

Writers' Circle
 Scribble Page 5000
 The WORD WEAVER

Inside

- ◆ BOARD MESSAGE/PAEANS.....2
- ◆ WORKSHOPS5
- ◆ GRAMMARPUSS..... 8
- ◆ NOV/DEC CHALLENGE.....9
- ◆ BREAKFAST INFO..... 11

A NEWSLETTER FOR WRITERS AND EDITORS
 PRODUCED BY
 THE WRITERS' CIRCLE OF DURHAM REGION
 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2004 VOL. 10 No. 5

CARL CLARK

REMEMBERING SO MANY GOOD TIMES

By Marjorie Ludlow Green

I met Carl Clark in February of 1992. I know the exact month and year because I was interviewing him at the time for the March edition of *Roller Coaster*, a newsletter for single parents I produced each month for the Toronto School of Business (Oshawa and Pickering campuses). I titled the article "Remembering Good Times Too", because Carl had not enjoyed his several years of being single at all.

Always a social person, Carl joined Parents Without Partners, and met the woman who would turn his life around. He liked to joke about his five or six ex-wives, but with Linda in his life, he was on top of the world when I met him in 1992. Carl Clark, especially at his best, was never the kind of person one easily forgets.

When Linda asked me to speak at the memorial service for Carl, I worried about what I could say about a guy whose instant and permanent friendship brought so many laughs and good times into my life. How does one say good-bye to such a friend? I decided to take the easy route and read a portion of my article. I now find myself having to resort to that route again: sharing a little of what I wrote about a smiling, whiskered guy being interviewed in 1992.

He learned how to date and have fun again. "I made a commitment to myself that I would make no more commitments," he laughs. "So, when I wanted to ask someone out, I would say, 'Hi! I have no car, no money and no job. Would you like to go out?'" He met women who were hurting as much as he was, and he treasures those times of sharing, "when other singles were there for me."

Carl has given a lot back to the community, working twice for Mental Health. He spent four years on the Distress Centre phones and has continued volunteering his artwork for special causes. Humour has often been his lifeline and Carl derives real pleasure from what he

does.

His comic strip, "K.C.Bear," drawn for the Kivanas Club, appeared in the Oshawa Times, along with many of his editorial cartoons. The familiar Big Sisters and Fiesta logos are also his.

*A Renaissance man, Carl has written a children's play, which was presented by Durham Shoestring Performers, completed his first novel, *The Killing Line*, which was published in 1986, and more than 2600 pieces of his art have been purchased by companies and individuals throughout the world. Some of his more serious work graces the walls of the home he now shares with his wife, Linda.*

In 1988, feeling low, Carl went to a Friday night single's dance at Dynasty Inn. "It was a poor night," he says. "I was ready to give up and go home. And then I saw this great lady and I danced with her." Last September, they were married in a ceremony filled with laughter. Reunited with his children, he now also enjoys the love of seven grandchildren.

The bad times now a memory, Carl concentrates on teaching art to others. Now he laughs easily, sharing his wonderful humour with others, and looking forward to the future.'

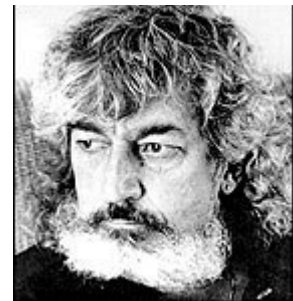
Carl's future included the WCDR. In 1995, he was one of the first friends I went to for help to form a board for a new non-profit organization for writers. Typical of Carl, he said yes immediately. He became our second vice president and proceeded to serve on every committee we had. When I asked him for a cartoon for our new newsletter, he sent me a pageful, enough to do us for months. Carl was there, with the poets in the pub, the night Dan Sullivan died.

More recently, he developed thanking speakers at the WCDR breakfast meetings into an art form, coming up with brilliant, hilarity-on-the-spot reflections that had the whole room laughing. I'm not sure Carl didn't miss his calling.

While he did manage to make the odd "extra" appearance in movies (he auditioned for, but did not land, the role of Captain Highliner), I think he might well have made a fortune in stand-up, had he ever tried.

Carl reveled in being a far-from-perfect person and used his self-deprecating wit to bring joy and encouragement to many of his fellow writers. His cartoons in the local papers informed and amused thousands of readers over the years. And yet, as another speaker at his memorial pointed out, Carl was never heard to speak badly of anyone.

Our lives have been touched by a very special person. Old-fashioned, gallant, multi-talented, blessed with unique wit: Carl Clark was all of these, and more. How fortunate we are to have known that Renaissance man.



CARL CLARK
 1935 - 2004

A Message from THE BOARD

By Annette McLeod

It fell to me to mail the last issue of the Word Weaver, and as I sat in my living room with my little one-woman assembly line (fold, insert, seal, label, stamp ...), one envelope fell to the floor. I bent to pick it up, and as I turned it over, the name on the label hit me hard: Carl Clark.

