THE SPICE OF CANDOUR

Stan Persky sprinkles his enthusiasms from A to C

From his memories and intellectual discoveries with all the zeal of a record collector putting on tracks from his favourite albums. Spalding Graylike, Persky could easily perform excerpts from this book as a one-man play at the Fringe Festival, and Balding Gray would be a hit.

Persky’s flirtations with the mainstream are apparently over. He won’t be writing any populist book-packing about the Gordon Campbell government, as he did in the old days of Bill Bennett. That would take a lot of work. Instead *The Short Version* enables the now-renegade Capilano College professor and habitual of Berlin to explore the self-satisfaction of his accumulated riches. *The Short Version*: *An ABC Book* presents Persky the philosopher king, unplugged, unfettered, counting his chips, with the insouciance of a brassy Jaba the Hut.

A is for Art and Auschwitz. “A record,” Adorno sternly declared in the wake of the Holocaust, “is that lyric poetry is impossible” after Auschwitz. I think that the best way to interpret that remark is not that good poetry can’t be written after Auschwitz, but that good writing now requires an understanding of the Holocaust.

B is for Bald. “My father was bald, and I inherited, along with much else from him, his standard male pattern baldness. I fretted about it, mainly worried, I suppose, about its potential effects on my sex life. For years, I fought a losing battle by arranging my hair in a desperate ‘comb-over’; at attempting to disguise the obvious. What an extraordinary waste of time, of mirror gazing, of bra-kantine and gel occasionally, walking around the streets, when a breeze comes up and fiddles through my fringe. I forget that I am bald, and like people who have lost an arm or a leg are said to experience a phantom limb, I experience some imaginary nairiness. Then I run my hand over my crystal-ball-shaped dome, and move on.”

C (at the end of the book) is for Continued. “I remember how thrilling it was as a child to come to the conclusion of something I was reading, a story or a book, and discover, at the end, it wasn’t ‘The End,’ but that there might be more to come.

More Walter Farley Black Stallion stories, more Wizard of Oz books, more John B. Tunin sports novels or Amazing Adventures. Ever since I began to write, I’ve always wanted to end a book with the magical promissory words: to be continued.”

It adds up to a smorgasbord, not a fine-star restaurant. You can go back and forth along the line-up, dismissing some dishes, finding delight in others. The spice of candour is Persky’s most consistent quality, whether he is hipping Chicago Cubs’ shortstop Ernie Banks or the influence of French heavy-hitter Roland Barthes. (Discovering the latter’s posthumous, alphabetically-ordered book entitled *Roland Barthes, we learn, was an indelibly liberating experience* that encouraged Persky to embrace himself as a subject, leading him from his breakthrough homo-sexual memoir *Buddy’s,* and now onto *The Short Version,*)

You don’t have to be a previously committed Stan fan to appreciate someone who admits, “My books, like late-medieval chrestomathies, are a patchwork of books.” To emphasize his point, Persky proceeds to provide a six-and-half page bibliography of his favourite books and authors. He’s telling us everything he wants us to know, and very little else.

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Stan Persky lectured on Wilde man Stan Persky at the Vancouver Public Library. He will also appear at 3pm on November 27 as part of the 21st Jewish Book Festival.
Margaret Mead went to Samoa. Louis Leakey found hominids in Kenya. To make her name in anthropology, Leslie A. Robertson went prospecting for a myth in the hard-luck town of Fernie.

As the former mining centre slowly morphed into a destination ski resort, she hung out at the local hospital, at the ice rink, on the route via Corbin and Coal Creek, rather than use the more direct route via Fernie. Hence the curse narrative could have "fulfilled the practical purpose of warning people about the rigours of travel through the Fernie area.

In 1964, at the behest of Fernie Mayor James White, members of the Kootenay (Kimnasa) tribe were invited by Rotarians and the Fernie city council to officially lift the curse on the 60th anniversary of the town's incorporation. "During these years many misfortunes have befallen us," said the mayor, "and by many, it is believed that your curse brought these about."

Chief Red Eagle passed a peace pipe to Mayor White, but it went out. Amid more incantations and puffing, the curse was symbolically vanquished. A month later Mayor Jimmy White dropped dead.

Much of the value or pleasure to be derived from Imagining Difference arises from such tangential excerpts. It's fun to learn, for instance, that in 1909, Fernie police made 188 charges of prostitution, 166 charges of drunk and disorderly, 32 charges of vagrancy, and 20 charges for assault.

"Amongst the fines that were levied," she writes, "a Chinese launderer was given a fine of five dollars for washing water from his mouth onto an article of clothing. During WWI, 306 allegedly enemy aliens were arrested and interned in Fernie and nearby Morrisey. This sort of thing has precious little to do with the Curse, but Robertson's interviews with common folk, and her close reading of the files of the Fernie Free Press, dating from 1898, provide balance to her discussions on the "politics of cursing."

"It was hardly a vote of confidence, but it allowed her to pursue First Nations research wherever possible. The idea that she was disliked was important to her,

But it was William Fernie's fault. Or so legend has it.

In 1906, Fernie retired to Oak Bay on Vancouver Island where he died in 1921. Over the ensuing decades Fernie residents have claimed they can see the shadow of a 'ghostrider' on the roof of his formerly handsome house and they're all happy to share the story.

The litany of Fernie's misfortunes since then is impressive.

Maroon folk, and her diggings in the Crow's Nest Pass for the Geological Survey of Canada in 1898. The Indians resented the intrusion of the white men (and later the Canadian Pacific Railway). The girl's mother, or the girl herself, cast a curse upon the emerging community of Fernie, established in 1898 and incorporated in 1904. For ever afterwards, white settlers would suffer "from fire, flood, strife and discord; all will finally die from fire and water" (according to one source)."

In 1897, 1902, 1916, 1923, 1948—floods

In the late 1990s, mainly relying on oldtimers, Robertson tape recorded countless accounts of how the legend of Ogopogo or sightings of 'Caddy,' the West Coast sea monster.

Robertson wanted to investigate the oral traditions of the people travelled into Alberta from B.C., they generally took the intrusion of the white men.

The idea that she was disliked was important to her, but it allowed her to pursue First Nations research wherever possible. The idea that she was disliked was important to her, but it allowed her to pursue First Nations research wherever possible.
A Blackfoot family, in traditional Hudson's Bay blankets, with their interpreter, Jerry Potts (centre) and North-West Mounted Police commanding officer John Cotton and Inspector A. B. Perry, who would become the force’s fifth commissioner in 1900.

An obituary in the Macleod Gazette read: For years he stood between the police on one side, and his natural friends, the Indians, on the other, and his influence has always made for peace. Had he been other than he was… it is not too much to say that the history of the North West would have been vastly different to what it is…

Rodger Touchie concludes his account by commenting on the regrettable circumstance that someone who chose Canada as his homeland and served it so well should remain largely unrecognised. His only public memorial to date is an informally christened mountain along the Great Divide, and a Calgary school named in his honour.

Rodger Touchie, who owns Heritage House press with his wife Pat, became interested in Potts as the subject for a biography from reading accounts of the western frontier in which Potts’ name repeatedly occurred among those of better-known figures such as Crowsfoot, Red Crow and Sitting Bull, as well as Mounties such as Macleod, Sam Steele and James Walsh.

The use of a lesser-known character as a prism to view history has been popular since 1978 when Barbara W. Tuchmann published A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century. 18986545

Biographer and novelist Joan Givner lives in Mill Bay.
John Pass, Mona Fertig and Stephen Betts contemplate inevitable falls from grace

The believability of this poet’s fulfillment is that he doesn’t second-guess it. Pass, stumbling in the bloom, is man besotted with a particular place, a possible Paradise.

**BEAUTY SUPPORT**

This is Paradise by Mona Fertig

This is Paradise by Mona Fertig is a remarkable collection of poetry that explores the beauty and fragility of nature. Through her poems, Fertig captures the essence of a place near perfection, illuminated by the interplay of light and shadow. The history of racism conveyed in the bloom, is man besotted to have them certain. / Certain? That one thing or the other? No! / Subtlety, shading is the tang.

