th wun nd onlee
bill bissett
Winner of the George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award. SEE P. 13
The name of British Columbia is no longer relevant—if it ever was—so why don’t we have a conversation about changing it? It’s a literary issue that a mature society ought to be able to understand.

If you’re a Chinese British Columbian, or someone from one of our First Nations, or, let’s say, someone who has Japanese or German or Dutch or Bengali ancestors, does the name British Columbia sit well with you? As Peter Newman has observed, roast beef is now an ethnic dish.

You’ll discover that the Columbia in British Columbia is NOT derived from Christopher Columbus.

Yes, Queen Victoria reputedly chose the name British Columbia by joining the adjective British to the northerly portion of the Columbia fur trading district. Yes, the Columbia fur trading district, in turn, derived its name from the Columbia River.

Yes, the river was named on May 12, 1792 after the ship Columbia Rediviva, that belonged to the American sea captain Robert Gray, who was allegedly the first ‘white’ man to navigate up the mouth of that river on May 11, 1792 (a Spaniard got there before him, but that’s usually overlooked).

But Gray’s ship was not named in honour of Columbia, the explorer, as most people would guess. According to Wikipedia: “Columbia Rediviva was a privately owned sloop under Captain Robert Gray. The ship is usually known in history simply as the Columbia, which was sent to the Pacific Northwest to trade for fur. The ship is named for one of the three patron saints of Ireland, St. Columb, or St. Columbia, a great Irish sailor who had the gumption to found a monastery on the island of Iona in Scotland in the sixth century A.D.”

Most British Columbians don’t know, and they couldn’t care less, that a British monarch named an adjective that connotes imperialism with a noun derived from an Irish saint to define where and who we are.

America, after all, is named for the Italian merchant Amerigo Vespucci simply because a German cartographer named Martin Waldseemüller produced a world map in 1507 that named the newly discovered continent after Vespucci’s first name.

The name of the Pacific Ocean is similarly ludicrous. According to Magellan successfully navigated those straits near the bottom of the Americas, he happened to reach the new ocean on a day when it was unusually calm, or ‘passive,’ hence the name Pacific was born—an absurdity if you’ve ever ventured very far from this coast in any kind of boat.

Names are often nonsensical. But in 2007, can we at least have some discussion about the name of our province? The very idea of possibly changing the name of British Columbia is cultural heresy in some people’s minds but surely it’s about time for some sober reflection on this issue.

I think it is unlikely Queen Victoria (who was 39 in 1858 and given to strong opinions on such issues as naming and protocol) wanted to name the new colony after an American ship or an Irish saint, writes Howard White, publisher of the Encyclopaedia of British Columbia. “I think she had in mind that Columbia was appropriate because it was the name used by geographers for all of the new lands discovered by Columbus, (it was commonly used as a rhetorical name for the US).”

As this year’s Shadbolt Fellow at Simon Fraser University, Alan Twigg is mandated to generate some healthy debate on public and social matters, and to serve as a bridge between academia and the general public. His forthcoming book is Full-Time: A Canadian Soccer Adventure (Douglas Gibson Books/M&S), available in the spring of 2008.

Reckoning 07

ALAN TWIGG

TO ADVERTISE CALL 604-736-4011
A nephew of Tseshaht artist and author George Clutesi, Randy Fred founded Canada’s first Aboriginal-owned and operated publishing company, Theytus Books, in 1980, based in Nanaimo. Here Randy Fred shares memories of his Alberni Valley uncle who wrote Son of Raven, Son of Deer, a ground-breaking work published by Gray Campbell, the province’s first trade publisher.

I remember Uncle Georgie was so very gentle. His voice had a bit of a rasp due to tuberculosis from his younger years. He was quick to smile. His humour was subtle. He hated politics. He was not one to attend Band meetings as they tended to be so confrontational. He knew there was corruption in our office. He was quick to smile. His humour was subtle. He hated politics. He was not one to attend Band meetings as they tended to be so confrontational. He knew there was corruption in our office. He was always very forthright in his hand, was always very forthright in his hand, was always very forthright in his hand, was always very forthright in his hand. Nevertheless, she, too, felt powerless and avoided the political arena.

His wife, Margaret, on the other hand, was always very forthright in her opinions. She was not afraid to call a crook a crook. Nevertheless, she, too, felt powerless and avoided the political arena. Margaret was simply honest. I used to chuckle to myself when I would visit the arena.

I was glad Uncle and Auntie didn’t hold anything against me for the failure of the project. Instead, our relationship improved sufficiently. It was no longer taboo to share our culture.

Father Georgie’s trailblazing allowed me to work in communications. By the time I started Theytus Books Ltd. much of the jealousy towards him and the negative feelings about his work had diminished sufficiently. It was no longer taboo to share our culture.