I'm not particularly superstitious, but it did flash through my mind that it might be Carl's way of making sure his wife, Linda, didn't have to face that in her mail one morning.

Or maybe it was just Carl imping me from wherever he is.

His loss will be felt for a long time to come.

• • •

As always, it's our job as boarders to try to give the members what they want, and that from which they can benefit most, and since we haven't heard otherwise, I guess we're doing OK. But it's hard to operate in a vacuum. We need your feedback.

Our participation in Word on the Street fell by the wayside this year for lack of volunteers. We were afraid the online contest would go the same way, but entries have picked up significantly in the past week or so.

One of the ideas we're kicking around for this year is a "would you turn the page" night. We'd get a fiction editor, publisher and/or agent to sit on a panel; you'd submit the first page of your novel (and you are working on one, aren't you?). The panel would then discuss for the edification of us all, and tell us whether or not they would be compelled to keep reading.

This night wouldn't be for sissies - we wouldn't necessarily have to reveal whose work was whose, but you may have to listen to them tell us that, no, they wouldn't. But at least you'd know why.

We haven't worked out the kinks yet, and don't want to take it further unless we know there's support. Give it a think, then let a boarder know at the next breakfast (or via e-mail) whether this is something you'd like to be part of. (Pardon the dangling preposition - sometimes conversational takes precedent over perfect form, even with a grammar junkie such as me.)

• • •

She's a modest gal so, Deb, avert your eyes, but it bears noting that new Word Weaver editor Deb Rankine survived her baptism by fire. Her first issue of the Word Weaver was a worthy successor to Aprille Janes's tenure - with no desktop publishing skills to rely on, Deb really came through. We apologize for its lateness and appreciate your patience. We're back on track now, and you'll be seeing

the Word Weaver in your mailbox every two months as before. Thanks, Deb. You rock.

• • •

The new board is gelling nicely, with newbies Barbara, Vicki and Karen adding their unique talents and personalities, and oldies (sorry, gang, just a wee joke) me, Rose, Rich, Sue and Sherry plugging away as always. Sherry has taken on vice-presidential duties with Carl's passing and is proving to be the charming and industrious asset we knew she was. A new board position - special event coordinator - is available, and we look forward to welcoming a new candidate. More on that as soon as we figure it out! If you're interested in joining the board - yes, there's some work involved but we have a good time too - please talk to a current board member.

• • •

It's frightening to think of it, but by the time the next Word Weaver comes out, it'll be 2005, with the 2004 holiday season already behind us, so Merry Christmas, Happy Hhanukah, Jolly Kwanzaa, Festive Festivus, or whatever makes the season bright in your home. We look forward to the coming year, and with it the Dan Sullivan contest, short fiction contest, Words in Whitby and a passel of great breakfasts still to come.

Paeans

Durham Region is on a roll!
Congratulations go out to:

Sherry Loeffler has had some great news today. Tree Side Press in Vancouver has accepted her new book, *How Not To Sail the High Seas*, an adult mystery novel. Don't call the WCDR and Write Now member for a few days to congratulate her, because she is too excited to squeak!

Pamela Hamilton was delighted to find out that two of her poems will be published in the October - November issue of the online journal *All Things Girl*. Look for "Toward the End of Day", and "Curtain Fall", in the poetry & prose section of www.allthingsgirl.com



A WARM WCDR WELCOME

Our newest members

AUGUST

Nancy McQueen
Marie Anne Millar
John A. MacRae
Bryan Davies

SEPTEMBER

Meka Jones
Grace Colella
Jacquie Johnson
Sheila Reesor
Lianne Browne
Susan Malarkey
Pamela Hamilton

OCTOBER

Dylan Robertson
Adele Simmons
Carole Akers
Maria Abulnar
Ginette Roberge

WCDR Who's Who: Yvonne R. Harriott

By Phillippa Schmiegelow

It's snowing today and it's all white on the ground. I'm cold and scared. So wrote eight-year old Yvonne, newly arrived from her native Jamaica. Yvonne has always been an avid journal writer and the entries that followed that record of a young child's introduction to the unfamiliar Canadian climate and culture continue to provide her with material for her short stories.

Yvonne's first writing success came in 1998 with the publication of a travel interest article in a community magazine but short stories are her passion. She submits one story after another to targeted magazines and enters many contests, among them the *Toronto Star* Short Story Contest, which she submits to every year. In September 2001 *Today's BlackWoman* published "The Wedding", one of six to seven romantic shorts she submitted to the magazine that year. "We've decided to pick up your story", a voice on the other end of the phone told her, "We pay US\$200." Elated, Yvonne bought up all the copies in the bookstore and handed them out to family and friends. Her mom is her greatest fan and still proudly displays a copy on her coffee table.