Fertig’s poems are imbued with a sense of place, evoking the familiarity but opening up its unique angles, covering its strangeness, namelessness. The tone is elegiac, descriptions are more about place than about the place, and recording, the reader to believe that “a wilderness, victim of your inventions, disastrously creative.” Only in the final stanza does Fertig offer a slim hope in the answer to entropy: support. The dream was alluring into “The huge and intractable beauty… where it’s all sunshine in the garden and wilderness. The contentment is shadowed by atrophied, febrile, convulsed. The cure for which: chopping firewood in the presence of an angelic dog.”

Fertig’s poetry is inventive, often immoderate lines echo the piled-upon accident of writing about beauty and happiness, victim of your inventions, disastrously creative. The beauty is over-the-top goofy at times but stunned and song-prone, “Pass, stumbling in the bloom, is man besotted to have them certain. / Certain? That one thing or the other? No! / Subtlety, shading is the tang.”

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In the aftermath of this accusation, played out against the backdrop of the changing Vancouver skyline and the seasons of the Anglican liturgical calendar, Jonathan, the young priest, undergoes an excruciatingly public humiliation and punishment, and a prolonged hysteria infects the city’s population. The fallout has far-reaching consequences for other characters, particularly Beth, who is forced to reconsider her judgments about her family, and move beyond bitterness; and for the mother of the accuser who realizes her son has lied and why. Jonathan’s own attitude to his predicament is admirable and problematic. He is determined to be true to his Christian values of selflessness and forgiveness. But by maintaining a Christ-like and possibly dangerous detachment throughout the proceedings against him, is he doing the right thing? Or is he being unfair to the ones who love him by allowing himself to be victimized? And is Jonathan possibly enjoying the role of martyr just a little too much?

This is rich territory for a novelist to explore. If someone is persecuted, are they obliged to fight back? It’s more than a gay persecution issue; people are asking themselves these moral questions, specifically with how they are going to carry forward the Christian message of love into the 21st century. Vancouver Voices is unfused with an Anglican perspective as Watmough tries to allow for both contemporary and traditional values in presenting the complications of love and religion.

More than fifty years ago, David Watmough’s first book, A Church Renounce, a Study in Modern French Catholicism, was published in London in 1951. That same year, Watmough was 25 years old, he met his life-long friend Floyd St. Clair, aged 21, at a Wednesday night social at St. George’s Anglican Church in Paris. So it is tempting to propose that with Vancouver Voices, David Watmough has come full circle; he has gone back to the church.

Perhaps, more accurately, he has never left.

Sheila Munro lives in Comox where she is writing a novel.

MUMMERY’S THE WORD

King Arthur confuses as to how he inspired his troops by pulling his famous sword Excalibur from the stone.

The Eagle by Jack Whyte

F orty thousand years ago to the conclusion of The Eagle, the eighth and final volume of Jack Whyte’s expansive Arthurian opus about the origins and exploits of the Brotherhood of Knights Companion to the Holy Grail—aka the Knights of the Round Table—Arthur Pendragon’s closest friend and admirer, the Frankish knight Lancelot de Lys aka Sir Lancelot of the Lake, or Clothar—returns to Gaul and gets the last word.

Lancelot, the “lover, adulterer, deceiver and very perfect, gentle knight,” reveals Merlin’s fate and hears King Arthur confess as to how he inspired his troops by pulling his famous sword Excalibur from the stone. “There was nothing miraculous involved,” he says. “It was mere mummary, designed by Merlin for effect, no more, no less than that.”

Fascinated with 5th century history ever since his school days in Scotland in the 1960s, Jack Whyte immigrated to Canada in 1967 and left imagined a probable solution to the Sword in the Stone mystery in 1978.

Entering the fictional field of Thomas Mallory and T.H. White, Whyte is determined to also trace and imagine the formative years of King Arthur. “Arthur is the quintessential hero who surrounds himself with other heroes of equal stature,” he said in 1992. “The story of the Holy Grail contains in and of itself the nucleus of man’s history ‘on spec.’

At age 52, in the literary equivalent of his next series will re-invent The Knights Templar, a medieval order of military monks who, according to Whyte, “became the most powerful and influential organization on earth” within fifty years of their formation by nine obscure knights in the Holy Land in either 1118 or 1119. Also known as the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Jesus Christ, they were expelled less than 200 years later when King Philip IV ordered the arrest of the senior leader of the Order in France and they were imprisoned on Friday, October 13, 1307, giving rise to the superstition that Friday the 13th is an unlucky day.

According to Whyte’s website, “The novels will look at the Templars as they were at three stages of their growth—the beginnings, from 1119 through 1129, when the nine founders were searching for the treasure that would make them famous; the peak, during the Third Crusade when the Templars were at their strongest as a fighting force, campaigning with King Richard the Lionhearted against Saladin, the Sunni Moslem sultan of Syria; and the very end, with the arrest of the French Templars on Friday 13th and the flight and legendary destiny of the few who escaped the fate suffered by the others of the hands of the Holy Inquisition.”

An avid gaver who sings in eight languages, Whyte is a general and gracious performer who has never seen a stage he didn’t like. He wrote and performed a one-man show about Robert Burns, creator a Remembrance Day Special for TV with the Mike Karnes and narrated an award-winning documentary for Terry Jacks’ Environmental Watch organization. Having founded Burns Clubs in Calgary and Vancouver, he now lives in Kelowna, British Columbia.
Anna becomes a First Banana

A pair of socks. Peanut butter and jelly. Anna and Zoe. All inseparable. Best friends since first grade, Zoe wasn’t afraid to live life and Anna wasn’t afraid “to take notes.” Together they were a pair.

Then the indomitable Zoe breaks her arm. This year her accommodating sidekick Anna must head off to Camp Stillwater alone. Anna has always been comfortable playing second banana, but now she’ll have to operate as a Camp Counselor in Training beyond her friend Zoe’s shadow. Her Book Club, Oprah Magazine-reading mother insists, “Sometimes in life we just have ourselves. Sometimes it has to be enough.”

But Anna isn’t convinced. At the camp, it seems everyone is lining up to take pot shots at her. First, there’s the uber-competitive Jennifer, with a 3.8 grade point average and her future Chairman of the Board aspirations. The high achieving Jennifer is determined they must trounce Arlene Breckner’s cabin in the big swim race. Karim, the swimming coach Anna is paired with, has the “same toffee-coloured skin, same black, silky hair that would brush the top of his shirt collar, if he wore a shirt, which would be a shame.”

But her dreamboat swimming instructor is as hard on Anna as ever, accusing her of pacing herself so she never comes in first.

Isabel, the new, rainbow-haired girl at camp, doesn’t play by the rules. She kowtows to no one and says what she’s thinking. It’s unsettling for Anna to meet someone who always tells the truth.

Anna remains a moving target, keeping peace between Jennifer and plain-spoken Isabel, and convincing Karim she’s up to being his assistant. As someone whose name has never appeared on the list of the Top Five Girls You Hate, she is determined, above all, to get along.

Delta-based Gayle Friesen grew up in the Fraser Valley reading Little Women and Peter Pan. All three of her previous titles, Jenn’s Girl, Men of Stone and Losing Forever, have been selected by the New York Public Library for its Books for the Teen Age list.

Louise Donnelly writes from Vernon.
When children outgrow Piglet and Eeyore at the House of Pooh Corner, now there’s a nearby place to learn—gently—that everything in this world doesn’t always turn out right in the end.

It’s called Nannycatch Meadows.

And it’s in the Great Forest, across from Grotty Bottom, which is located between Sheepshank Knott and Pokey Edge. You can’t miss it, because James Heneghan and Bruce McBay have put a map at the outset of Nannycatch Chronicles. The marvellous place names of that map, such as Boggle Hole, Biskey Fen and Pussytoe Hollow, are derived from real villages that Heneghan and his wife discovered in the north of England during a recent walking tour.