Like many creative people, George and Margaret had both been ripped off at times. It took a lot of convincing to finally get them to agree to allow me and Theytus Books Ltd. to publish The Art of George Clutesi.

What a nightmare! George had entrusted all his written collections and archival materials to a supposed writer, a non-Native who had gained George and Margaret’s trust. That project never did reach publication.

She lied to us about her progress with the material to the Clutesis. She lied to us about her progress with the material to the Clutesis. She lied to us about her progress with the material to the Clutesis. I was dumbfounded. I knew I loved the songs and dances. I did not know then I was feeling shame about being Indian. I never pressured me.

Today Tseshaht people appreciate what Uncle Georgie did. However, in the beginning they ostracized him for his cultural work.

—from Reckoning 07 by Randy Fred

George Clutesi

In 2005 Randy Fred received the Gray Campbell Distinguished Service Award for his outstanding contribution to the development of writing and publishing in B.C. He recently returned from the BC Disability Games in Powell River, where he won the gold medal for B-1 Visually Impaired Lawn Bowling. He lives in Nanaimo.
HOW THE WEST WAS WRITTEN

s the author of The West Beyond the West and numerous other history titles, Jean Barman has energetically served as a vital catalyst for historical and heritage endeavors in B.C. for 25 years. In preparation for the Reckoning 07 conference at Simon Fraser University, we asked her to look over her shoulder and describe how she evolved into one of the province's leading historians.

The beginning of BC BookWorld two years later consolidated the tremendous changes underway.

The complexities of writing and publishing British Columbian history came home to me as the decade was drawing to a close.

With the emergence of B.C. publishers, the past was being regionalized, whereas previously it was mostly tacked onto the history of the nation.

Having been invited to write a distance education course on B.C. history, I decided to seek publication and found myself having to choose between a leading B.C. publisher I much admired and University of Toronto Press.

To publish in B.C. foretold a regional history, whereas emanation from Toronto would insert the province's history into a national canon. The ambivalence with which I opted for nation over region has been lessened by the appearance of The West beyond the West in a third edition this year, having gained a national audience.

A new dilemma arose: History is usually written by the winners. Their lives comprise the archival collections, and historically these have been white men enjoying political and economic privileges. So long as we relied on the materials at hand, we were telling the same old stories.

My appreciation of Raincoast Chronicles and Sound Heritage, together with my experiences co-editing three volumes on Aboriginal education and serving almost a decade on the board of BC Heritage Trust, turned my attention to the potential in everyday sources of information, ranging from letters to oral testimony in the form of human memory.

The consequence has been, in my case, several books, as well as articles, focusing on the workings of gender and race in British Columbia's past. Having learned from The West beyond the West, I sought to ensure, as we all need to do, that publishers reflect the books' intended audiences.

Constance Lindsay Skinner: Writing on the Frontier, which follows a B.C. writer to early 20th-century Los Angeles and New York, and Sojourners Sisters: The Lives and Letters of Jessie and Annie McQueen, about two young Mariners come west, went to University of Toronto Press to ensure that British Columbian history continues to be mainlined. In order to return their story home, Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898, co-written with Bruce Watson, was published by University of Hawai'i Press.

In other cases, a B.C. publisher mattered. Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwestern Coast, co-written with Jan Hare, appeared with UBC Press as a reminder that the entire province is integral to British Columbian history. Maria Mabofof the Islands was placed with New Star and The Remarkable Adventures of Por-tuguese Joe Silverly and Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point with Harbour so that descendants whose oral testimonies made the three books possible would have maximum access and all British Columbians would know their stories matter.

The transformation in writing and publishing British Columbian history over the past three decades has been possible only because many, many persons have decided this place matters. Our publishers have repeatedly demonstrated their sensitivity to the province's history. By writers opting to publish regionally, as well as nationally and internationally, British Columbia's past has become far better known than it was a generation ago.

But we still have a long way to go.

Jean Barman is working on two book manuscripts, tentatively entitled "Lost British Columbia: A History of Aboriginal Interacativity" and "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in 19th Century British Columbia." She and Bruce Watson are also in the midst of a research project tracking the French-Canadian and Iroquois contribution to the fur trade and to the making of the Pacific Northwest.

Thirty-five years ago, when Pelé came to Vancouver, only the Barman family showed up to greet him.
the Golden Age of BC book culture has been reached, the Encyclopedia of British Columbia, published in 2000, was arguably its summit. Here its editor Daniel Francis recounts the origins of one of the most culturally important books from and about B.C.

"I don't really know what mixture of blind confidence and pigheadedness made me think anything was going to come of it."