Her sister reads everything she writes. This

can set Yvonne's internal censor going, but she has learnt to suppress it. "When I first started sending my novel manuscript out to publishers, I did so using my mom's maiden name and my middle one. "Ruth Ellis" sounded good, but then I realised no one would know who'd actually done the writing. I didn't want that. After all, this is what I do. This is what I write."

Yvonne is primarily a romance writer. She researches her stories carefully, drawing on her background in legal administration, her travels and from her love of people watching. "My characters," she tells me, "tend to be black, but over the years I've introduced others and they work well together." With an infectious grin she adds, "Hey, I might as well reach out to everyone and try to broaden my reader base." On a more serious note, she repeats the advice given her last February by Harlequin Books executive editor, Birgit Davis-Todd: If you're a good writer, it doesn't matter what colour your characters are, as long as we like your story and think it will sell.

I asked Yvonne if she thought that one day she might support herself by her writing. It wasn't hard to guess her answer: "I think so. It's certainly something I strive for. My parents have taught

me that you can do anything you want to in life. If they could leave all their friends behind to start a new life in a new land, I can be a writer. Two of my friends asked me to autograph "The Wedding", when it was published. It was so sweet. 'You never know,' they said, 'we can always say we knew you at the beginning.'"

Yes, indeed. And watch out for Yvonne R. Harriott's first Romance novel, *Having It All*.



Odds & Eds

By Deborah A. Rankine,
Word Weaver Editor

Last August I asked the eldest of my two nephews if he thought they could skip nursery school the next morning and spend the day with Auntie Deb. He gave me a sideways glance that belied his years, then proceeded to advise me that they don't call it nursery school if you're five years old. Obviously I had much to learn. He mulled over my question, his brow knitted deep in thought, and confirmed that yes, both he and his little brother could indeed "*skipped*" school. I marvelled at his blind-faith consent, having no clue what this *skipping school* business was all about, agreeing simply because he did not want to disappoint his auntie.

I'd planned a jam-packed day of swimming, playground shenanigans and a picnic lunch. I wanted to get to know them while their world was still viewed in wide-eyed technicolour.

I learned some very important things that

day. Like who was the superhero-de-jour, that brussels sprouts were still the uckiest vegetable in the whole entire world, and that the older one had almost mastered Shoe Tying 101, certain that it was only a matter of days before he would be mentoring his little brother in this loopy artform. But the most important thing I learned that day was to just let go and have some fun: make funny faces, pretend you're eating boogers, hang upside down on the monkey bars and feel the rush. And the best part's that it's free for the taking.

On our way home in the car, a small voice from the back seat reminded me that we'd forgotten to skip to school.

This issue's theme, *simple abundance*, abounded, and even though your Word Weaver editor gave you an unreasonable deadline, you welcomed the challenge. Thanks to those of you who submitted your slices of life. I thoroughly enjoyed devouring each and every "piece". And thank you for your patience as I navigated desktop publishing software with one hand and speed-dialed Annette, Aprille and Rich with the other. Hopefully it will be clear sailing from here on in.

The theme for the January/February 2005 Word Weaver will be that old standard, New Year's Resolutions, but with a twist. Forget about the diet, the quitting smoking, the vow to exercise or being nicer to your in-laws, blah, blah, blah. I want to know what your plan of action will be for your *writer's life*. I want you to commit it to paper and send it to me with a timeline of when you think you will reach your individual targets; like when will you have finished the research you've been meaning to get to, or what hours of the day you are going to block off for writing, or that you **will** write in your journal daily. Pick one thing, pick a dozen. It's up to you how committed you are to reaching your writing goals for the new year. But I should warn you - submissions published will be subjected to quarterly review by yours truly, and your progress featured in future issues of the Word Weaver. So, are you "writer enough" to accept this submission challenge?

Deadline for submissions:
December 20, 2004

Maximum word count: 600

SUBMISSIONS TO:
wcdwordweaver@wcdr.org

JANUARY/FEBRUARY CHALLENGE

We're celebrating Valentine's day in an untraditional way.

Instead of whispering sweet nothings into your lovers' ears and feeding him/her chocolate-covered strawberries in bed, send them a "Dear John'/Jane" letter. Your challenge is to let this person down gently as you address all the things that are wrong with them.

Deadline: December 20, 2004

Maximum word count: 500

Send your challenge to: wcdwordweaver@wcdr.org

Professional Development Fall/Winter 2004/05

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

TEXT, SUBTEXT & CONTEXT

By Jane Bow

Saturday, November 27, 2004 from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Location: Uplands Writers Retreat

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

This workshop is for creative writers who are looking for ways to reach beyond straight narrative, to use techniques that will create impact, through resonance at an archetypal level, in their readers. It is suitable for writers who have a basic knowledge of character development and plot construction, and is a lot of fun.