Having collaborated with McBay on several books already, Heneghan was happy to lend a hand for a map at the outset of Nannycatch Chronicles. The drawings by Geraldo Valério are com fortingly familiar, teensy etchings of Chief Moose, a tea pot, Chipmunk, Robin and Bear. But the amusing and concise storylines in Nannycatch Chronicles are a tad different. More than a few of the charming critters die. Or rather, they get killed. Sometimes not entirely by accident, usually because Uncle Possum is as careless as he is callous.

The Nannycatch News carries the UP-SETTING news but it appears nobody can do much about such things.

Death, like a well-known four-letter word, happens. Good-hearted Possum can’t fix his Uncle Possum’s temper. “Uncle’s heart grows nastier and meaner every year,” he says. “He yells at babies, he doesn’t believe in Christmas or coloured crayons or bubblegum, and he never plays any games. Uncle Possum doesn’t know the meaning of fun.”

As a radical measure, Possum arranges for his uncle to have a heart operation to get it fixed. “If the operation is a success,” says Chipmunk, “perhaps your uncle will become a vegetarian like us.”

But no such luck. In Nannycatch, whimsy is seldom rewarded. The procedure fails and Uncle Possum remains as cantankerous as ever. A new highway is built by humans, making refugees of Possum’s friends. He tries to help everyone, heroically saving Old Weasel’s life. But fatal and near-fatal accidents continue. Skunk is killed when Uncle Possum hurls a book at him. Forced to try swimming, Swallow drowns. “Swallow swallowed a lot of water,” notes Woodpecker.

Nannycatch Meadows, like the real world, is a charming but dangerous place. Illustrated by little tombstones, there’s a Publisher’s Warning at the outset. “Everything dies: flowers, trees, elephants, bees, hamsters, turtles, dolphins, dogs, cats… Everything. Nothing lives forever. Everyone knows this.

Young readers, however, should guard against this book falling into the hands of grown-ups, many of whom get quite upset whenever the subject of death is mentioned. Don’t ask us why.”
PIRATES & PENANCE

Red Sea by Diane Tullson (Orca $7.95)

I n Red Sea, Diane Tullson’s
teen thriller about surviving
an attack by present-day pir-
ates, fourteen-year-old Libby is
an unwilling participant in a
year-long sailing trip with her
mother and stepfather. “I’ve
seen walk-in closets bigger
than our boat,” she complains, “but
it could be the Queen Mary
and still not be big enough.”

Their sailboat is named Mistaya,
meaning little bear. “I think it
means big mistake,” Libby
gripes. For five years Libby
has resented the addition of a
stepfather, Duncan, and she
pines for her 19-year-old boy-
friend. Then her problems re-
ally begin.

Having sailed from Djibouti
at the southern end of the Red
Sea, bound for the Suez Canal,
the threesome are attacked by
murderous pirates. Libby’s step-
father is shot and killed, the boat
is ransacked and Libby’s mother
is unconscious and disappear.

A storm convinces the pirates to
hastily depart. They knock Libby
unconscious and disappear.

When a robed man arrives and
raps on deck in her pyjamas,
Libby is in danger of being gang
ravaged by the masked invaders
in a sudden and maddening
attack. “Like most mortals I love
a good magic show,” says Schendlinger, “and another of
my favourite things is to read up on peo-
ple’s lives.”

After a year of research and a 90-de-
gree learning curve, Schendlinger
surprised herself by pulling a book out of a hat.

Prepare to Be Amazed consists of 10
stories of some of the most awesome ma-
gicians from the 1840s to the present.

Sorry, but the man they call Reev
doesn’t make the cut. Nor do Penn & Teller.

Along the way we also meet Chung
Ling Soo, who died onstage while perform-
ing the Bullet Catch trick, and
David Copperfield, known for his
daring illusionist for 47 years, inspired
the comic strip Mandrake, and died in 1993.

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cicians from the 1840s to the present.
longtime rancher and member of the Lower Similkameen Indian band, Harry Robinson was born in Oyama near Kelowna on October 8, 1900. He devoted much of the later part of his life to telling and re-telling Okanagan stories that he first heard from his partially blind grandmother Louise Newhmkin on her Chopaka ranch.

Childless and burdened by a hip injury in 1956, Harry Robinson sold his ranch in 1973, two years after Matilda died. On August 26, 1977, Robinson was living in retirement in a rented bungalow in Hedley when he met a non-Aboriginal graduate student from Nova Scotia, Wendy Wickwire, who was introduced by mutual friends.

On the evening before they all went to the Omak rodeo in Washington State, Harry Robinson launched into a story after dinner and continued until almost midnight. That experience drew Wickwire back to the Similkameen Valley for the next ten years, with her Uher reel-to-reel tape recorder, transcribing and editing Robinson’s stories until almost midnight. That experience drew Wickwire back to the Similkameen Valley for the next ten years, with her Uher reel-to-reel tape recorder, transcribing and editing Robinson’s stories.

For part of the 1970s, Wickwire lived in Hedley, waiting for her to climb into his old green pickup truck, and getting his mail, and hanging a coat on his hanger. “Eventually Harry Robinson needed full-time medical attention for a worsening leg ulcer. He moved to a senior citizens’ home in Keremeos. Later his condition deteriorated when his artificial hip dislodged.”

After a detailed study, I have decided that Aboriginal folk a century ago were likely telling much the same stories—but the collectors weren’t recording them very often. They weren’t interested in them because they saw them as “tarnished” stories. Franz Boas and his colleagues were looking for the authentic “traditional” stories. And of course they were busy defining authentic and traditional in their terms, for their own purposes.

A “good example of Harry’s ability to incorporate current events in a meaningful way in his stories,” writes Wickwire, “is his interpretation of the landing on the moon of the American astronauts.”

“Arresting was not the first to land on the moon. He had simply followed the path that the sun set. And as a result, Coyote’s son had learned about long ago, which is recorded in the old story “Coyote Plays a Dirty Trick.” In this story, Harry saw the earth rise and set and the moon rise and set as the Apollo mission, the two ‘strapping young men’ critical to Coyote’s sons return to earth.

Eventually Harry Robinson moved to a senior citizens’ home near Kelowna, in Westbank. “It was very sterile, very clinical,” Wickwire recalls. “He was using to driving his old pickup truck into town and getting his mail, and hanging a coat on his hanger.”}

The Wickwire/Robinson collaboration has produced three volumes of stories, Winning The Star (1989), a finalist for the Roderick Haig-Brown Regional Prize when Robinson was 89; Nature Power: In The Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller (1992), winner of the Rodnick-Haig Brown Regional Prize, and the newly released Liv- ing by Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory, winner of the Roderick Haig Brown Regional Prize when Robinson was 91; the Oral Traditions—so I have kept going it.

“Now Harry’s on the map.” The Wickwire/Robinson collaboration has produced three volumes of stories, Winning The Star (1989), a finalist for the Rodnick-Haig Brown Regional Prize when Robinson was 89; Nature Power: In The Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller (1992), winner of the Rodnick-Haig Brown Regional Prize, and the newly released Living by Stories: A Journey of Landscape and Memory, winner of the Roderick Haig Brown Regional Prize when Robinson was 91; the Oral Traditions—so I have kept going it.

“Once they discovered the true identity of Harry, he was a household name. He was invited to give public readings and lectures across Canada, for the Oral Traditions—so I have kept going it.

“Living by Stories veers away from ‘traditional’ First Nations’ narratives favoured by Franz Boas and other anthropologists. Other mentors included Mary Narcisse, reported to be 116 when she died in 1944, John Ashnola, who died during the 1939 flu epidemic at age 98, as well as Alex Skeuce, old Pierre and old Christine.