— DANIEL FRANCIS

The ebc began as the gezi an idea shared between the publisher Howard White and myself during a freak snowstorm on the highway south of Vancouver. (This is my version of the story, of course; Howard will have his own.) Howard and I had been to White Rock on an errand of a completely different sort. We had been visiting an elderly union organizer whose memoirs I was supposed to be ghosting and Howard was expecting to publish. But I turned out to be insufficiently communist for the old firebrand to like, and the project died on his living room rug. While we inched our way down the slippery highway back to the city, we began to cook up another scheme.

At the time—1990—Howard and I were not the good friends we subsequently became. We had been students at UBC at the same time during the 1960s but had not met there. Following university, I married and moved to eastern Canada to live. When we finally did meet, it was in the offices of the Stern Gallery in Montreal in 1986. I was living in the city and Howard was there on business. I commissioned from him for the magazine I was then editing. When I returned to the coast the following year, I began performing freelance editorial chores for Harbour.

As we made our snow-impeded way in from White Rock that fateful day, it turned out that both Howie and I had been mulling over a similar idea, some sort of a compendium of information about British Columbia. This kind of project seemed to flow naturally from my own recent involvement in Mel Hurtig’s various incarnations of the Canadian Encyclopedia. Meanwhile, Howie had been contemplating a sort of traveller’s guide to the province, inspired by a California guidebook he had seen. From this basis, the EBC began to take shape in our minds as a one-stop guide to all things British Columbian; as Howie put it in his foreword to the book, “everything from BC soup to BC nuts,” or, as it turned out, everything from abalone to George Zukerman.

As I say, it was 1990. Looking back, I calculated that in 1992 much would be made about the bicentennial. It seemed to me the time was right. I put my hand in my pocket and pulled out a dime.

I don’t really know what mixture of blind confidence and pigheadedness made me think anything was going to come of it. Somewhere along the way I read the biography of James Murray, editor of the Oxford English Dictionary. The image of him pigeonholing his word definitions in the great iron Scriptorium he had built for the project seemed depressing. When Murray embarked on the project in 1879, its promoters expected that the OED would take ten years to complete. Five years later he and his team had reached the word “ants.” When the famed editor died in 1915, the dictionary was still not finished. I hoped to live long enough to see the end of the EBC, but there was no guarantee.

Periodically I would drive up to see Howie in Madeira Park to have another planning session. The entries were in my computer, of course, but I made printouts and took them along to impress him with my progress. As the number of boxes of paper I heaved out of my trunk grew, so did our realization that maybe, just maybe, the book might become a reality.

And it worked.

The ebc was born, I calculated that in 1992 much would be made about the 200th anniversary of Captain Vancouver’s arrival on the coast. The public coffers could open, I thought, to support commemorative projects, of which ours could be one. Here I made two rookie mistakes. The first was to think that BC could be one. Here I made two rookie mistakes. The first was to think that BC could become the great explorer’s coastal survey. As it turned out, 1992 passed with hardly a ripple of attention paid to the bicentennial. The second mistake was to think that I could compile an encyclopedia, single-handedly, in two years. In the event, it would take ten, and the assistance of many contributors.

Naïveté and hubris notwithstanding, by the time Howie and I reached Vancouver, the idea of the Encyclopedia of British Columbia was born. It threatened, however, to be a still birth. Thinking it might be nice to have some funding in place before we began, I wasted a lot of time contemplating ways of raising the cash. This was not going to be an ordinary book; it would have to be funded in extraordinary ways. We were aware that Hurtig’s company had run aground on the shoals of its encyclopedia projects and Howie did not want to see Harbour suffer a similar fate. But after months of fruitless talking and thinking, it occurred to me that fund raising was neither my strength nor my job. That responsibility belonged to the publisher. I decided to get started on the content.

I began by treating it as a harmless hobby. As other people might play golf or press stamps into an album, I compiled brief articles about people, places and things. I had told writing students in the past, when a subject seems so large as to be intimidating, begin by biting off a small piece and starting to chew. In the case of the EBC, I followed my own advice. I simply began writing entries. There was no method to my approach. If something caught my attention in the morning paper, I followed it up. So—and so induced into the BC Sports Hall of Fame? I tracked down enough information to write a biography. The latest census released? I downloaded population figures for every city, town and village. Another lumber company bought or sold? I better get going on a list of pioneer loggers. One thing always led to another and as the months, then years, passed, the pile of finished entries on a table in my office rose toward the ceiling.

I don’t really know what mixture of blind confidence and pigheadedness made me think anything was going to come of it. Somewhere along the way I read the biography of James Murray, editor of the Oxford English Dictionary. The image of him pigeonholing his word definitions in the great iron Scriptorium he had built for the project seemed depressing. When Murray embarked on the project in 1879, its promoters expected that the OED would take ten years to complete. Five years later he and his team had reached the word “ants.” When the famed editor died in 1915, the dictionary was still not finished. I hoped to live long enough to see the end of the EBC, but there was no guarantee.

