, she's a wife, the mother of two teens and the servant of two cats in Scarborough, Ont.



Canada Mourns A Legend



Timothy Findley, venerated author and playwright, died in his sleep Thursday, June 20, at a hospital in France. He was 71.

Findley once studied ballet and had a successful acting career that included appearing with Alec Guinness at the Stratford Festival in the 1950s. He gained respect as a writer with his third novel, *The Wars*, which won a Governor General's award in 1977.

Other well-known novels included *Not Wanted on the Voyage* and *The Piano Man's Daughter*.

His play *Elizabeth Rex*, received a Governor General's Award in 2000.

He was an officer of the Order of Canada.

On A Personal Note ...

I had the privilege of interviewing and writing an article on Timothy Findley in 1996, shortly before he and Bill Whitehead moved from their Cannington home, which is just a few minutes drive from my own home in Sunderland.

I was amazed at their generosity as they invited me, the creative director for the magazine and a photographer into Stone Orchard, and proceeded to serve us refreshments and chat with us for four hours.

About 10 months later, my daughter graduated from Grade 8, and her picture appeared in the local newspaper because she won a music award. Imagine my surprise when a few days later I received a note from Tiff and Bill saying they saw her photo in the paper, figured she was my daughter and wanted to congratulate our family.

The depth of kindness and caring by which both Bill and Tiff lived is gratifying to all those whose lives they have touched.

The scope and excellence of Timothy's work is awesome, and has inspired many Canadian writers to strive for the next level of courage in artistic expression.

That 1996 interview remains one of the highlights of my professional career and personal life — that and the note Tiff sent to me saying the article I did on him was "splendid."

According to my family, I haven't been fit to live with since. (I wrote and told Tiff about the monster he'd created with that wonderful word.)

I join many Canadians in saying I will miss his voice.

— Dorothea Helms

Is There A Writer In The House?

There soon will be!

WCDR's Writer-in-Residence programme is off to a grand start, as the board announces its decision to hire Stuart Ross for this exciting new role.

Some of you have already had the pleasure of meeting Stuart this summer at Centauri, where he taught poetry. He was short-listed in 2002 for the Trillium Book Award for

his poetry collection, *Farmer Gloomy's New Hybrid*. ECW Press will publish Stuart's fourth major poetry collection in 2003.

Stuart brings a wealth of experience including copy editing, lecturing and contest judging to the position.

WCDR will soon be announcing details about how you can sign up for your one-on-one session with Stuart.

Paeans

Judy Bagshaw has had a Christmas short story, "Belle's Jingle," accepted for the November issue of *Wynterblue Thunder*.

Another of her Christmas stories, "Saint Nic," will be featured on their Web site, <http://www.wynterblue.ca>.

This month, Real Romances will be republishing her two novellas formerly published by Wordbeams. Quite a streak you've got going!



WCDR's administrative assistant, **Anna Therien**, is on a roll. She's now sold a humour article to *Ontario Out of Doors*, a tough market to crack. Way to go, Anna!



Aprille Janes has become a regular fixture in *The Toronto Sun's* Career Connection section. Not only does she write articles, she was recently featured alongside buddy and fellow board member **Annette McLeod** in an article about following your bliss.



Cindy Rennie will have an article in *The Country Connection Magazine* winter issue. The piece is a stunning essay on "her lake" up in cottage country. This will be her first magazine publishing credit. We anticipate many more from this fine writer!



Debra Franke's short story was chosen the overall winner of the Canadian Authors' Association Annual Winners' Circle Short Story Contest. Her story will be published along with the other winners in the *CAA Winners' Circle Anthology*. This is stupendous news, and we're all really proud of you, Debra!



Write Stuff Writing Services, the writing business **Dorothea Helms** operates with her husband, Rich, recently made the news. *The Globe and Mail* featured a press release Dorothea wrote about a unique Web feature she and Rich put together to enhance Alliance Homes' online presence.

Dorothea also wrote a terrific piece about Dave Broadfoot, our awesome luncheon speaker at Words in Whitby, that ran in *The Toronto Sun*, and has had a second First Person Singular accepted by CBC Radio.

Dorothea's next project is to tackle editing duties for a brand new Metroland-wide publication, *There's No Place Like Home*. It will go

out to more than 1.378 million readers twice a year. We don't know how you're going to keep another ball in the air, Dorothea, but we're absolutely positive you'll find a way.



WCDR made a clean sweep of *The Toronto Sun's* DriverSource Saturday Fiction Contest. Nancy Del Col placed first with her short story, "The Gutless Cutlass." Our Webmaster, Ken Burch, placed second with "Distance"; Clarke Leeder took third place with "My Father's Ford." Gives new meaning to the term "driving force!"



Catherine Daley has had a piece selected to run in the "Lives Lived" section of the *Globe and Mail* about her aunt, Helen Metcalf. Nicely done, Cath.



Sherry Loeffler has a poem in *Testimony*, her church's national magazine. Her story "In Praise of Christmas Lights" has been selected for the 2002 President's Award for Literary Excellence.