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“When I become to be six years old,” he said, “my grandmother told me the story of the canoe wind and the boy who was on it. I didn’t understand much of what she said. I was only eight or nine years old at the time. I didn’t think much of it.”

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As a child in the Fraser Valley, Al Carder stood in awe of the ancient forests, with Douglas fir trees that commonly reached heights of more than 300 feet. Sixty years later, after retiring from a career in plant biology and having received the Canada Centennial Medal for his contributions to Canadian agriculture, Carder has documented some of the largest trees in Western America in relation to tall trees in the rest of the world in Giant Trees of Western America and the World (Harbour $26.95). He includes information and scale drawings of B.C.’s 400-foot Lynn Valley fir, the tallest authentically measured Douglas fir ever felled, and California’s Eureka Tree, the tallest redwood. The greatest breast-high diameter of the bole of a red cedar ever recorded was 22.3 feet, that of the Ocasta Cedar felled near Grays Harbor, Washington, in 1906, and also a Sointula Cedar felled on Malcolm Island in 1923. Another western red cedar was so wide that eight men and women danced a quadrille on its stump in 1887. The tallest tree currently standing in North America is the Stratosphere Giant, a California redwood with a height of 369.8 feet. Carder previously published Forest Giants of the World, Past and Present (1-55017-363-4).

Upon his arrival in Vancouver from Austria in May of 1951, Hans Knapp (above) applied for work with The Loggers Agency and soon entered a world of fires, poker games and rats. Having recovered from a near-fatal accident in the woods, he has now penned a lively, ribald memoir of post-war logging camps, Loggers of the BC Coast (Hancock House $19.95) in which he concludes, “Logging seems to be an impossible task in a land where nothing seems to be impossible.” Knapp’s cast of supporting characters includes Axel the Scandihoovian, Rosie the homosexual logger, Sidewinder Rowley, Springboard Jack, Ha Ha Harry, Whispering Swede, The Grouch, Skookum Joe, Flash Harry, Arne the Bull, Hank the Finn, Big Gustav, Gimpy, Screwy Louis and the Coffee Queen. Loggers of the BC Coast (Hancock House $19.95).
Burton Cummings once sang, “American Woman, get away from me”… but ex-North Vancouverite Bryan Adams has turned away from hard rock to soft focus pix of rich, famous and distinguished women to raise money for breast cancer research. Having provided hardcover photo albums of Canadian women and British women, Adams has turned his non-Ansel eyes to the likes of Hillary Rodham Clinton (above right) and Lindsay Lohan (left) for American Women (Key Porter $60), a coffee table book in concert with designer Calvin Klein who is listed as co-author. Adams’ first book in the series, Made in Canada (Key Porter, 1999), benefited the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

This letter was sent to comfort the family of John Balfour Gray. Born in Trail, he was the first resident of Nelson to be killed in World War II.

**NEW BOOKS**

**Aperture cranked up to 10**

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“There have been many attempts to explain this murder…. None can come close to the narrative form of explanation provided by Rebecca Godfrey’s stunning new book….. Marvellous.” THE GLOBE AND MAIL

“A beautifully written, meticulously researched, compelling story.” TIMES COLONIST (VICTORIA)

From the Kootenays to Stalingrad to Hong Kong

Sylvia Crooks was three years old when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. Thereafter her hometown of Nelson, ‘Queen City of the Kootenays,’ with its population of 7,000, supported the war effort full bore. Crooks’ Homefront & Battlefront: Nelson BC in World War II (Granville Island $24.95) celebrates the sacrifices of a community that raised eight million dollars for Victory Bonds, shipped 17,000 pounds of clothing and eight tons of jam overseas, and lost 70 lives from the 1,300 men and women who enlisted after 1939. Nelson also sent more men to the Boer War per capita than any other comparable Canadian town and its 54th Kootenay Infantry Battalion suffered heavy losses in WW I.

This letter was sent to comfort the family of John Balfour Gray. Born in Trail, he was the first resident of Nelson to be killed in World War II.

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Fresh basil, clams & dogs

“I get really excited by ordinary things,” says Victoria tattoo shop owner Sarah Kramer, returning for her third vegan cookbook, La Dolce Vegan! Vegan Livin’ Made Easy (Arsenal $24.95). Kramer doesn’t mean raindrops on roses, brown paper packages tied up with strings or snowflakes that fall on her nose and eyelashes. She means, “the scent of fresh basil. The crunch of an empty sun-bleached clamshell as my foot runs across it on the beach. The deep, soft sigh of my dog as he’s about to fall asleep. The smell of my kitchen when I’m baking bread...” Going vegan, for Kramer, is not just about food; it’s also a lifestyle and an attitude. Her ebullient approach to self-marketing has helped turn How It All Vegan! and The Garden of Vegan into bestsellers. “La Dolce Vegan! comes at a time when I find myself multi-tasking to the nth degree,” she writes. “I’m busy running a tattoo shop, maintaining the GoVegan.net website, testing and creating recipes, taking photos, and making sure my dog and my husband get enough exercise... I don’t have a lot of free time to muck about in the kitchen, and I suspect you don’t either.”

Banana slugs & death in the library

Sarah Kramer

A food columnist for the Victoria Times Colonist since 1997, Galiano Islander Pam Freir mixes humour with humus in her first collection of recipes and wit, Laughing With My Mouth Full (HarperCollins $29.95). Raised in Nova Scotia, Freir has retired from her career as the creative director of an advertising agency to host a do-it-yourself Cornish Hen Stuffathon and concoct chapters with headings like Oh No! There’s Butter on the Honey Knife! “I want to ride a scooter and swim the length of the lake through duckweed when there’s a child at my side. I become an instant expert on baseball stats, banana slugs and who killed whom with a lead pipe in the library. And I am touched in tender spots I’d forgotten I possessed when I’m presented with the Harry Potter book they know I’ve not yet read. But, all things being equal, I’d rather eat with the grown-ups.”

Waterfront: The Illustrated Maritime Story of Greater Vancouver

“...This is a book for every British Columbian, indeed every Canadian, every newcomer and visitor. Of its genre, it is a masterpiece.” – Patrick Reid

Waterfront is a magnificently illustrated, authoritative and lively tour of the maritime history of Greater Vancouver, exploring the relationship between the water and the people that has shaped the region. The growth of maritime activity unfolds in its pages, as text and images focus on the history of Greater Vancouver’s waterfront.

I Stand for Canada: The Story of the Maple Leaf Flag

“This is a fascinating account of how we raised our own flag. I heartily recommend it to any Canadian who has a feeling for our country.” – Farley Mowat

I Stand for Canada is a stunning visual biography of Canada’s flag that traces the maple leaf from its origin to its acceptance as the unofficial but unmistakable emblem of Canada. Widely used in the 19th century, the maple leaf came into its own during World War I when Canada’s men in the trenches wore badges that incorporated a maple leaf into their design.

Books for CANADA

Available in all fine bookstores

Distributed by Publishers Group Canada
Hate in Haiti

Vanouver’s Anthony Fenton travelled to Haiti to conduct interviews for Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority (Fernwood $14.95), co-authored with Yves Engler, a Montreal activist who once played for the Chilliwack Chiefs of the B.C. Junior Hockey League.

Their book is described as “a cry to the citizens of rich countries to understand what is being done in our name to the descendants of the world’s only successful slave rebellion.”

Engler and Fenton claim interference in Haitian politics by Canada, the U.S. and France has led to thousands of deaths and deeper impoverishment.

Yves Engler has traced his evolution from a Concordia Student Union vice president and hockey player to political activist in Playing Left Wing: From Rink Rat to Student Radical (Fernwood $19.95). “My father learned how to be a journalist through his involvement in anti-apartheid and other activism,” he recalls, “and my mother’s commitment to community health arose from her upbringing and the terrible stress of not being respected and valued in a segregated society, the language, work, food and the terrible stress of not being respected by the new society.”