Periodically I would drive up to see Howie in Madeira Park to have another planning session. The entries were in my computer, of course, but I made printouts and took them along to impress him with my progress. As the number of boxes of paper I heaved out of my trunk grew, so did our realization that maybe, just maybe, the book might become a reality.

At one point I received a letter from the writer Daphne Maratt. I had written a short biographical entry about her and had sent it out for fact checking.

She wrote back with some minor corrections, but mainly she wrote to tell me that she had noticed from my letterhead that I was living in the pile of sawdust as a kid. Daphne said that it gave her a great deal of pleasure to think that an Encyclopedia of British Columbia was now being produced in the house where she spent part of her childhood. Whenever the whole project seemed larger than my ability to complete it, I used to recall this letter, and the coincidence it evoked, and be reassured that there was an audience of people who shared an experience of the province and wanted to know more about their place.

Haphazard as my approach was, there seemed to be no other way. So long as we had no money to pay for the project, I would not bring myself to ask anyone for help. As time passed, I overcame this inhibition and discovered to my surprise that most people were more than willing to be a part of the project for nothing. Dozens of writers, some of whom were friends, many of whom were strangers, agreed to add my own output. Then we assembled a group of knowledgeable advisors to help sort out the essential from the incidental. There was a limit to how big a book we could be and we were fast approaching it.

Finally it looked like we would be ready to publish on BC Day, 1999. But at one of the Madeira Park meetings the editorial team commented that we had to take another hard look at the material. The one thing an encyclopedia has to be is dependable. There were still some holes to fill. And were we certain that the information was as reliable as we could make it? Societies that put together a book also give it a list of sources, to draw up the flow charts and data bases, we’d never get the damn thing done. Instead, we just went ahead and did it.

I do not recommend this as the best way, but it seems to me to be a typically BC way.

And it worked.

Daniel Francis History of the Vancouver Aquarium’s involvement with killer whales will be published in the fall of 2007.
REMEMBERING R2B2: A NAÏF’S STORY

“Reckoning 07
RENEE RODIN

The sign in my window said Come On In. We’ve Raised Our Prices but I never did,” says Renee Rodin. Here she recalls her days as an idealistic bookseller who organized poetry readings with free beer, smoked pot with Roy Kiyooka and put up with volatile types like P.X. Belinsky and Bill Hoffer.

In the mid-eighties I worked at Octopus West, a wonderful used bookstore in the 2100 block of West 4th in Kitsilano. “Brownie” (P.X. Brown) and her partner, the late Jules Comeault, had bought the store in the seventies from Bill Fletcher.

On my first day, when another staff person went for coffee, a customer came to buy some paperbacks in the window. Their prices, 25, 35 or 50 cents, were clearly marked on their covers. That’s what I sold them for. So I discovered I had sold someone’s private library of highly collectible pulp fiction, brought in for display purposes only, for next to nothing.

When Brownie decided to sell Octopus West to concentrate on her other store, Octopus East, on Commercial Drive, near where she lived with her baby, Rosie, I wanted it. Brownie offered a generous installment plan for payments and I bought the store in the fall of 1986 with poet Billy Little, who had been a close friend of Jules’ and had also worked at Octopus. We changed the name to R & B Books because of our names but we were open to interpretation about the initials.

In December, just before the Christmas season, which we were depending on, a fire broke out in the apartment upstairs. I was alone in the store and had no idea the building was ablaze, though smoke could be seen across the city. Someone came in to get me out. The person upstairs was not so lucky. A pioneer recycler, Barry had piled masses of newspapers on top of what became his prerogative to buy the books if he found my mistakes it was a good place to try out new work.

The readings were often so crowded that on four separate occasions audience members fainted from lack of air. After the poor person who had passed out was attended to, sometimes by ambulance attendants, the reading would resume. For bp nichol we sat back on a patch of grass, bp read by candle, star and moonlight. It was magic.

The fantasy is that you can sit and read in a bookstore but there was no way to work to be done. If you think selling poetry books is hard, try selling used poetry. There were more requests for the music tapes I played at the store, which weren’t for sale, for than for the books.

Still there were lovely interludes such as when Roy Kiyooka, who read at the store several times, dropped by once a week before he died. We’d talk and take it. Browsers either enjoyed the sight and smell of the grass or fled.

In the nineties the economy was very tight. I had no cushion to ride out the rough times and it was impossible to compete with the bigger stores. After I decided to pack it in, ten other small Vancouver bookstores, most of them run by women, folded.

Mainly because of the store’s reputation, I was able to sell R2B2 in 1994 to Denise and Trent Hignel who renamed it Black Sheep Books. They continued the readings for the next three years before they sold it to George Kroller who continued for another three years. So the weekly series went on for 14 years in all. It was fabulous and I miss it.