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

GRAMMAR FOR WRITERS: THE (ALMOST) JARGON-FREE VERSION

By Cathy Witlox

Saturday, January 22, 2005, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Location: TBA

Event fee: \$80 (\$70 for WCDR members)

The ability to tell a compelling story is a special talent. The mechanics of the English language, however, can intimidate and undermine the confidence of even the most capable of storytellers. Learn the grammar and self-editing skills necessary to polish your manuscript, tell your story effectively, and impress an editor.

Instructor, **Cathy Witlox**, has been copy editing and proofreading both fiction and non-fiction for more than a decade. Having spent seven years in-house, she has worked on hundreds of novels, novellas, articles, and author interviews and biographies. She's had more than 50 instructional grammar and writing articles published on the web site of a large North American publisher, where she became a familiar online presence under the name "Grammar Girl". Currently, Cathy, a member of the Writers' Circle of Durham Region and the Editors' Association of Canada, is building her own freelance editing business, WordWitlox (www.WordWitlox.com), and writing her first novel.

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

NEW WORKSHOP POLICY!

Workshops will be cancelled 7 days before the start date if registration is insufficient. Payment in full is due upon registration, by cheque or credit card.

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

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

THEME: SIMPLE ABUNDANCE

Simple Abundance

By Pamela Hamilton

My foot finds the spot where the floor creaks, coffee sputters and drips into the waiting carafe, and our dog, Cleo, sighs occasionally, but otherwise the house is quiet at five a.m. I fix myself a coffee and listen, absorbing the unfamiliar silence. Soon, warm air sways curtains as the familiar click, clink, thunk of the furnace begins its day's work. I think of my children and husband asleep in their warm beds and take another sip before returning the milk to the refrigerator, where every shelf is full.

My husband sleeps one floor above me, his snoring almost imperceptibly audible through the ceiling. He's been working long hours and I know he needs this deep sleep. I picture my daughters in their beds, the older one probably in exactly the same position I left her; the youngest, most likely uncovered with an arm or leg protruding off the mattress. Everyone is safe and warm.

Cleo rolls onto her back when I pass her in the hallway, her greatest joy being those moments when one of us stops to pet her soft, warm belly. "Yes, you're the best doggie," I tell her, and she thanks me by excitedly tapping the tiles with her tail.

Coffee in hand, I descend the carpeted stairs into the basement and turn on my computer. It sits on a corner desk unit made up of several tan wooden surfaces that are attached to silver, metal posts. My monitor sits on the largest of the wooden surfaces. This is my desk - a space of my own - not quite the 'room of one's own' that Virginia Woolf suggests for a woman wanting to write, but it's mine, and I know it's more than many

women who are also wives and mothers possess. I look around and remember my husband marking out the boundaries for this portion of the basement we were going to finish; how frames were placed along those lines and then walls positioned and nailed together. He set the boundaries where my desk would go and marked for the technician where to install the high speed Internet connection. I often forget that this area was a gift from my husband, who listened when I told him I wanted a space for me. Today I remember.

I stretch before sitting down, reaching one hand then the other toward the ceiling. The muscles in my arms and back are still sore, reminders of a new skill on the uneven bars mastered at my last gymnastics class. I feel fit, strong and proud. Returning to the sport after 20 years has been more rewarding than I ever anticipated.

I sit down at my computer acutely aware of the simple but abundant blessings in my life: a warm, safe home protecting a family I love; a refrigerator filled to overflowing; the devotion of a beloved dog; a desk of my own; involvement in the sport of my youth; today.

It wasn't always like this. Ten years ago and four months pregnant, I thought my future was guaranteed, but a sudden miscarriage followed by the discovery of a tumour in my uterus, and the heartbreaking words of the obstetrician that I might not be able to have children, slammed the door shut on a dream of motherhood that had become as much a part of me as breathing. As challenging as it

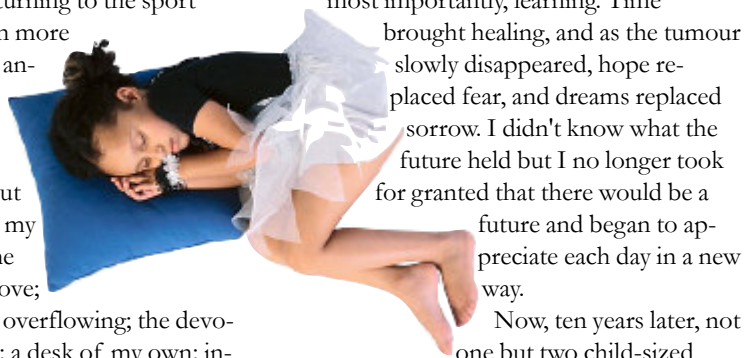
was to walk into the Bayview Cancer Centre once a week for blood testing, picturing a life without children was even more difficult. Each day was an exercise in distraction, as I tried to ignore the grief and fear that accompanied me like an unwanted companion. I grieved for a future that might never materialize and feared what would happen if the tumour spread. I worried about dying and leaving so many dreams unrealized.