As a sewage system worker in Alberta, he worked with heavy equipment such as concrete drills and jackhammers, and developed a lymphatic tumour in his stomach eight years later. His physician told him he had three months to live in June of 1983.

Having worked for the socialist government of Allende, Mujica-Olea was one of the first 100 political prisoners exchanged for wheat in 1975. But when he became a Canadian citizen in Alberta in 1980, his troubles weren’t over. “Edmonton was a prison of snow,” he says, “in relation to the culture, the language, work, food and the terrible stress of not being respected by the new society.”

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Five more cancers were found in his body in 1984. Three more cancers were discovered in 1985. From his readings of books recommended by Dr. Abram Hoffer and Dr. Deanne M. Roberts, Mujica-Olea became convinced that Joe Robbins’ book Diet for a New America was correct in stating, “beef, pork and poultry industries help to cause cancer” due to chemicals and preservatives.

Mujica-Olea stopped eating animal products, but continued eating mussels and clams, blueberry bread, supplemented by vitamins (as directed by Dr. Linus Pauling). “Today, we walk together along the path of solitude / my cancer, my poetry and me,” he writes in You Love Killed My Cancer/Tu Amor Mato Mi Cancer (New Westminster: World Poetry Publishing $20), a self-published, bilingual collection that includes his detailed dietary advice.

Now living in New Westminster, Mujica-Olea founded The World Poetry Reading Show on Co-op Radio, 102.7 FM in 2001, a weekly show featuring multilingual, multicultural poets in the Vancouver area that provides a forum for immigrant poets to be heard in honour and respect. He and Ariadne Sawyer also co-founded and manage the World Poetry Reading Series at Vancouver Public Library, hosting more than 350 poets of differing ethnic backgrounds from more than 50 countries.

Mostly self-published, Mujica-Olea has written about his experiences of torture in a Pinchotin prison in From the Shadow of Death in Chile (2003) and Poems From the Soul of a Political Prisoner (2003), both published to mark the 30th anniversary of Allende’s overthrow with CIA complicity.

The former book is a diary derived from scraps of paper filled with tiny writing that were smuggled out of prison by family members. For more info, visit www.abcbookworld.com

Apes of the Planet

WORLD-RENOWED AS A PROTECTOR OF GRANUTANS, SFU ANTHROPOLOGIST and Indonesian conservationist Biruté Galdikas has followed her Orangutan Odyssey with Great Ape Odyssey (Harry N. Abrams $65), including 125 photographs of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and orangutans by Karl Ammann. It was the SFU Book of the Month for October.

Tu Amor Mato Mi Cancer

In the aftermath of the coup by Augusto Pinochet Ugarite that caused the deaths of approximately 30,000 Chileans, including the assassination of President Salvador Allende Gossens in 1973, Alejandro Raul Mujica-Olea came to Canada as a Chilean political refugee after two years of prison and torture.

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Cindy Oxenbury has returned to Book Warehouse to become Chief Operating Officer succeeding founding partner Sharman King, who will remain as CEO. Carol Dale and Louise Hager have closed Women In Print bookstore but will remain involved in the book trade with personal initiatives. Veteran bookseller Jim Allen and the cooperative owners of Granville Book Company also closed their doors this year. After many years at the UVic Bookstore, Sarah Harvey has taken a job as an editor for Orca publishers; her replacement is Jennifer Cameron. After keeping Ladysmith's Fraser & Naylor Bookstore afloat for many years, Douglas Fraser and Shirley Naylor have given way to their employee of many years, Frieda Douglas, who has changed the name to Salamander Books.

The B.C.-related nominees for the Governor General’s Awards in literature this year are:

FICTION:
- Charlotte Gill of Vancouver, for Ladykiller (Thomas Allen Publishers).
- Kathy Page of Salt Spring Island, for Alphabet (McArthur & Co.).
- Pamela Porter of Sidney, for The Crazy Man (Groundwood Books/ House of Anansi Press).

POETRY:
- W.H. New of Vancouver, for Underwood Log (Oolichan Books).
- Richard Olafson of Athens ON, for Return from Africa (D&M).

DRAMA:
- Daniel MacIvor of Toronto, for Cud-de-sac (Talonbooks).

NON-FICTION:
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- Richard Olafson and Trevor Carolan, the new Pacific Rim Review of Books will expand beyond its initial emphasis on authors pertaining to Ekstasis Editions for three issues per year.

TRANSLATION:
- Wayne Grady of Athens ON, for Return from Africa (D&M).
- Fred A. Reed and David Homel of Montreal, for All that Glitters (Talonbooks).

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE (Text):
- Barbara Nickel of Yarrow, for Hannah Waters and the Daughter of Johann Sebastian Bach (Penguin).
- Richard Olafson of Athens ON, for Return from Africa (D&M).

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE (Illustration):
- Murray Kimber of Nelson, for The Highwayman, text by Alfred Noyes (Kids Can Press).

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I love that you devoted half of the (BCBW Autumn) issue to fiction titles. I have only one complaint (and it’s a small one) and that is with W. P. Kinsella’s No Laughing Matters article in the Lookout section when he suggests that children’s literature is “picture books with pop-ups that one reads to pre-schoolers.”

I know that the opinions of your contributors don’t necessarily reflect the opinions of the staff of BC BookWorld, but I sure hope someone set him straight on that one. Thankfully Susan Juby gave him a thoughtful response, though I don’t know if it was enough to have educated him on the vast spectrum that is children’s lit...

Anyway, I’m finally going to do what I meant to do for years—subscribe to BC BookWorld. Deep Cove doesn’t have any outlets (that I’ve discovered) that carry your newspaper. Please keep up the great work! I discover so many books through your publication.

Shelley Hrditschka
North Vancouver

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I read with interest the interview with Noam Chomsky [BCBW Autumn]. Mr. Chomsky’s views are always challenging, and he can usually be trusted to look at issues with a brutally honest eye. One aspect of this article left me somewhat baffled, and that was the title, in headline format, in large red letters, which read as follows: Dissembling Fear. To dissemble means “to conceal or disguise” or “to give a false impression.” In other words, putting the dictionary aside and relying on everyday English, I will use the synonym “pretend.” So there we have it; to dissemble is to pretend. The title of the Noam Chomsky article tells us that fear is being dissembled. Someone, for some reason, is pretending to be afraid.

I perused the interview several times to see who it was that was pretending to be frightened. After all, the concept is counterintuitive—it is far more typical of human nature that one would pretend NOT to be afraid; there is little to be gained by pretending to be scared if we aren’t. Anyway, failing to find a single line in the text that conveyed the idea of fear-feigning, I came up with some theories. Perhaps your publication is one of those where the job of printing titles and headlines is relegated to one person who comes up with catchy hooks for everybody. That would, at least, exonerate the writer. Still, the question remains: what did the author of this huge scarlet malapropism really mean say? Disseminating Fear? The multinationals and warmongers could be accused of that. Disassembling Fear? Mr. Chomsky could be credited with attempting that. Whatever the explanation, I think the BC BookWorld editors overlooked a whopper—and I ain’t dissembling!

Nick Sullivan
Cumberland
"Coyote is to CanLit what k.d. lang is to country music."—OTTAWA X PRESS

LOOKOUT #22 • a forum for & about writers
3516 W. 13th Ave., Vancouver, BC V6R 2S3 • bookworld@telus.net

Ivan E. Coyote (above) has released three collections of humorous and usually autobiographical writing, Close to Spider Man (Arsenal, 2000), One Man’s Trash (Arsenal, 2002) and now Loose End (Arsenal $17.95). She recently moved to Squamish.

IF I WAS A GIRL
BY IVAN E. COYOTE

Last week, my cousin Dan’s girlfriend, Sarah, mentioned to my girlfriend that they were hiring at the restaurant she worked at on the Drive. “You should come in and apply. We would have too much fun, and the tips are good,” Sarah told her.