My events were free but I sold beer at them, which helped pay the rent. After the readings, when lively literary discussions turned into lively parties, I’d end up giving the beer away because I didn’t like selling to friends and fellow partiers.

My greatest pleasure as a bookseller was when someone found an out-of-print book they’d been searching for or I turned someone onto a book I loved no matter how little it cost. Occasionally I had collectible items that could have fetched serious money but I had no idea of their value. Once Bill Hoffer, the late antiquarian book dealer, swooped in and got some great deals. Later he said if he found my mistakes it was his prerogative to buy the books no matter what. Fair enough.

The sign in my window said “Come On In. We’ve Raised Our Prices” but I never did.

Renee Rodin’s work of narrative prose, Ready for Freddy (Nomados Press, 2005), was preceded by a book of poetry, Bread and Salt (Talonbooks, 1996).
The life and times of bill bissett

After 45 years as a writer and publisher, bill bissett is the first recipient of the George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding contributions to literature in B.C. to be presented on Friday, September 14 at Simon Fraser University (downtown). For more information, call 604-736-4011.

From a literary and historical perspective, bissett took off in British Columbia where Earle Birney left off. Fundamentally Left Coast, but more recently bi-coastal, bissett has written more than 60 books that are immediately identifiable by the incorporation of his artwork and his consistently phonetic (funetik) spelling. As an energetic “man-child mystic,” bissett is living proof of William Blake’s adage “the spirit of sweet delight can never be defiled.” His idealistic and ecstatic stances frequently obscure his critical-mindedness, humour and craftsmanship.

Bill bissett was born in Halifax on November 23, 1939. He spent much of his teen years in hospital for treatment of an abdominal condition, peritonitis. His mother died when he was 14 in 1953. During this period he became deeply immersed in movies, to the consternation of his father, a judge, who hoped his son would follow in his footsteps and become a lawyer.

While attending Dalhousie University in 1956, bissett ran away with a preacher’s son to join the circus, ending up in Vancouver in 1958 (“either 1958 or ’59”). In the early 1960s, bissett worked at the Vancouver Public Library and UBC Library. With Lance Farrell and Martina Clinton, he began experimenting with language and drugs. Martina Clinton was bissett’s partner for much of the 1960s, from 1961 to 1967, and became the mother of their daughter, Oolijah, born in 1962.

While attending UBC in the early 1960s, bissett was influenced by the Washington state-born poetry professor Warren Tallman who brought American poets to the campus. During this period he also met fellow poets such as Patrick Lane, Judith Copithorne, Jim Brown and Maxine Gadd.

In 1962, encouraged by fellow writers Robbie Sutherland and Lance Farrell, bissett randomly picked the name for his mimeograph publishing imprint, blewointmentpress, by blindly picking a word from the dictionary [dicksyunaree]. The ointment described in the dictionary entry was a medication for the treatment of crab-lice. The first issue of his blewointment poetry magazine appeared in 1962. Other early literary cohorts included Kurt Lang, with some support from Earle Birney and Dorothy Livesay.

In 1965, bissett co-founded Very Stone House with Lane, Brown and Seymour Mayne. In 1966, he published his first two books, fires in the temporal OR the jinx ship n other trips (Very Stone continued on page 14

F

The public is invited to “Meet bill bissett” on Thursday, Sept. 13, 7pm, Guildford Library, 15105 - 105th Ave., Surrey. To register or for more info call: 604-598-7366.
House/blewointment as well as we sleep inside each other all (up nickh's Ganglia Press).
In 1966, after speaking out against the Vietnam war on a CBC-TV documentary, bissest began to be followed. He claims he was beaten up and harassed by police. Two social workers bought $800 worth of his paintings and advised him to leave town or else he and Martina Clinton wouldn't be allowed to keep their daughter.
In 1968, bissest co-founded a cooperative art gallery, Th Mandan Ghetto, with Joy Long and Gregg Simpson. After he was busted while taking marijuana to a Powell River commune, he spent a few weeks in the winter of 1968-69 at the Oakalla prison farm, plus some time in jail in Powell River, Vancouver and Burnaby. He was fined $500 but federal authorities vowed to appeal the ruling, wanting a stiffer sentence.
During this period he also released a 12-inch vinyl LP, produced by Jim Brown, in conjunction with his book entitled awake in the red desert (Talonbooks).

The major disaster—or turning point—in bissest's life occurred at a Kitsilano house party in 1969. Having performed earlier in the evening at a concrete poetry show, bissest fell through a folding door that was supposed to be latched shut—and plummeted 20 feet to the concrete floor in the basement, severely injuring his head. "Or at least that's what they tell me. Those brain cells have gone."
(Th door had been unfastened to let the cat downstairs for its milk. A two-year court case was won by the insurance company and bissest never received any compensation.)

bissest was paralyzed and catatonic, and about to be sent to Riverview for electronic shock treatments, when an intern turned neurologist rescued him by correctly diagnosing his inter-cerebral bleeding.