Jo Sorrill had a piece in the Sunday Star in the "Have Your Say" section.



Renowned children's author K. A. Applegate has offered to read a manuscript written by Scott Bremner.



WCDR founder Marge Green is one of the top 10 winners of the Sunday Star Short Story Contest with "The Prat Who Looked Like Hugh Grant." That's a top-10 finish in a field of about 1,800. Quite a coup, Marge.



Ingrid Ruthig has had a short story accepted by the *Dalhousie Review*. "Snow Blind" will be published in an upcoming issue.



New WCDR member Kevin Craig has a story posted on www.maturemoment.com and has also had an acceptance by www.babelmagazine.com, a site that was hit more than 120,000 times last month. Talk about getting your byline out there! Not content with that, he recently had three short stories and 17 poems accepted by a journal called *Captains of Consciousness*, as well as a short story accepted on www.canadiancreative.com. Kevin also had a piece posted at

www.smilingfish.ca and wants WCDR members to know that www.smilingfish.ca is looking for submissions by Canadians.



Ruth Walker published an article in *Clarrington This Week* entitled "Findley's Ashes Come Home to Durham." She notes lichen's efforts to launch their literary journal and gives Findley's response of financial support and best wishes.



Gabrielle Bauer has recently learned that her piece "Waltzing the Tango" was short-listed for the Edna Staebler award for creative non-fiction.

The winner will be announced at the end of September.



Janet Luchinger writing as Jan Springer is excited about the Aug. 1, 2002 release of her third romantic suspense novel, *Love Through A Stranger's Eyes*, from Wings Press (www.wings-press.com).



Cottage Life gave Kristen Barrett an assignment as a result of a piece she sent in a few weeks ago about a flying dingy in cottage country (yes, you did read that right). The piece about the cottager/pilot, his adventures in cottage country and the wacky flying boat is due mid-September and is scheduled to run in the April/May 2003 issue's boating supplement section.

Anthology Update

Inspired by a suggestion from Philippa Schmiegelow, the first-ever WCDR anthology has been christened *Signatures*.

Editor Ruth Walker has given all submissions — more than 100 of them! — a thorough read and is in the process of giving feedback to members. Expect to hear about your submissions at the September breakfast.

We are on target for our anticipated pre-Christmas release date and are looking forward to stuffing many a stocking with *Signatures* this year!

Dan Sullivan Poetry Contest

About The Contest

Adult ♦ First Place

a home economics
By matt robinson

Shirt crumpled on the floor. Why is it that tumbled cloth always signifies desire? With its wrenched, impetuous forms.

— from *The Blind Assassin* by Margaret Atwood

the apartment is a mess, flung and filthy, really. and we are, for all intents and purposes, madly (as

they say) in love. the kitchen sink is harlequin: an off-kilter reminder of our appetites — the tupperware all

jaunty with the flaking batter aftermath of lazy pancakes and other such thinly veiled suggestions

of sex. even the drain proclaims this lust, its stopper loose enough that the dishwasher has spent itself dry and

fully out of the basin. the fridge sweats something earthy, almost vegetive: not only preserving, but now

producing as well. look: a glance at the counter shows it wet, spilt juice-slick and tacked with mail, some

envelopes weary — finger torn and ragged — while others, still crease-and-fold new, wait for the tongue.

Children ♦ Third Place

Winter Is
By Livia Anna Van Schepan, 8

Happy girls and boys skating on the smooth skating rink.

Twinkling and sparkling houses up and down the quiet street.

Tiny birds searching hungrily for food and little squirrels looking for chestnuts.

Little girls and boys making snow angels. Cold parents sipping hot chocolate.

The Dan Sullivan Memorial Poetry Contest is sponsored by The Writers' Circle of Durham Region.

It was established in 1995 in memory of Dan Sullivan, Durham poet and Writers' Circle member who, on March 13, 1995, while at the inaugural Poets in the Pub night in Pickering, read two of his works, acknowledged the applause, and died. In a heartbeat he was gone. This contest is our way to remember him as a man of many ac-

complishments and to honour him as a poet and friend.

Contest winners were announced at the WCDR Annual General Meeting on June 8, 2002. Winners in each category received a cash prize and certificate. The prizes are funded by contest entry fees and by the WCDR.

The poems were judged on originality and the sense of the craft of poetry shown in the work.

Youth ♦ First Place

Lowther's Last
By Rosalyn Yake

In a last letter
of stones and sleep,
And literature like a seed
to be carried as
a bloodstone in orbit,
She wrote to Neruda,

— "Pablo" she would have called him,
because he hung Neftali
on the branch of an evergreen,
where the night blew over
and Pablo
surfaced like a star.

But the night took Pablo back,
A snap of the fingers,
A twitch of a branch.
Cancer.

And now this is her last,
A last letter and more.

And sitting beside
my apartment window,
Cityscape noises
And the clicking of my keys,

I am left to wonder
like a kid over
a night light,
Writing letters to the dead
who wrote letters to the dead,
Will this be the last?