But my girlfriend already has a job, and the other hand, have been subsisting on a story-teller’s wage since I abruptly lost my job in the film industry, mostly due to my un-apologetic and appalling lack of respect for authority, and my visceral distaste for people who won’t stop talking about Los Angeles.

“Tips?” I perked up. “I can wait tables. Did it all the way through high school.”

Sarah shook her head. “No offence, I’ve, but my boss likes to hire, you know . . .”

She held two imaginary melons up in front of her chest. “. . . girls.”

Now, although it is true that I technically fall into the biologically female category, I do lack most of the requirements for membership in the feminine realm. And of her chest. “. . . girls.”

There’s something I need to tell you,” I said. We were drinking Earl Grey tea and talking about our earlier visit to the American border. “There’s something I need to tell you.”

“Sit up, for chrissakes, and put a long-sleeved shirt on.” I was shocked by her apparent lack of border angst. “You wanna get us pulled over?”

I forgot that she looked like a girl, and thus the rules were different for her. She had a better chance of crossing without incident if she didn’t put on the long-sleeved shirt. “Next time, let me drive,” she said calmly as we breezed through the border. “Sad, but true.”

We are in Shopper’s Drug Mart in the makeup section when another pro on the girl side presents itself: sixty-seven names for the colour red: heat wave red, firecracker red, code red, forward, blazing and nuance red, really winy red, vain stain, maraschino, downtown, and plumage red, and my favourite, Vampire State Building red. Not to mention prep’s cool peach or country club coral. Who knows?

Ivan E. Coyote

While I filled up, she went in to buy a snack. When I came inside to pay, the gas jockey, whom I have known for five years or so, was draped across the counter explaining the intricacies of Keno to my lovely companion. She was drinking a Slurpee. I had to drag her away to pay for my gas.

“That’ll be $22.50,” he tells me, still distracted by the fascinating world of lottery odds. “I’ll get that too,” I added, motioning toward her Slurpee.

“Don’t worry about that,” he said, waving his hand like a magician, “that’s on me.”

Five years I buy gas from him and Sharpees never grow on trees until I bring the redhead in.

We talked about it in the car, and the whole time we were buying groceries: the pros and cons of girlery versus boydom. She gets free Sharpees, but deals with harassment twenty-four seven. I get free and searches at border crossings, but have to change my own tires.

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Ivan E. Coyote
Swiss family Blanchet
A mother’s sailing memoir remains a coastal classic after 13 printings.

The indomitable ‘Capi’ (i.e. captain of Caprice) was hard-pressed to make ends meet. Each year she rented her home and set off in Caprice with her children for five months of exploration. The family investigated Indian settlements, canneries, marine stores, floating log booms and traced the voyages of Captain George Vancouver, keeping a copy of his diary aboard. Blanchet rejected conventional notions of fashion for women and wasn’t afraid to get her hands dirty. “Engines are used to being sworn at, and emphysema and the damp climate, she reportedly sat with her head inside her oil stove for 20 minutes each day.

The Curve of Time began as a series of articles for Blackwoods Magazine in London, England, before it became a book in 1961. Its unusual title was derived from The Fourth Dimension by Maurice Maeterlinck, who viewed time as a curve. At its height, one can simultaneously view the past, present and future.

On September 30, 1961, Capi Blanchet was found dead at her type writer, having suffered a heart attack at age 70.

Blanchet’s neighbour and friend Gray Campbell of Sidney released the first Canadian edition of The Curve of Time in 1968. It sold for $1.95.

Edith Iglauer Daly has written about Blanchet in Rainbow Chronicle. Rosemary Neering has provided a profile in Wild War Women.
And you thought all academic books were dull? From Sigmund Freud’s theories on penis envy to the desires of “testosterone-taking third-sexers,” Carellin Brooks examines the proliferation of “phallic feminine figures” in North American and European writing since the end of the 19th century in Every Inch a Woman: Phallic Possession, Femininity, and the Text (UBC Press $85).

Her penetrating study of gender-bending penetration will be a far cry from Canadian actress Kim Cattrall’s attempt to capitalize on her Sex in the City sexpot role with Sexual Intelligence (Greystone $34.95), an alluring tie-in to a television special.

Third Sexers & Intelligence in the City

Having worked as Chief Collector at the Vancouver Aquarium and as a fish culturalist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada for many years, Andy Lamb of Theytus Island has been a scuba diver for forty years, including 28 years in the company of underwater photographer Bernard P. Hanby. The pair has combined their knowledge from 4,000 scuba dives to co-found the Marine Life Sanctuaries Society of British Columbia, a non-governmental agency to encourage the establishment of a network of ‘No-Take’ marine protected areas. As well, with more than 1,700 colour photos of some 1,400 saltwater seaweeds and animals, Lamb and Hanby’s new Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest: A Photographic Encyclopedia of Invertebrates, Seaweeds and Selected Fishes (Harbour $69.95) is touted as the most comprehensive and up-to-date collection of Pacific marine life photos ever produced. It follows Lamb’s Coastal Fishes of the Pacific Northwest.

Histories & Anatomies

With 370 maps charting the growth of Vancouver and its environs, Derek Hayes’ sixth intensively detailed historical atlas and his eighth book, Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley (D&M $49.95), traces the region’s development from the days when Vancouver’s predecessor, the village of Granville, with 30 buildings, was divided into lots in 1882 for a city to be called Liverpool.

What’s wrong with this picture?

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James Delgado makes clear in Waterfront: The Illustrated Maritime Story of Greater Vancouver (Stanton, Atkins & Dosil $45), it was the Spanish explorer José María Narváez who made the first recorded European visit to English Bay in 1791; George Vancouver arrived the following year and made the first European entrance to what he called “Burrard’s Canal” after a former shipmate Sir Harry Burrard-Neale, passing the Squamish settlement of Wh’müllutsthun on June 13, 1792. Delgado credits Len McCann’s “sleuthing” and numerous others for his survey of the harbour’s history.

Third Sexers & Intelligence in the City

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In a brave new world of palm pilots and email, it’s getting harder and harder to pretend you’re Harrison Ford in Raiders of the Lost Ark. A new breed of travel writers nonetheless keeps trying, flying off in all directions with their Tilley hats and laptops, would-be Heyerdahls with VISA cards in their pockets.

Bruce Kirkby isn’t quite like that. At 22, Kirkby left his mind-numbing job at Ontario Hydro to take a solo bicycle trip along the newly opened Karakoram Highway in northern Pakistan. A contributor to National Geographic who tackled Everest in 1997, Kirkby wrote his first book, Sand Dance, as a member of the first expedition to cross the Empty Quarter of the Sahara since the 1930s, learning some Arabic beforehand. It was only one of his adventures.

More philosophical than self-inflating, The Dolphin’s Tooth: A Decade in Search of Adventure ($34.99) is Kirkby’s well-edited summary of globe-trotting to Ethiopia, Arabia, Nepal, Belize, Tashkent, Swiss Alps, Burma, Tibet and Nepal. About one-third of his memoirs describes travels within Canada, chiefly along the B.C. coast, in the Rockies and in the Arctic.

Quoting Carl Jung and Albert Camus is all very well, but Kirkby has wisely chosen The Dolphin’s Tooth for a title, thereby obliging reviewers to mention his encounter with a local man who gave him a dolphin’s tooth when he was kayaking in the Andaman Sea (off Phuket, Thailand). “Always remember that the dolphin still dreams of freedom,” he was told.

The Catch-22-like notion that freedom can pursued by concocting risky adventures is, of course, far from freeing, and the quest-driven Kirkby seems to fully understand his psychic predicament as an adrenaline junkie. Along the way, his camera equipment was stolen in Belize City (one of the least safe cities in the Americas) and he lost a Swedish girlfriend named Cecilia.

“I never blamed guiding,” he writes, “because I never saw it as a choice between my lifestyle and our love. Feeling young and immortal, I was just too consumed with my search to imagine any other way.”