I didn't recognize at the time the signs of depression but my boss noticed the change in me and fired me for not being the "bubbly person" he needed in the position. The loss of income seriously affected cash flow and had we not sold our house when we did, it's likely bankruptcy would have followed.

It was a time of questioning, reassessing and, most importantly, learning. Time brought healing, and as the tumour slowly disappeared, hope replaced fear, and dreams replaced sorrow. I didn't know what the future held but I no longer took for granted that there would be a future and began to appreciate each day in a new way.

Now, ten years later, not one but two child-sized miracles sleep upstairs in their warm beds and not a day goes by without my acknowledging what gifts they are - and what a gift today is.

Pamela Hamilton, originally a New Jersey girl, now lives in Uxbridge with her husband and two daughters. Passionate about becoming a better writer, she spends as much free time as possible choosing one word over another.



The words that enlighten the soul are more precious than jewels.
Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882 - 1927)

Simple Abundance

By Kevin Craig

Simple abundance. The term always makes me think of gardens and cultivating. It also makes me think of the everyday sacred...the joy of discovering life's simple pleasures.

Thanks to the amazing group of women in Sue Reynolds' Fearless Writing workshop, particularly Sue herself, I walked away from her course this spring with big plans to complete my novel-in-progress. The other participants validated my work and made me consider the possibility that it wasn't half as bad as I imagined it to be. The big plans to finish my manuscript, however, were soon completely forgotten. As John Lennon sang, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans". In other words, life has sidetracked me.

I'm sure I'll get back on track with my novel. Even though I'm not writing anything at the moment, I'm not the least bit worried. When I finally do motivate myself to get bum-in-seat and write, I will have a treasure trove of new material to work with.

My writing has taken the back burner to the new puppy, my son's new hockey season and chauffeuring my daughter to her new part-time job. Some may see these things as distractions to the writing process, but I see them as new gardens being tilled and seeded for future use. Ideas are percolating and stories will be written borrowing from these experiences.

My wife, Alison, has always been afraid of dogs, so I was aware that there was a good chance I would never have one. I am an avid dog person, and for some unknown reason they like me too. This past August, Alison announced that it was time for us to have one. I remained quietly hopeful until the very day Franny actually came home with us. What does this have to do with writing? Nothing. But it is the fuel that will bring me back to writing. Fran-

ny has filled my life with a joy that will soon spread into my writing life. That's what joy does with writers, it cultivates into joyful writing. It's the steam we need to get writing.

Alison and I had a short conversation the other day about abundance. "Did you know?" she asked me. "Did I know what?" I replied. "Did you know the whole time?" she repeated, holding Franny's face and sprinkling her wet nose with kisses. She had discovered the simple abundance of unconditional joy that puppies deliver...an abundance that she had missed out on her entire life. "Yes," I replied simply.

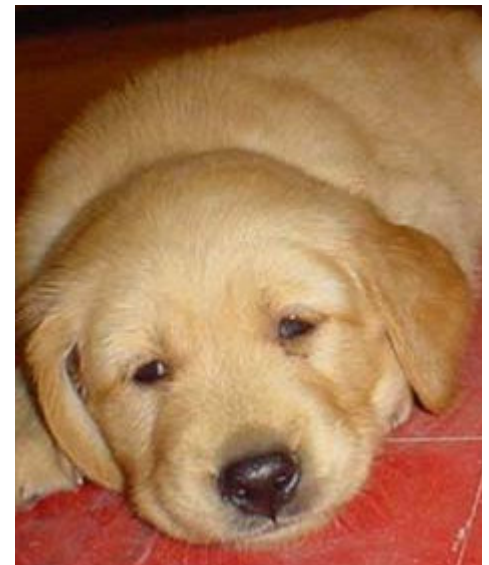
This discovery of simple abundance could happen to anyone at any time. Quite often it happens when people discover writing and the richness it can bring to their lives. From the joy I received from walking a dog for the first time in nearly twenty years to watching my son score his first goal of the season, I have recently been overwhelmed with simple abundance. I would much rather experience these things than write. I have faith that the writing will come in good time and that I will be better off for having put it off. Sometimes it's a good idea to put the pen down and step back. It'll be there when you're ready to return to your writing.

I feel the burgeoning of ideas simmering in the background of my thoughts lately. I'm certain that all of my characters from this point on are going to have a faithful dog at their sides. I will unabashedly make that dog a golden retriever like our Franny. My characters will soon be discussing life's trials and tribulations while sitting in the stands enjoying the skirmishes of eight-year-old boys playing hockey. One of my future characters will even sit in a car contemplating life as it grows dark outside and he waits impatiently for his oldest child to finish her shift at the local A&P superstore.