Children ♦ First Place

A Tree
Nicholas Fellion, 12

The clouds,
cold,
hard, match the setting
A whistle
breaks
the

Silence ...

A mechanical sound,
as the smokestack
spoils
the

Landscape
H A Z E

The sun breaks through steely grey
Feeble,
meagre,

Wasted on a sullen reality
A pale light on
a pitiful,
broken shape.

it
IS WAS
A Tree



Adult ♦ Second Place

Wanderlust
By Ingrid Ruthig

One more day fades and leans heavy
yet I resist the pull of warm sheets
where those who depend on me lie easy
in some silent knowledge I don't own

but you ask

Even if I give in, shut eyes to the race and
pray for quiet dreams
I will not sleep

because still you ask

So deep into midnight I listen
to distance, the dark, a breeze and far-off
that high blistered whine of what's possible
speeding past duty's siren, gathering me in
grit

like an open road
until I crave

what this night might bear -

raw
wild
windblown
open-cloaked
down and dirty

roof out windows wide bassbeat
blare by kiss-blown cares,
brazen crazy highway freeflight
- out there, this heart is
grabbing up handfuls of
chance and fallen night sky.

Youth ♦ Second Place

Blue House On The Corner
By Bronwyn Walker

She stands high on the hill
waiting like a queen
to be cared for
old paint scraped away
fresh coat added

Waiting to fill herself with laughter
footsteps racing down her halls
the smell of cinnamon, ginger
and brown sugar baked
deep within her
five layers thick

Forgotten house on the corner
colour faded from
once brilliant blue shutters
foundations keeping her in place
giving hope
to a new beginning

Adult ♦ Third Place

Bones of Hunger
By Janet Peters Varley

It started with
the bones of your children
after the last famine

you gathered their ribs
sun-dried them on racks meant for grain
carved holes

to string jute through
- to impart your emptiness
and holes for wind
- to articulate your pain

cast them out
in a bottle kept afloat
by their salty beginnings
you prayed for their souls, and
nine months later
they washed up on fertile soil
discovered, by chance,

examined and passed
from hand to hand,
the contents ending up displayed
in the window of the Natural Impressions
Craft Shop,
shrewdly tagged
"Bones-of-Hunger wind chimes"
authentic/hand-made

soul-starved consumers gobbled them up
- returning the bottle empty, with an in-
voice for more.
you didn't understand
- surely something was lost in the
translation.
you had meant it as a symbol of your
misfortune,
not a business proposal.

Judges' Bios

Richard M. Grove is the president of the Canadian Poetry Association Board of Directors. He published his collection *Beyond Fear and Anger* in 1997 (Hidden Book Press) and has since had many poems published in newspapers, periodicals and anthologies around the world. Grove hosts poetry readings and is involved in publishing books of poetry for fellow poets.

The work of **Joy Hewitt Mann**, a writer of both fiction and poetry since 1989, has appeared in journals across Canada. She has received several first-prize poetry awards including the Leacock Award for Poetry, the Lapointe Prize, the Hope Writers Guild Annual Poetry Contest, the

Children ♦ Second Place

The Log
By Matthew Dunlop, 8

I am a log,
steady as can be.
I am striped like a

Bumble Bee

Like a ...
BUM, BULL, BUM, BULL
Bee!

I have branches
like a tangled tree:

A baby tree.

Oh no! There's a "B"
on me!

Youth ♦ Third Place

Simply Be
By Jesse Gilbert

One last kilometer, just up ahead
a bend in the road, a turn to the right,
a small path marked only by an old hog-
shed,
I hear the wilderness call, my mind in flight.
The trail ends at a seemingly endless lake,
steam still rises up above the top,
a beautiful calmness adds to the take,
as I allow time to slow to a stop.
Over the water the canoe glides,
sending the surface insects into hiding,
as the earth sleeps along the hidden hill-
sides.
This love for nature is ever binding.
Erasing all the burden from me
for when here, I can simply be.

Acorn-Rukeyser Award and the Cambridge Writers' Collective Poetry Award. Her first chapbook, *Voices From the Other Side of the Moon*, was published by Bard Press Books, NY, in 1998, and her collection of poetry, *Bone on Bone*, is upcoming in 2003 (Pedlar Press). When not writing, Hewitt Mann runs a large "junk" store in Spencerville, Ont.

James Langer of St. John's, Nfld., is one of the founding editors of *Signal* literary journal.

Andrea Stone, judge of the children's and youth categories, has appeared in *Diviners*, *lichen*, *The Writing Space Journal* and *Toronto's Small Press Book Fair Instant Anthology*, and placed first in the 2000 Ontario Poetry Society contest. She lives in Toronto and is completing a Master's Degree in English.

Summer Challenge Winners

Last issue's challenge was to get p.o.'d about something, and you sure did!