After an emergency operation, bissest couldn't communicate and he suffered from edema and aphasia (memory loss). "So I was like a write-off."
A young neurologist was the only person who believed he might recuperate. bissest confounded older physicians by relearning body movements and speech, aided by the young neurologist who brought him balls to squeeze, taught him the alphabet and insisted he try to paint again.
Gradually his combination of aphasia, edema, paralysis and epilepsy abated.
This second long-term hospitalization heightened his appreciation for life and also spared him from returning to prison.
When federal authorities arrived at the hospital to serve notice of appeal within a prescribed 30-day period, the head nurse advised them bissest would be dead within a week. The case was dropped.
bissest's poetry was the subject of a June 14th broadcast in Parliament in 1977-78 over the fact that taxpayers were subsidizing allegedly profane poetry. A nucleus of Conservatives led by Fraser Valley West MP Bob Weinman complained to the Canada Council about grants to bissest's main publishers since the mid-1970s, Talonbooks. The controversy arose from material in a book by CJOR hotline Ed Murphy called A Legacy of Spending in which bissest's work was reprinted without permission.
"I'm a taxpayer, too," bissest later responded, "but I don't tell an engineer how to build a bridge."
The defence of bissest and Talonbooks was a galvanizing factor in the emergence of the literary culture in British Columbia. Hundreds of supporters lent their names to a full-page ad in the Vancouver Sun. bissest recalls, "tho consensus n skuing buzzards we're kept at bay 4 over 2 years before the feds held up a yvr uvg poeetree redings fudging my self n other poets n blewointment n small press n great lawyr friend si simons prepared writ 4 serv."
To silence their critics, bissest and Talonbooks filed suit in the Supreme Court of B.C. on June 23, 1978 against eight Conservative MPs, seven newspapers and 13 others for libel and violation of copyright.
Neither bissest nor his own press received any funding from Canada Council in the year of the upheaval. Eventually Canada Council reduced funding support for blewointmentpress by 42% in 1982. Two friends paid off bissest's creditors and kept blewointment afloat on an interim basis. After 20 years of Vancouver-based activity, the press was moved to Toronto. It has re-emerged back in B.C. as Nightwood Editions, chiefly managed by Silas White.
Bissest comments "now publishing in bc is huge," he says, "totalee multifasitid vigourous n prinsipul n tho th forces against art n kultur may try 2 stamp us out we continue on with so mewan voices sew mewan platforms uvl wech is totalee necessare 2 cvr a n demokratik society without support us th arts a countrree will sink in2 brutalitee....th rite wing nee sleep."
As much a painter as he is a poet, bissest has largely supported himself since the 1960s by selling his paintings and by reading poetry. The Vancouver Art Gallery hosted an extensive one-man show of bissest's art, curated by Scott Watson, in 1984, called five in th sprag. "The magical world of the child," wrote Watson, "with all his libidinal preciosity, is what bissest is after in his painting..."

That's a bit much. Sometimes he's trying to make a buck or two in order to eat. But there's no question that bissest has been one of the most original and widely appreciated poets Canada has ever produced.
Since the 1990s, bissest has divided his time between the West Coast and Ontario (which he calls Centralia), where he was the vocalist for a rock group. The Luddites. He has released at least five CDs with various collaborators. bissest's first collected works appeared as NOBODY OWNS TH EARTH (House of Anansi, 1971), selected by Dennis Lee and Margaret Atwood. A second collected edition was Beyond Even Faithful Legends, Selected Poems 1962-1976 (Talonbooks, 1980). He has twice won the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize in 1993, for inheerent shut, and in 2003, for poet among th swearing boxes) and he received the Milton Acorn People's Poet Award in 1991. Capilano College devoted its 25th anniversary issue to bissest in 1997, edited by Patrick Friesen, in concert with a tribute at the Vancouver Writers Festival.
Also in 2006, bissest was the subject of a Bravo film, heart u a poet, written and produced by Maureen Judge.

Powers-that-try-to-be-in Canada, and literary critics such as Al Purdy, have often looked askance at bissest, darning with faint praise, as if he can't be for real, but when he's gone, we'll safely pronounce he was a national treasure.
That's why he'll become the 14th recipient of the province's lifetime achievement award for authors (formerly known as the Terasen Award) when literati gather for the Reckoning 07 conference at SFU Downtown on September 14th.
The Georgia Straight has been hugely influential in the B.C. literary scene. The list of writers who have found their way into print via its Vancouver-based pages since 1967 is staggering.

New Star Press, for example, evolved directly from the Georgia Straight Writing Supplement. BC BookWord's publisher Alan Twigg and designer David Lester met while working for Dan McLeod's Georgia Straight prior to starting BC BookWord in 1987-1988.