Last year, when I facilitated an on-the-spot writing group, I encouraged the participants to take my writing prompts and mould them into the events taking place in their lives. I also told

them to search out the simple joys in their lives and write from there, making sure to first put the pen down long enough to notice these joys. My advice to other writers, whenever I feel brazen enough to give it, is simply this - keep your eyes open to joy. It's the only way we can see the everyday sacred. Also, realize that every moment you live is an opportunity to accumulate material for your writing life.

Being a writer has taught me one important life lesson for which I am truly thankful. My life is an abundant garden. And so is yours, so let it grow. And don't be afraid to show the world your garden through the words of celebration you will surely later write.



Kevin Craig is attempting to accept the fact that he is working on a "novel". His writing is currently taking a backseat to life, but he senses a pending storm of words on the horizon. His plan is to help them to fall in the right order.

You must keep sending work out; you must never let a manuscript do nothing but eat its head off in a drawer. You send that work out again and again, while you're working on another one. If you have talent, you will receive some measure of success - but only if you persist.

Isaac Asimov (1920 - 1992)

Simple Abundance... Remembering Jack McClelland By Ruth E. Walker

In October 1971, I was a high school dropout when I started working in the warehouse of McClelland & Stewart, located then on Hollinger Road in Toronto. In those days, M & S functioned as a full-service publisher and distributor. Having the good fortune to move through various shipping jobs to the general office as file clerk and receptionist, and then on to copyright and contract clerk, I had the opportunity to observe how Canada's premier publishing house conducted the business of authors.

Jack McClelland was a good employer. But more importantly, he was a great Canadian - a bit manic perhaps, but deeply committed to his vision of Canada and its culture. He profoundly changed the way we saw ourselves because he changed the way we saw our writers. His

value system was not of the commodity mindset; he was passionate about our wordsmiths and passionate about what they did.

I remember him in striped shirts - almost never with a tie - his freckled hand constantly smoothing back the forelock of his wonderful fair head of hair. He was a wiry dynamo who knew everybody's name in all the departments, and could be as easily spotted among the stacks of books in the warehouse as among the Bay Street suits of the Board of Directors.

Jack McClelland was all energy. God, when he had something cooking, we'd all know about it - from the part-time summer help in the warehouse, to the VP of finance - everybody got involved in the boss's ideas. Promotion. Publicity stunts. Celebration. If it hadn't been done in Canada before, well, so much the better.

I think too few of us understood how crucial Jack's unswerving passion was at a time when, with rare notable exceptions, Canadian writers generated little interest at home. Hockey play-

ers were our national icons, and those in the arts were seen - when they were noticed at all - as, at best, "interesting" or at worst, were viewed with suspicion. After all, it's not like they do anything important, right?

Today, our writers, poets, visual artists, dancers, singers, actors, comics - indeed, anyone involved in the culture industry in Canada - are celebrated and acknowledged for their contributions. It is true that Canadians still love our hockey heroes. But we should all take a moment and think about how narrow our vision of ourselves might have been without the determination and passion of Jack McClelland.

Poet and writer **Ruth E. Walker** is a founding editor for Lichen literary journal. She leads creative writing workshops, and is a past president of the WCDR.

GrammarPuss

Ah, the semicolon. Underused, misused or not used at all, it has suffered since the genteel days of Shakespeare and has fallen to the point of virtual superfluousness in our modern age.

There are greater sins - truth be told, one can do without it, and often get away with trotting out an extra comma here or there. But if one is determined to do things properly - and avoid the dreaded (at least by GrammarPuss) comma splice - its presence will be missed in one's writing.

Half comma, half colon, it languishes unnecessarily in sentences where it has no business as often as it is left out altogether.

Harken back to your grammar school days, and one hopes you'll remember what makes up a complete sentence: a subject and a verb. Yes, it's that simple.

I sat. He stood.

Short and sweet, they are both sentences complete in themselves.

Even if one were to say, "Sit!" or "Stand up!" they are complete sentences, because the subject "you" is implied.

I'm sitting, you can stand if you want to. There it is! The comma splice. If we are to make such statements grammatically correct, we must divide them - I'm sitting. You can stand if you

want to. But alas, they are related. I mention my sitting only because I have taken note of your decision to stand. Enter the semicolon: I'm sitting; you can stand if you want to.

Note that the phrases on either side of the semicolon are complete sentences. Therein lies the semicolon rub.

One must make one's own decision whether to use a semicolon or to separate the two sentences based on their relation to one another. If they are unrelated - I'm sitting. He's eating pomegranates. - the period is the way to go.