Other people's loud music seems to hit a chord (pun intended) with several of us, including Tina

Ivany, whose hero exacts a classical revenge. And Kevin, I think I met this guy. Come to think of it, I think I might *be* this guy.

Thank you to all.

Disturbing the Peace By Tina Ivany

Frank was savouring his weekend alone.

As soon as he saw the back-end of his wife's car — packed to the brim with all her croonies — disappear, he loaded a tray with all his essentials — an ice-cold Heineken, heavy-duty sunscreen, sunglasses, his ratty old Tilley hat and his weekend companion, *London*, which he fully intended to finish — and carried it to the deck.

He was just entering the Black Plague, when it started. The noise. That infernal, incessant bloody noise ... boom, boom, boom ... blaring, blasting its way into his ears, invading his mind, threatening to destroy the sublime peace he so treasured. He wouldn't indulge them and go inside. No sir, he'd staked his claim.

Rap! Crap! Some moron's idea of music to accompany a perfect summer's day. Whatever happened to the sounds of silence? He could hear his wife's familiar retort when he found the world unacceptable: "You're past it, my friend."

So be it, but he still had a brain, busily at work now, conjuring up a solution. He'd give them noise. Retrieve his shotgun from the garage and fire off a couple into the air. Sure, and spend the rest of the weekend in jail. He returned indoors for his CD player and a stack of CDs.

"When in Rome ..." he thought, as he in-

serted the first disc. The golden voice of Placido Domingo captured the air. Tosca, Act III, in English, "the stars are brightly shining."

He waited for the crescendo. Yes. Yes. The tenor was about to reach the summit and just as he did, Frank cranked up the volume. Aha! Add a little culture to your limited repertoire,

you clods. Rap!

Crap!

La

Dolce

Vita,

suckers —

you have

a nice day

too.

Express Lane

By Kevin Craig

"Did you see what she just did!" Simon whispered to Susan.

"Relax, Simon," she replied. "We're next." She prayed that he wouldn't make another scene. His volatile temper seemed worse with this recent heat wave.

"Excuse me," Simon said to the woman. The woman pretended not to hear him. Susan felt sorry for her, knowing she was about to bear the brunt of Simon's frustrations.

"EXCUSE me," Simon yelled, tugging at the woman's sleeve. "Did you read the sign?"

"I beg your pardon?" the woman snapped.

"Please refrain from grabbing my ..."

"Nine items or less," Simon bellowed. "It's the hottest day of the year and the air conditioning in this place isn't working! You have 12 items. The sign says nine!"

"Simon please," Susan pleaded.

"No!" he spat. "I sat in traffic to get here and I put up with the lack of air conditioning. I won't let her go through the express lane with 12 items!"

The cashier avoided eye contact with the trio.

"I need ice cream!" Simon demanded, slamming it down in front of the woman's groceries.

"Simon, go wait in the car!" Susan yelled. Then, to the woman: "I'm sorry, the heat's getting to him."

Susan removed the ice cream from the belt and beckoned for Simon to leave the store. He turned dejectedly and stomped away.

"The sign says 'less than nine!'" he shrieked as the automatic doors swung closed behind him.

Simon finally saw Susan emerge from the store several minutes later, walking behind the express-lane Nazi.

He shook his head in disbelief at the woman's total ignorance of the grocery store rules.

"You've got to learn to control your temper!" Susan said as she got in the car.

Simon started the car, then quickly slapped his arm with all his might.

"Damned mosquitoes!"



November/December Challenge

When I was little, a gift came in shiny, colourful paper, tied with a bow. A little older, and a little wiser, I now know a gift can take many forms: an elderly parent recovering from major surgery; a Friday afternoon off work to do with what I please; a daffodil that makes an unlikely appearance in the middle of February.

That's the only criteria for next issue's challenge: the

title must be "The Gift" — poetry, prose, essay, anything goes, as long as it embodies what that title means to you. Keep entries to 300 words max and send them by Oct. 15 to wordweaver@wcdt.org or by regular mail to the editor at address on last page.



A Message From The BOARD

By *Aprille Janes, President*

“And so, as we bid a fond farewell ...”

Those words often closed the old travel-ogues my father enjoyed when I was growing up. Images spring to mind of a tropical beach with the sun setting behind swaying palms as the cruise ship heads out to sea. But in this case, the fond farewell is to retiring board members Ruth Walker, Dorothea Helms, Susan Reynolds, Alexandra Savage-Ferr and Nancy Rogers. Each one is taking her leave after helping WCDR journey a little farther towards its goals. Each one made a tremendous contribution to our organization. They’ll be missed — but we know they haven’t gone far. (As I tell Ruth, I know where you live!)

Now, I’ll just twist my metaphor slightly and picture the new board members taking their places at the oars, ready to pull hard and take us even further.

Joining us this year is Annette McLeod, who has been our *Word Weaver* editor for the past few months. In addition to this responsibility she has taken on the new role of public relations. I don’t think Annette ever sleeps, she brings so much energy to everything she does.