A gifted photographer along the lines of veteran climber Patrick Morrow, Kirkby is not another ‘creative non-fiction’ writer who has taken a brief trip to an exotic place and produced a thick book; he is an outdoorsman who has taken a lot of excursions and produced a concise summary. When he’s not travelling, he lives in Kimberley, B.C.

The privatisations and land grabs are usually locked in before the local population knows what hit them...

“Hundreds of thousands of people are being forcibly relocated inland. The coast is not being rebuilt as it was dotted with fishing villages and beaches strewn with handmade nets. Instead, the Sri Lankan government, corporations and foreign donors are teaming up to rebuild it as they would like it to be: the beaches as playgrounds for tourists, the oceans as watery mines for corporate fishing fleets, both serviced by privatized airports and highways built on borrowed money.”

Tsunami Journey has also been published in a Tamil version. Walker is now raising money to build ten more community schools, at $4,000 per school, and urging Canadians to become directly involved in relief, avoiding VISA and Mastercard, if possible.

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Len Walker can be reached at lenwalker@yvnonet.com Published by Tsunami Haven Pre-Schools, Qualicum Beach, B.C. V9K 1S7

As a practical idealist who “cut through red tape” in order to provide direct assistance, Walker, 60, now fears a second wave of reconstruction will be “much larger than the wave itself.” He reproduces a Naomi Klein article that suggests corruption and incompetence are masking a much deeper scandal: “the rise of a predatory form of disaster capitalism that uses the desperation and fear created by catastrophe to engage in radical social and economic engineering.”

Walker’s uplifting memoir takes a bad news detour. Just as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund recently forced Sierra Leone, the world’s second-poorest country, to privatize its resources, including water, the reconstruction industry in Sri Lanka, with the complicity of foreign aid, has been working so quickly that, in Klein’s words, 

When you jump over the edge, you are bound to land somewhere.”
— D.H. LAWRENCE
Norval Morrisseau:
Return to the House of Invention (Key Porter, $45) is a revised version of a 1997 volume re-released in conjunction with the new Toronto exhibit of Morrisseau’s work.

Morrisseau has also provided illustrations for Windigo and Other Tales of the Ojibways (1969) but he has published few books largely due to difficulties negotiating business terms. Other titles are Legends of My People: The Great Ojibway (1980) and Travel to the House of Invention (1997). His former manager Jack Pollock co-edited The Art of Norval Morrisseau (1979) with Lister Sinclair.

Norval Morrisseau has had a profound influence on the work of other Canadian Aboriginal artists, particularly Daphne Odjig, Jackson Beardy and Joshim Kakegamic.

“Morrisseau was committed, from the very start, to preserving the stories and myths of his people,” says documentary filmmaker Paul Carvalho. “He never wavered. As troubled as his life was, he also went through it with this incredible sense of mission.”


He suffered another stroke in 1996, moved to Nanaimo in 1999 and has not painted since 2000. Afflicted with Parkinson’s disease, he moved into the home of friends in Nanaimo in 2002, then transferred to Nanaimo nursing home in 2004, confined to a wheelchair.

“Seldom considered a British Columbian, Norval Morrisseau of Nanaimo has been called the “Picasso of the North” and the greatest painter Canada has ever produced.”

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**Astral Beings (1991) by Norval Morrisseau**

A recipient of the Order of Canada in 2004, confined to a wheelchair. [534x381]He suffered another stroke in 1996, moved to Nanaimo in 1999 and has not painted since 2000. Afflicted with Parkinson’s disease, he moved into the home of friends in Nanaimo in 2002, then transferred to Nanaimo nursing home in 2004, confined to a wheelchair.

**The Astral Travels of Norval Morrisseau**

Seldom considered a British Columbian, Norval Morrisseau of Nanaimo has been called the “Picasso of the North” and the greatest painter Canada has ever produced.
Upon his arrival at Fort Victoria, John Muir, at age 50, selected one hundred acres of land in Sooke. He chose the property because it reminded him of Loch Lomond in Scotland. The harbour and its surrounding territory, inhabited for centuries by the native T'Sou-ke, was only accessible from the main colony of Fort Victoria by canoe.

While fulfilling his HBC obligations as a coal miner at Fort Rupert on Vancouver Island, Muir organized the first labour strike in B.C. history in 1849 to object to working conditions and inadequate pay. After a brief imprisonment, Muir homesteaded on his Sooke farm named Woodside, where he built the island's first steam-operated sawmill. While building a fleet of ships Muir became the largest exporter of lumber to South America, Asia and supplied wood for sailing ships and buildings around the world, like many vessels loaded to excess by greedy owners, sank as it entered the seas of the open Pacific.

In a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Douglas slandered Staines as "a violent party man, prudent neither in his conduct nor associations." Nevertheless, the fact that Douglas was in conflict of interest must have been noted in Britain, for the severance of his connection with the HBC was soon made a condition of his becoming Governor of B.C.

The two antagonists eventually reached some accommodation. Governor Douglas attended a wedding in Metchosin at the Blinkhorn homestead, or Bilston Farm as it was known, in spite of the presence of those who had tried to depose him. To Muir's credit he was fair-minded enough to admit at last, "I must confess he proved himself a man of vision over the long haul."

While this account is dominated by two men, there are numerous colourful figures from the colonial period such as William Alexander Smith, better known by his adopted name of Amor De Cosmos, who became editor of the British Colonist. He targeted Douglas' abuses and became the second premier of British Columbia, after John McCreight.

Ashby also introduces Muir's neighbour, Captain Walter Colquhoun Grant, usually described as the first independent settler on Vancouver Island and the first within the whole colonial region. Grant arrived at Fort Victoria in August of 1849—after Muir—and proceeded to join his eight labourers who were clearing a farm about 40 km from the fort, at Sooke (having likely arrived on the ship that brought Muir). Grant's wish to turn the area into a Scottish settlement was so strong that he tried to teach the Aboriginals to speak Gaelic.

After a brief prospecting trip to the Oregon territories, Grant liquidated his Sooke holdings and returned to Scotland in 1855. To the Victoria Open School he gave his beloved croquet set in the hopes that the students would play the sport in his absence—but his second gift was a more dubious one. He gave the Muir family three bushes of Scotch broom from the Sandwich Islands. These fast-spreading plants were a gift to Grant from the British Consul in Honolulu, who in turn had bought them in Tasmania. "That," says Muir, "may explain why they proliferated in the devilish way they did."

A Member of the First Legislative Assembly on Vancouver Island, John Muir died in Sooke on April 4, 1883. During ten years of research, Daryl Ashby of Victoria found the Muir's original Fort Rupert homeite and the site of the first Muir sawmill in Sooke.

Joan Givner writes from Mill Bay on Vancouver Island.
“Every city has its distinct history of rioting,” he says. “... I decided to pursue the subject after the APEC riots made it clear that the local political economy was ignored in favour of a ‘bad apple’ explanation, which only further obscured the causes and events leading up to the riot.”

Barnholmen, publisher of The Rain Review of Books, proposes an equivalent of the London River Re-enactment Society in order to stage re-enactments that will make historical events live again. His roster of riots includes the Anti-Asian riots of 1907, the B.C. Penitentiary riots of 1934 and 1938, the Rolling Stones riot of 1972, the Ginn’s Rose riot of 2002 and the Punk Rock riot of 2004.

In the riot that followed the occupation of the Vancouver Post Office by the unemployed in 1935, Steve Brodie (left) was singed out by police officials.

Raising the bar

Most book reviewing is biased, or else bordering on self-advertisement. But not all.