This essay by Pierre Coupey on the origins of the Georgia Straight first appeared in The Grape weekly newspaper, an offspring of the Georgia Straight, in March of 1972 (Issue #8, March 8, pages 12 and 13). Reprinted by long-time Straight worker Korky Day on September 6, 2006 and procicded by Day and Coupey on September 11, 2006, it has also reappeared in print at http://www.rickmcgrath.com/georgia_straight/staffers.html

Coupey's historical summary opened with a preamble. "NOTE: In writing this, my purpose is not to malnourish Dan McLeod. My essential purpose is to describe the beginnings of the Straight, and as best I can the circumstances that led to our decision (Tony Grinkus, Milton Acorn, Peter Hloukoff, Rick Kitaefs, and mine) to leave the Straight in November 1967."

All the formatting and capitalization are as in the published original. The many spelling typos and one hyphen were corrected by Korky Day.

In February and March 1967 the Vancouver Sun/Province mounted a campaign against the youth culture, “hippies,” and “drug use.” It was designed to misinform and frighten the public, and to twist the “drug” issue into a cover for police suppression of the developing social and political energies of the Vancouver young. Remember The Advance Mattress? 4th Avenue! The Sound Gallery? Vietnam! I felt strongly that we needed a voice in order to expose and resist this harassment and misinformation: the idea of starting a radical free press flashed to me one night in March. I spoke first to Rick Kitaefs about starting a paper, and he liked the idea. We called up Milton Acorn, and the three of us met at Kitaefs to discuss the idea further. We agreed it should be a community paper, and that to arouse community interest and participation, we should open an editorial meeting at Rick’s house. We also agreed I should write a statement announcing the need for a free press in Vancouver, the aims of the paper, and an invitation to an open meeting. I wrote the statement, dated 30 March 1967, showed it to Rick and Milton, got their approval, had it run off (as I recall) on bill bissett’s press, and set out to distribute it in Vancouver. The statement invited all those interested in discussing “the aims of a free press, its name, the means to set it up, its floating editorial board, its stance and scope,” to come to 883 Hamilton, Sunday 2 April 1967, at 7-9 PM.

Although I don’t remember exactly when I met Dan McLeod, it was certainly after the statement was written, and probably just before the meeting was held, or perhaps at the meeting itself. There was a large group at the first meeting, too many for me to recall everyone. Those I remember as most active in the discussion were Milton Acorn, Rick Kitaefs, Peter Hloukoff, Tony Grinkus, Kim Folkus, Claude Jordan, Gerry Gilbert, John York, Peter Anlter, Stan Persky, John Mills, Barry Cramer, and Dan McLeod. The consensus of the group was that there was a free press needed, that it should be supported by and responsible to the community at large, and that it should be co-operatively produced by as many interested people as possible. At no time was the paper conceived to be a private enterprise, owned by anyone or any one group. On the contrary: it was to be against private ownership and for community involvement. We discussed many names for the paper (“Gastown Press,” “Terminal City News, etc.”), and finally arrived at the name Georgia Straight, proposed (as I recall) by Dan McLeod, though it may have been Glenn Lewis or Glenn Toppings’ idea. The group at large undertook to contribute and raise money to get the paper going, again with the understanding that the community should support its own paper. Eventually we raised enough to print the first issue, the major contribution coming from Milton Acorn, some $200. The consensus of the group agreed on having an editorial board and two co-operating editors who would oversee the production of not more than two consecutive issues. We felt this principle necessary to prevent the paper from being controlled even editorially by any one individual, so that the paper would remain truly co-operative. Since Dan McLeod and I were most concerned to get the paper going, we were authorized to act as the first two co-operating editors, to activate an editorial board and staff, and to get the first Georgia Straight out.

To do that, we solicited material, assumed functions, searched for a printer. I made a poster announcing the paper, its contributors, the deadline for new material and ads, and when the first issue would be out (see copy of poster attached). At this point the paper was functioning co-operatively: Dan, Rick, Peter, Tony, Eric Freeman and I were all working closely together, not to mention Milton and many others. We also had to open a bank account, and here’s where I made one of my biggest mistakes. As I recall it, Dan and I went to the Toronto-Dominion Bank, corner of 4th and Burrard, to open an account in the name Georgia Straight. I didn’t think this action important at the time. I suggested to Dan that he handle the money, since I neither liked nor understood money matters. I didn’t think of having a joint account, without which there could be no possible for signing cheques, and Dan didn’t suggest it or resist my own suggestion. As a result, through my antipathy to money, my ignorance, and my naive idealism, Dan had sole signing privileges on the account, and as I later found out, a legal claim to the paper’s assets. It never occurred to me that Dan might later capitalize on the trust of all those whose money we were putting into the bank. Perhaps Dan didn’t understand the implications of the moment either.