Another familiar face is Anna Therien who, as my intrepid administrative assistant, saved me from jumping overboard many times this past spring. She enjoyed keeping me in line so much that she agreed to join the board and is now your new membership co-ordinator.

Taking her place next to them on the Good Ship WCDR is Nora Landry, our new breakfast co-ordinator. It’s her cheery voice you now hear on the central phone line. She will ensure we have entertainment and food for the journey.

Kim Carson, who possesses an impressive background in working with other volunteer organizations, is bringing on board her considerable skills to serve as our new treasurer.

And Frank Young is probably wondering what he agreed to as he takes on the recently created role of new initiatives co-ordinator.

Returning to safely guide us through good and bad weather is Lynda Allison, who is now

your vice-president and events co-ordinator.

To educate us, Lois Gordon is staying on as workshop co-ordinator and Kathleen Martin will be keeping the ship’s log in order again this year as secretary.

Me? I get the easy part. As president, I stand in the bow and shout orders.

So be sure you have a ticket for the cruise. Your membership gets you great perks such as reduced rates for breakfasts and workshops, the anthology, the directory and a chance to work with the writer in residence.

Also, if you are not currently receiving e-mail notices from “Membership” you’re missing some great opportunities and information. Please drop a note to Anna and ask her to put you on the list (members@wcdr.org). We send out notices of markets, competitions, hints, and just plain good stuff. Don’t miss out!

Welcome aboard!



If I Do Say So Myself ...

Q: *Andrea Stone* ♦ A: *Nora Landry*

As a medical writer by profession, how do you find the energy to sit back down at the word processor to write for pleasure? Do you ever feel like Karen Kain taking dancing lessons in her spare time?

I think that I can safely say I have never felt like Karen Kain! My professional writing (the writing that I get paid for) is a very different process for me than my writing for pleasure (the writing I long to get paid for). Maybe it is comparable to Karen Kain taking square dancing lessons — it’s the same, only different.

When I thought about this question, I realized that many of my first drafts for stories are in my notebook rather than on my computer. Although it was not a conscious action on my part, perhaps that is how I make the entire experience different, intellectually and physically. There are certainly days when I have spent so much time in front of the computer that I couldn’t bear to go back, but I am sure that is true for many writers with day jobs. Ultimately, when it’s time to write the story, it’s time. My last first draft was written in the car while on a trip to Montreal. It was time.

Recently you’ve started writing for children. How are the challenges in writing for a younger audience different from those involved in writing for adults?

I remember meeting a woman for the first time and telling her that I was interested in writing. “What do you write?” she asked me. I explained about my professional writing and then added that I was interested in writing stories for children and young adults. “Oh yes,” she nodded sagely. “That would be much easier than writing real novels.” Yeah. I get that a lot.

For me there are real challenges involved with writing, and some, like getting my butt in the seat or trying to figure out the very best

way to show what I am trying to get across in an honest and engaging way, change very little regardless of my intended audience.

There are some challenges that I think may be more specific to writing for children and young adults. There are issues such as lack of life experience, authentic voice and even the plot structure of stories. I think my greatest challenge in writing for this audience is avoiding the urge to make a teachable moment out of everything. Recently, I came to a realization about my fiction writing — I figured out my job. My job is to tell the story. So, when I write, my challenge is to sit back, relax, and simply tell the story. Let my characters take my readers on the journey. It actually took a lot of pressure off me, and I hope that my writing is better for it.

In the last year or so, what’s the best book you’ve read? Why do you like it so much?

I have two answers for this one — the first is a book that I actually lent to you, Andrea, called *The Bestseller*, by Olivia Goldsmith. The great (or perhaps terrifying) thing about this story is that it may really be how books get published! What a riot — highly recommended as beach reading for any aspiring author.

And because I really do “read,” I couldn’t leave out *Atonement* by Ian McEwan, a vivid story with an interesting and unexpected ending. I think I enjoyed the book so much because I could relate to the main character, as a child, as a young woman, and as a struggling writer.

What’s your opinion on men with sideburns?

That is the easiest question of all — men with sideburns are HOT!

Across The Board

Get Acquainted With the New Board of Directors

Aprille Janes

President

Aprille wrote reams of short stories and poems while growing up but was told she needed a “real” job. Five years ago, after a successful consulting career in the technology field, Aprille decided to take a creative detour and return to her first love. Creative writing and poetry courses at Dur-

ham College encouraged that dream. She finally took the plunge and submitted some of her work to the Canadian Author's Association and found herself included in their first poetry anthology. She now has a number of publishing credits including *The Toronto Sun*, some local

magazines and a piece on CBC Radio. She is currently working towards living her dream full time.

In between all this writing and consulting Aprille is serving her third term as president of the WCDR, which she considers a labour of love.



Lynda Allison

Vice-President



Lynda owns and operates Write-Up Writing Services, a writing and researching business. Her published works include newspaper and magazine articles, a column for a

radio station newsletter, a children's short story and a children's Christmas play.

Lynda also directs sessional children's literature and drama clubs where children gain confidence in reading, writing and presentation skills.