The word "however" and "therefore" put up semicolon flags. By virtue of their use, the sentences are assumed related. If, for example, there is only one chair to be had, these statements are related: I sat; therefore, he stood. "However" and "therefore" are often used to introduce opposition or consequence, and in such cases cry out for the semicolon. "In fact", "on the other hand" and similar phrases have the same effect. When "however" and "therefore" are used, however, in the midst of a sentence, the semicolon shouldn't rear its hybrid head. Conjunctions are another option: I sat but he stood. He stood because I sat.

There is another common use of the semicolon: to separate items in a list. In these cases, a comma will often suffice. I sat on a chair, a chaise longue, a countertop and a footstool. Once such items become more complex, often

involving commas within each item, it behooves us to employ the semicolon: I sat on a big, red chair; a zebra-striped chaise longue; a new, shiny granite countertop and a square, velvet footstool. (While some would argue, GrammarPuss as always comes down on the side of clarity, and maintains that the final semicolon - which, in this example would fall after countertop - is superfluous and may be omitted, or may be replaced by a comma.)

Although colloquial language use permits us the liberty of partial sentences, if one's writing is at all academic, or if one is attempting to maintain a tone of propriety, one cannot get along without the semicolon.



November/December Challenge

AMAZING GRACE

BY BARBARA HUNT

Her orthopaedic shoes chirped on rubber flooring as she shuffled along the corridor. Her generous hips rolled, her shoulders swayed, and her arms pumped as she propelled herself forward. She was much more motion than was necessary.

Her Christian name was Grace. It was her mother's idea, because she was born at Christmastime...though everyone called her Gracie, as in "Gracie Allen". This was on account of her squeaky laugh - the second sound to emerge from her after birth.

Gracie's soap-scrubbed cocoa complexion glowed in her purple uniform - no Florence Nightingale white or angel-of-mercy drab for her. The stethoscope bounced on her ample chest as she bustled to Room 206. Her left hand jingled with empty glass vials. The other paraphernalia - needles, tourniquets, labels, gauze and alcohol swabs - were tucked alongside in the metal carrier.

"How ya doin' this evenin', Mr. Ross?" she bubbled. The first bed was tautly made up for its next occupant, and in the second sat Mr. Ross, propped up on pillows. He lowered his tome and peered over his specs as she crossed the room.

"I'm just fine, Gracie," he replied in cool tones. "Is it that time already?"

"You know it is," exclaimed Gracie, as Mr. Ross laid aside his reading material and rolled up his pajama sleeve. "You go in tomorrow mornin' and they need your blood work." Efficient as always, Gracie

read his temperature, checked blood pressure and drew blood, all the while discussing Mr. Ross's family visits, dinner menu and doctors' prognoses. *What a sweet, old gentleman*, she thought, popping vial after vial off the syringe as they filled.

"Now ya make sure to get some sleep t'night," she admonished as she affixed the prenumbered labels to his four vials. "G'night. See ya bright and early, hon," she said with a toss of her curly-top, and was gone.

One-eyed, she squinted at arm's length at her list.

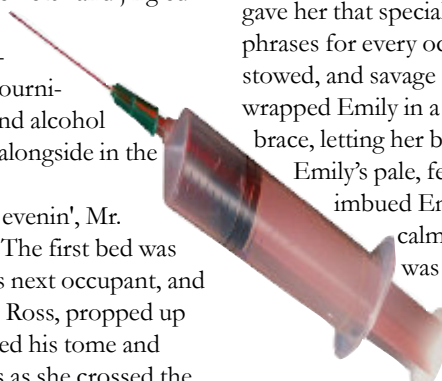
"Room 222," she muttered. "Emily, sweetie, how are ya holdin' up? Ya doin' okay?" Gracie asked as her hand parted the curtain shrouding the first bed. Emily Green's frail shoulders shook, and tears coursed down her youthful features.

Heart surgery awaited her in the morning, and Gracie's years of experience gave her that special gift of words and phrases for every occasion. Five vials stowed, and savage fears salved, Gracie wrapped Emily in a warm chocolate embrace, letting her brown eyes settle on

Emily's pale, fearful ones. Gracie imbued Emily with comfort, calm and courage. This was Gracie's endowment and destiny.

Gracie made more visits on the third, fifth and sixth floors

to complete her evening rounds. She then stopped in at the deserted nursing lounge to review her work. After carefully pocketing one vial of each patient's blood, Gracie headed to the lab with the remainder. *Business is good*, she thought, licking her parched lips.



Home from the Horror Show

By James Dewar

**Come nightmares that freeze
the blood colder
than the wind-chill
Antarctica blows,**

**when the walls of the tower
grown older than time
seize my soul
as my sanity goes.**

**When germinal stirrings
puncture the ground
and mutterings float
through the trees,**

**the red of the sun
is the red of my blood,
the wind
is my own rasping wheeze.**

**If the tonnage of midnight
embraces your heart
and your screams
embarrass your mind,**

**the rap on the windows
the touch of my teeth;**

**the cold
is the bone-chilling kind.**

The cure for writer's cramp is writer's block.