Linda Rogers’ nifty George Fetherling and his Work (Toronto: Tightrope $14.95) has gathered a variety of articles and appreciations of Fetherling and his work. “Not out of altruism, out to everybody else than they are to me,” he once said. “... I decided to pur-

George Fetherling

Ryszard Dubanski

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Linda Rogers’ nifty George Fetherling and his Work (Toronto: Tightrope $14.95) has gathered a variety of articles and appreciations of Fetherling and his work. “Not out of altruism, out to everybody else than they are to me,” he once said. “Not out of altruism, out of purely selfish motives of making myself feel better. And some people, by their nastiness, make it much easier for me to be nicer to them than they do to me.” Fetherling fans in Rogers’ compilation include John Burns, George Elliott Clarke, W.H. New, Brian Busby and Rhonda Batchelor (who recalls why her late husband Charles sent Fetherling her golden pomegranate dart, “denoted from long use and nicely oxidized,” before he died.)
Compiled with Greg Dickson of CBC Radio, Mark Forsythe’s BC Almanac Book of Greatest British Columbians (Harbour $39.95) includes entries for the likes of Emily Carr, Terry Fox and W.A.C. Bennett, plus the man who gave the world the egg carton. Joseph Leopold Coyle, who lived in tiny Aldermere, a community close to Smithers, evidently invented the egg carton in 1911 after a local rancher named Gabriel Lecroix was having difficulty shipping his eggs intact to the Aldermere Hotel near present-day Telkwa.

The rancher and the hotelier were forever squabbling about who was responsible for the broken eggs. Coyle, who owned and ran the local newspaper, was privy to this bickering and decided to fix the problem. Having taught himself how to construct most of the machinery necessary to produce Smithers’ first newspaper, the Interior News (still publishing today), Coyle, a do-it-yourselfer, was a man who relished a challenge. After he designed his paper prototype of the modern egg carton, he sold his newspaper in 1918 and moved to New Westminster to mass-produce his product with the help of United Paper Products, eager to make a fortune. It was not to be. Coyle ran low on funds, sold his patent, and died in New Westminster, so un-sung that his name does not appear in the first edition of the Encyclopedia of B.C., but his archives are at the Bulkley Valley Museum.

Coyle’s little-known story emerged after Mark Forsythe requested his province-wide listeners to submit nominations for the 100 Greatest British Columbians. Suggestions from the public were augmented by invited submissions from provincial experts to complete Forsythe’s second book project.

Barrie Sanford was entranced by the opening and closing of the New Westminster train bridge as a child. The allure of that bridge has remained so strong that Sanford and his bride were recently married on a train nearby the bridge. Having long ago acquired his engineering degree, Sanford has yet to satisfy his childhood ambition to design a bridge, but he has published several successful books about railroads—including his newly released Royal Metal: The People, Times and Trains of New Westminster Bridge (Sandhill / National Railway Historical Society $39.95).

Betrayal
Betrayal is the story of Eva, a dynamic, successful young mother who is forced to reassess her marriage when her husband’s apathy can no longer be ignored. Karin Alvtegen is a bestselling crime writer from Sweden.

Fiction • $22.00

On Beauty
Set on both sides of the Atlantic, Zadie Smith’s third novel is a brilliant look at family life, marriage, the collision of the personal and political, and an honest look at people’s self-deceptions. It is also, as you might expect, very funny indeed. A Man Booker finalist.

Fiction • $34.00

Runaway
Winner of the Giller prize, the rapturously acclaimed Runaway is a book of extraordinary stories about love and its infinite betrayals and surprises—stories as vivid and fragile as our own lives.

Fiction • $22.00

Penguin Group (Canada) • www.penguin.ca
Friends who are authors in the northern B.C. literary scene told George Sipos the greatest excitement for any new author is having that first book arrive at your door, holding it for the first time. He’s not so sure about that.

Recently a box arrived at the Sipos home in Prince George after dark, brought by a dedicated delivery man who found no one at Sipos’ address during the day and had retraced his steps later that evening, with his wife and children in tow. “It was certainly an auspicious moment,” says Sipos. “But it wasn’t an ecstatic, erotic epiphany.”

That’s partly because George Sipos, a former bookseller who was no stranger to the feel of a new book, had worked closely with an editor and poet, Sue Sinclair, in the preceding months to whip Anything but the Moon (Goose Lane $17.95) into shape. For Sipos, the wonderfully philosophical discussions on the placement of a comma during the six months he and Sinclair had pored over the manuscript—“a long, protracted, interesting, pleasurable”—was more fulfilling. That editorial exercise culminated in a trip to Toronto where Sipos sat “eyeball to eyeball” with Sinclair, a fellow poet he had met at the Banff Writing Studio. Months later Sipos got an email from the publisher with suggestions for cover artwork. There was another prolonged period until the proofs came in the mail, accompanied by some terse instructions to get them back promptly.

“Getting published is great,” he laughs. “Don’t get me wrong.” But for Sipos getting there was more than half the fun.

After moving to Prince George in 1979, George Sipos and his wife Bridget soon realized they were bringing back hundreds of dollars worth of books whenever they went to Vancouver. Coles and Woodward’s had the only book outlets in town so Sipos began selling books from his home.

In the late 1980s, he borrowed $1,000 from a friend and opened a storefront location named Mosquito Books. The bookstore soon became a major focus for literary activity in central B.C., hosting literary readings that included visits by renowned dissident Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko and novelist Timothy Findlay. Sipos fondly remembers the caravan of fans led by booksellers David and Janet Walford from Mountain Eagle Books in Smithers who trooped four hours down Highway 16 with banners waving, “Timothy Findlay or Bust.”

Many of the poems in Anything but the Moon are concerned with memory and how this changes the past. All are rooted in the landscapes and experiences of the north. “By God, there’s a lot of weather in them,” he laughs. He describes his own work as mostly lyrical, as opposed to post-modern “mucking about with language.”

Currently Sipos is editing the work of a fellow poet, Gillian Wigmores, a younger writer from Vanderhoof whose first book will be Home When it Moves You (Creekstone $20). Donna Kane of Dawson Creek will be handmaking each of the 100 copies using golden-coloured papyrus and indigo tissue paper to echo Wigmores’ poems set among the lakes and rivers of northern B.C.

As one door closes, another opens. On December 31, 2004, Sipos closed Mosquito Books after 19 years. It was a hard thing to do, he says, but it was a response to getting older and the difficulties of selling books in Canada. He lamented the recent closure of other great independent bookstores, such as

The late Timothy Findlay (centre) attracted a caravan of literary fans from Smithers for an event at Mosquito Books organized by George Sipos in 1993.
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Weeding is next to godliness

We have to get ourselves back to the garden, Joni Mitchell said. And if you bypass the church along the way, well, you’re in good company. Few Canadians attend church regularly, but most believe spirituality is a force within their lives. In The Spiritual-Ity of Gardening (Northstone $40), Donna Sinclair explores how gardening can be a deeply spiritual experience. “Gardening,” she says, “is kin to what some do in church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or around a sacred fire: praying, singing, kneeling. It is holy ritual, a sacred connection between people and the natural world, discussing the garden as a place for balance and harmony, memory and hope, healing and acceptance. Sinclair writes for the United Church Observer.

Like mother, like daughter

Murder mystery novelist Ellen Godfrey won an Edgar Allan Poe Mystery Writers of America special award for true crime after writing By Reason of Doubt (Clarke, Irwin, 1981), her coverage of the Swiss trial of a UBC professor named Cyril Belshaw, a renowned anthropologist, who was accused and acquitted of murdering his wife in Switzerland and leaving her body in a ravine. Fast forward 14 years and Rebecca Godfrey, her daughter, has followed a first novel, The Torn Skirt, with a true crime investigation of a brutal killing and its aftermath in which teenagers were accused of leaving their victim’s body under a bridge. Rebecca Godfrey, now a New York-based journalist, has profiled the characters involved in the beating death of 14-year-old Reena Virk of Victoria on November 14, 1997, for Under the Bridge: The True Story of the Murder of Reena Virk (HarperCollins $32.95). Godfrey attended the trials of Kelly Ellard and also interviewed Warren Glowatski, both convicted in the case.

Ellen is back, this time with literary ambitions in...

Ellen Fremedon: JOURNALIST by Joan Givner


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