Lynda graduated from Trent University with an honours degree in English and history. She has owned and operated a fashion boutique, was regional co-ordinator for the Atlantic Association of Women Business Owners and worked for 10 years as a legal secretary developing her business writing skills.

Lynda loves working with children and has enjoyed her roles as camp director and children's pastor and as supply teacher for the Kawartha Pines Ridge School District.

Lynda has several works in progress including adult short stories, children's short stories and picture books, and a young adult science fiction novel. She shares her country home with her husband and three entertaining teenage children.

Kathleen Martin

Secretary



Kathleen found her writer's voice while attending a series of George Brown College workshops entitled “Writing for Children.” A move to Whitby meant she needed to find a new supportive, stimulating group of writers closer to home. Her membership in WCDR came as a result of a prize (honourable mention) for her entry in a short story contest. She is a participant in the WCDR Children's Writing Circle, and takes advantage of other WCDR writing opportunities. Kathleen's most recent writing accomplishments are a CBC airing of a short story and a poem, *A Time of Trial*, in *An International Anthology of Poetry*.

As part of her community involvement, Kathleen organized the first neighbourhood watch program for Whitby Shores, and is now its chairperson.

Now retired, Kathleen lives with her husband, who is in semi-retirement.

Frank Young

New Initiatives

Frank came to these shores as a teenager expecting the streets to be paved with gold.

Disappointed, he was forced to go back to work and continue his career as an apprentice electrician. He retired from Ontario Hydro in 1993 after 42 years in the electrical trade. Casting about for some useful occupation, it struck him that writing might be a good idea. Having always been an avid reader and possessing a very strange sense of humour, he felt he should let others enjoy the benefit of his wit. However, it was not until taking a course from Dorothea Helms and joining the WCDR that he had any success.

After being one of the original Opinion Shapers in *The Port Perry This Week* he has gone on to articles in *The Toronto Star*, *Country Connection*, *Tickled by Thunder* and *Panama City Herald*, and has made two appearances on CBC radio.



Anna Therien

Memberships



Anna comes to us from Ajax, where she works as a team with her husband in their company, DNA Marketing. Soon after joining WCDR she took on the role of administrative as-

sistant, where she was able to use her background in accounting and computers.

Her publishing credits include *The Globe and Mail*, *At Home in York Region* magazine and *The Toronto Sun*.

Anna looks forward to helping WCDR continue to grow.

Kim Carson

Treasurer

Kim has been writing science fiction stories for fun since grade school and is an avid fan of Ray Bradbury. She finished school with an economics degree and volunteer management certificate.

She has attended writing courses at Durham College and has been a member of WCDR for a year and a half.

Kim owns her own flooring store with her husband, loves to travel and spend time with her dog. She has more than nine years of experience with non-profit community groups and is happy to be involved as treasurer on the WCDR board and with Words In Whitby.

Nora Landry

Breakfasts

Nora has an honours double major in mass communications and English literature from York University.

A lifelong interest in words and language prompted a career as a copywriter, with a special focus on the pharmaceutical industry and a medical audience.

With more than 10 years of writing experience, she has written for a variety of audiences and has created a wide range of written and multimedia materials. She is currently self-employed as a freelance writer.

Nora joined WCDR for the opportunity to meet and interact with others with an interest in words. From that humble goal, so much more has happened. Nora has taken fiction writing classes and joined a writers' circle. She now works at writing fiction regularly and has a special interest in writing for children and young adults.

This is Nora's first year as a board member and she hopes that, since WCDR has offered her so much, this will be her opportunity to give back.

Lois Gordon

Workshops



Lois Gordon joined the group four years ago, and was so impressed with the support and camaraderie, she wanted to give something back. She is returning to the board for her third term as work-

shops co-ordinator.

As both an interior designer and a writer, she combines her skills to write decorating articles for two regional lifestyle magazines.

She has completed two books in the romance genre and is currently working on a third.

Annette McLeod

Public Relations



Annette's first published work, a poem, came at age 14 in the anthology *Celebrate Our City*, published by McClelland and Stewart in honour of Toronto's sesquicentennial. She is a 16-year veteran of *The Toronto Sun*, where she currently holds the post of senior writer/editor in the special sections department. *Toronto Sun* credits include a weekly automotive section, *Driver Source Saturday*, book and restaurant reviews, and features on topics including Feng Shui and the history of architecture. Her first play, *Character Assassination*, was mount-

ed to good reviews at this summer's Fringe Festival. She possesses a dubious education that includes communications at Ryerson Polytechnic University, fine arts at George Brown College, and bartending school. Annette considers herself an excellent self-starter and a mediocre self-finisher. She is the editor of *The Word Weaver* and a member of the Automobile Journalists' Association of Canada (AJAC).

She is currently working on a half-finished short story and a two-thirds-finished novel. When not writing, she enjoys arts and crafts, time spent with friends, video games and obsessing about hyphenation.