Inigo DeLeon

Writers' Circles

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

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

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

Every third Tuesday 7p.m. to 9 p.m. Free-fall writing exercises and critiquing. Meeting location varies.
Cathy Witlox
cathy_witlox@editors.ca

The Tale Spinners

The Tale Spinners are aged 55+ and meet every Thursday in Oshawa to write memoirs, fiction and poetry.
Barkley Fletcher: 905-571-1348

Writes of Passage

Group serves Whitby/Brooklin area. Focus includes writing exercises, feedback, and Q & A's regarding writing life. Group meets second Monday of each month. Everyone welcome.
Jan Seppala
jseppala@rogers.com

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

Note to circle leaders:

The Word Weaver wants to know changes to meeting times/venues etc.

Please send to
wcdwordweaver@wcd.org

The only reason for being a professional writer is that you can't help it.
Leo Rosten (1908 -)

Breakfast Information

November 13, 2004 guest speaker... **Barbara Turner-Vesselago, *Rises While Falling***

At the Writers' Circle of Durham Region's (WCDR) Writers' and Editors' Breakfast Dialogue, acclaimed writing instructor **Barbara Turner-Vesselago** will share from her experiences of writing and teaching around the world. As a disciple of W.O. Mitchell at the Banff School of Fine Arts and the bearer of a Ph.D. from Cambridge University (England), Barbara is well-grounded in the field of language and literature, including creative writing. She taught at the University of Jos (Nigeria) and University of Washington (U.S.A.) before leaving academic life in 1982. The free-fall method that Barbara uses invokes the courage of writers to fall into the words as they come in half-formed thoughts beneath unplanned structures without prompting. Within the framework of a supportive small group, she imparts this powerful immersion technique with a unique combination of teaching skills, literary knowledge and psychological insight. Her latest work, *No News But Kindness*, was a finalist in the 2001 Chapters/Robertson Davies Book Prize, and she was named one of six "Voices of the Nineties" by the University of Western Australia in 1995.

December 11, 2004 guest speaker... **Neil Crone, *Enters Laughing***

Neil Crone is an actor and writer who lives with his wonderful wife, two little boys and one neurotic dog, in a town so small everybody knows where everyone else's birthmarks are. He has performed in dozens of television and radio commercials, TV shows, and is the voice of numerous cartoon characters every Saturday morning. His most recent feature film roles include *Jasper Texas*, with Jon Voight, *Against the Ropes*, with Meg Ryan, and *The Recruit*, with Al Pacino. Currently Neil can be seen as hockey coach "Muck Munroe" in YTV's kids' mystery/adventure series *Screech Owls*, the warmly psychotic "Harry Strand" on CTV's *Power Play*, and most recently as "Ed" in YTV's hilarious family comedy *I Love Mummy*. Also, look for Neil in Disney's upcoming movie of the week *Beautiful Girl*. A Second City veteran improviser, host and stand-up comic, Neil 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. Neil is an award-winning humour columnist for the Metroland Papers and is a contributing writer for CBC Radio's new *Real Life Chronicles* program. Neil feels once he meets Don Knotts and Dick Van Dyke, he can die.

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.

It is not a bad idea to get in the habit of writing down one's thoughts. It saves one having to bother anyone else with them.
Isabel Colegate (1931 -)

THE WCDR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Annette McLeod

President

wcdrpresident@wcdr.org

Sherry Hinman

VP/Membership

wcdrvp@wcdr.org
wcdrmembers@wcdr.org

Rose Cronin

Treasurer

wcdrtreasurer@wcdr.org

Karen Cole

Breakfast Co-ordinator

wcdrbreakfast@wcdr.org

Vicki Pinkerton

Secretary

wcdrsecretary@wcdr.org

Barbara Hunt

Public Relations

wcdrpr@wcdr.org

Sue Reynolds

Workshops/Retreats Co-ordinator

wcdrworkshops@wcdr.org

Rich Helms

Web Liaison

wcdrwebmaster@wcdr.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Writers' Circle of Durham Region is ushering in fall in style with our second online writing contest.

WCDR Online 24-Hour Non-fiction Contest - November 13/14 2004

Visit our web site for complete details.

www.wcdr.org

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, ON L1S 3C5
Phone (905) 686-0211. Web address: www.wcdr.org
Word Weaver subscription: \$20/year (six issues)

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

Editor/Desktop Publishing

Deborah A. Rankine

Copy Editor

Cathy Witlox

We welcome your input!

Send comments to
wcdwordweaver@wcdr.org

or

The Word Weaver
c/o WCDR
P.O. Box 323
Ajax, ON L1S 3C5