“There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.”
— Somerset Maugham

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 Anna Therien to try the test PDF file (it's in full colour, folks!), then let her know if you'd like your name added to the E-Word Weaver list.

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
Next meetings: Sept. 4; Oct. 2
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
Next meetings: Sept. 10, 24; Oct. 8
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
Next meeting: Sept. 17
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
3021 Providence at Concession 3
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

Next meetings: Sept. 23; Oct. 21; Nov. 18
7 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Please call for location
Philippa Schmiegelow, 905-987-4856

Northword Edition

Thursdays, every two weeks
Next meetings: Sept 3, 17; Oct. 1
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Uxbridge Public Library
Dorothea Helms, 905-852-9294

Oshawa Scribes

First and third Tuesday of each month
Next meetings: Sept. 3, 17; Oct. 1
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
Next meeting: Sept. 17
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
Next meetings: Sept. 13, 27
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Township Hall, Uxbridge
Joyce Whitney, 905-852-3414

Word Players

Newcastle Writing Group
Next meetings: Sept. 16, 30; Oct. 14, 28
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
Next meetings: Sept. 10, 24
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
Next meetings: Sept. 12, 26
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
Next meeting: Sept. 21
9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Stemms Eatery
3300 Bloor St. W., Etobicoke
Mickey Turnbull, 905-824-5035
or mickeytc@ica.net

Odds & Eds

I made an important self-discovery during the course of mounting my first play at this year's Fringe Festival — I don't share well.

Unlike a piece of prose or poetry, you don't get to put words down on paper with full confidence that they won't morph into other words by the time they get to the reader. With a play, there are actors and a director standing between you and your intended audience. The director might have a different take on your words, and interpret them as you never intended. An actor, who may even have been saying the lines verbatim in rehearsal, can have a particularly energetic night, and adlib half the production. And there's nothing you can do but sit back and gape.

I honestly don't think it's because I believe every word I spew onto a page is golden. I don't think I have a problem taking criticism from respected fellow writers or skilled editors. Perhaps it's that I feel no one who doesn't love words as much as I do gives them proper respect. So what to make of this?

I haven't decided yet whether this will mean I'll learn to share, or that I'll just steer clear of playwriting, but it has opened up some questions I'm anxious to explore.

What do my fellow scribes think about this? Are the words really your own? Once they're out there in the cosmos, do they really belong to you at all?

The only way to make sure they stay exactly what you intended is to keep them for yourself, and, along the lines of that old Zen tree-falling-in-a-forest maxim, if a writer puts words on a page and no one is there to read them ... ?

With the subject line "Sharing," send your comments to wordweaver@wcdcr.org. I'll run a selection of opinions in our next issue. Happy fall!

Annette McLeod,
wordweaver@wcdcr.org

A Word of Thanks

It was decided some months ago to initiate several projects to expand the services of the Writers' Circle of Durham Region to its members. To this end, we successfully applied to the Trillium Foundation for a grant to defray the cost a members directory, an anthology (recently dubbed *Signatures*) and a writer-in-residence programme. The members directory will soon be at the printer, and good progress

has been made on all these projects. We owe special thanks for all their hard work to the following:

Directory committee: chairperson Lynda Allison, Susana Gomes, Heather Whaley, Ruth Walker, Anna Therien and Francis Theriault. **Anthology committee:** chairperson Lois Gordon, Annette McLeod and editor Ruth Walker. **Writer-in-Residence committee:** chairperson Sue Reynolds, Ruth Walker and Dorothea Helms.

— Frank Young, *New Initiatives*

Upcoming Breakfasts

Sept. 14

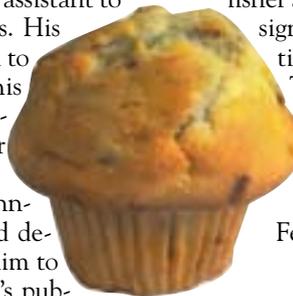
Featured Guest: **Mike O'Connor**

Mike O'Connor, founder and publisher of Toronto-based publishing house Insomniac Press (publishers of *Word*) will help WCDR kick off its fall 2002 season.

After graduating from journalism at Ryerson Polytechnic University, O'Connor worked for several newspapers in southern Ontario. Upon his return to Toronto, he

took his first publishing job as assistant to the president of Firefly Books. His experience there inspired him to publish small chapbooks of his friends' poetry and short fiction; he later worked for McClelland & Stewart.

A jack-of-all-trades, O'Connor's extensive production and design experience has enabled him to serve, not only as Insomniac's pub-



lisher and main editor, but as chief designer as well. Mike teaches creative writing at the University of Toronto, Canadian publishing at Ryerson and hosts *The Small Print* on CIUT FM in Toronto.

Oct. 12

Featured Guest: **Dan Blakeley**
CHUM News

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 Wednesday prior with Nora Landry at 905-259-6520 or at breakfast@wcdr.org

Workshops

The Business Of Writing

Dorothea Helms

Saturday, Sept. 28

10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Uxbridge Public Library

Members: \$75; Non-members: \$85

Pre-registration only. Send cheque by Sept. 20. Minimum 12 participants or cheques will be returned and workshop cancelled. Please make cheques payable to Write Stuff Writing Services and mail to: Dorothea Helms, S10895 Sideroad 17 RR #1, Sunderland, Ont., L0C 1H0.

Do you believe it's impossible for writers to make a good living in Canada today? Did you work a tremendous number of hours writing last year for little money? Have you ever heard, "Oh, you're a writer. But what's your *real* job?"

The commonly held belief that writers can't make much money or that you *have* to write for little or no remuneration are misconceptions. A natural choice for a home-based business, writing can be a fulfilling and lucrative career if approached as an entrepreneurial venture.

The demand for freelance writing and editing services stems from a wide variety of clients. This workshop provides an overview of what is involved in starting up a writing business — from motivation to targeting markets, approaching editors and keeping pertinent receipts and records. Learn how to avoid the common mistakes writers make and how to charge for various jobs.

Coffee and snacks provided. Bring your own lunch, or enjoy a midday meal at any of the restaurants near the library.

Dorothea Helms is owner of Write Stuff Writing Services, a thriving home-based writing/editing business. She is also a business trainer, and has helped dozens of entrepreneurs start their own businesses. Last year, Dorothea was nominated for a Rotman Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award.

Clean Up Your Act The Surprisingly Wonderful World of Copy Editing

Annette McLeod

Saturday, Nov. 2

Time and location TBA

Members: \$60; Non-members: \$65

If you boil copy editing down to one word, it's this: clarify.

Whether you're writing a novel, an essay, a magazine article, a newspaper feature, or a work so outré it defies description, the object is always to clearly convey your ideas to the reader.

Copy editing may seem like a dry process that's all about grammar and spelling, but it's much more than that. This energetic, interactive workshop will convince you that even the most beautiful prose can benefit from a thorough copy scrub.

In this course you'll learn: how to make educated, defensible copy decisions; the most common copy traps and how to avoid them; the professional copy editing symbols that will make the process faster and easier; tricks you can use to remember what you've learned; the importance of "the active voice" and how to use it in your writing; how plain words don't have to equal plain copy; how copy editing can give added satisfaction to your writing process — and even be fun!

Learn how to make your copy speak vol-

umes — and how to make editors love you! Bring five pages of your work in progress and learn how you can tighten up all your writing, without losing your voice.

Annette McLeod is a 16-year veteran of The Toronto Sun, a published poet and produced playwright, and editor of The Word Weaver. Formal education in copy editing at Ryerson Polytechnic University combined with eight hours a day spent writing and scrubbing copy in a tense, deadline environment has given her the tools to teach you why clean copy is better copy.

Writing Non-Fiction With Literary Flair

Paul Lima

Saturday, Oct. 5

10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Whitby Public Library

Members: \$60; Non-members: \$65

Interested in writing articles for magazines and newspapers? Want to learn how to write leads that will capture an audience — and an editor? This hands-on writing workshop will help you apply creative writing techniques to your non-fiction prose. Then you will learn to differentiate between leads for news articles and features and discover ways to bring your lead to the surface.

Paul Lima is a freelance writer and professional member of the Periodical Writers Assoc. of Canada, and conducts writing workshops for PWAC. He is a regular speaker at Ryerson, and currently writes articles for The Toronto Sun, The National Post, The Financial Post, Time Canada and many other online and print publications. He has had short stories and poetry published in a variety of literary journals.

Calendar of events



Sept. 14, 2002
Breakfast Meeting
 Featured Guest: **Mike O'Connor**
 Insomniac Press

Sept. 28, 2002
Workshop
The Business of Writing
 Dorothea Helms

Sept. 29, 2002
Book and Magazine Fair
Word on The Street
 Toronto's annual event takes
 over Queen Street West

Oct. 5, 2002
Workshop
Writing Non-Fiction with Literary Flair
 Paul Lima

Oct. 12, 2002
Breakfast Meeting
 Featured Guest: **Dan Blakeley**
 CHUM News

Nov. 2, 2002
Workshop
**Clean Up Your Act: The Surprisingly
 Wonderful World of Copy Editing**
 Annette McLeod

For workshop information, see page 11 or
 contact Lois Gordon at workshops@wcdcr.org

To register for breakfast meetings, see page 11
 or contact Nora Landry, breakfast@wcdcr.org

To get involved in Word on the Street
 contact Lynda Allison,
vicepresident@wcdcr.org

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the Word Weaver

www.wcdcr.org

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Editor • Annette McLeod
 Copy Editor • Philippa Schmiegelow
 Editorial Assistant • Sherry Loeffler

We welcome your input
 Send comments and submissions to
wordweaver@wcdcr.org or
 c/o WCDR, P.O. Box 323
 Ajax, Ont. L1S 3C5

We reserve the right to edit or reject
 submissions at our discretion

Famous Last Words

The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.

— Arthur C. Clarke