Deterioration

Although I worked for almost 8 months full time on the Straight (without drawing a salary) from the time we started it to the time I left, and most of the other founding editors, had made it clear from the beginning that we did not intend to work all our lives on the paper. We intended to maintain the principle of rotating co-operating editors, and to pass on our position to Peter Hloukoff for the second issue. We ideally expected everyone, including Dan, to follow this principle, and also expected a continuous infusion of new talent into the paper. All of that was too much to expect. Dan’s willingness to assume responsibility for many of the daily demands of the paper suited, at the time, my own desire to gradually disengage from the major activity and to return to my own work, even though I was disturbed at his reluctance to step down as an editor in favour of someone else, and at his unwillingness to encourage others to participate in the paper’s production as editors. In short, we allowed Dan to assume a more primary role partly because we wanted to pursue other activities, partly because we wanted to maintain the co-operative principle and allow others beside ourselves to play important roles in the paper. As we can see now (and as I suspected by the time of the 3rd and 4th issues), these two purposes were mutually contradictory, and aided Dan in gradually assuming more and more editorial power within the paper, and in

continued on page 18

17 BC BOOKWORLD AUTUMN 2007

Published by: BC BookWorld Press

Periodicals

BC BOOKWORLD AUTUMN 2007

One man’s version of why

the Georgia Straight once

spawned a rival underground newspaper called The Grape


...
suspension vaulted the permanent fixture in Vancouver. In becoming, by itself, the important event, for two reasons. First, in- stead of crushing, the Straight, it virtually established, by itself, the Straight as a per- manent fixture in Vancouver. In becom- ing a major censorship issue, the suspension vaulted the Straight into na- tional prominence, and the media in its eagerness to exploit the issue did what it usually does: simple-mindedly identi- fied the Straight with one personality, Dan McLeod. Dan, of course, must have been pleased with the national publicity he was getting as the coura- geous editor of a cruelly suppressed radi- cal paper. So the second reason the event was important was this: so often hap- pens, as the national media established a clear identification of the Straight with Dan McLeod, so Dan himself began to believe the publicity and identified him- self as the only person responsible for the paper. The last, the issue of control, is the same issue that has come to life again in the last months, almost 5 years later. Between the 5th and 7th issues, we began to suspect that Dan was taking legal steps to put the Straight in his private possession, steps that would rationalize his growing psychological be- lief, encouraged by the national media, that he was in fact the Georgia Straight. One of the surface rationales Dan always raised whenever doubts were expressed was that he had done “all” the work, a rationale that is not very gracious when one considers how many people contrib- uted their time and energy to the paper up to that time. No one can deny that he did a large amount of work on the paper, or that he fought hard for the paper’s continuance, but to say that is not to say that he did all the work, even had a private office!, and his ar- bitrarily reject articles for the paper, he relied too heavily on UPS American reprints, discouraging in- dependence. He never gave a satisfactory response. Ob- viously we suspected a measure of co-operative spirit, that he was already con- sidering all those who worked on the paper as his employees (unpaid), and not as equal co-workers in a community paper: the Georgia Straight was becom- ing a private enterprise, both psychologi- cally and factually. We wanted this to stop. As to finances, there was a further aggra- vating doubt: by the 5th issue, the Straight’s circulation had risen to over 60,000 per issue. Even before then none of us knew what was happening to the money the Straight earned, ever having complete control over the bank account and the finances, and he never shared information on the paper’s finances. But when the Straight was selling 60,000 copies an issue, its gross earnings, at ten cents a copy, then, the vendor keeping 5 cents, was $6,000 per issue, or $12,000 a month. And remember, no one at the Straight was earning a salary at that time. Now, $12,000 is an ideal figure, so let’s do some sweatings: subtract the value of 20,000 papers a month as lost, stolen or seized. That’s minus $2,000; only $10,000 left now. Next, subtract the generous figure of $750 a month to allow for printing costs, office equip- ment, office rental, legal costs and inci- dental expenses. That still leaves $2,500 a month profit, even at the above gen- erous figures. Unfortunately, I was never able to find out what happened, and when we tried to get Dan to give us some idea, he was evasive in the extreme, and never gave a satisfactory response. Ob- viously we suspected a measure of fi- nancial mismanagement.

We also began to question Dan’s edi- torial direction of the paper. He would arbitrarily reject articles for the paper after they had been accepted by other editors. He discouraged talented new people who wanted to work on the Straight, especially if they were local and independent. He relied too heavily on UPS American reprints, discouraging in the process the development of accurate reporting on local and national politics. Politically, the paper was becoming so tepid, a kind of happy liberal/NDP mix, as to fail to offer any real alternative to the politics of the Vancouver Sun/Prov- ince complex. All of these dis- satisfactions: Dan’s editorial policies, his financial vagueness, his arrogance to- ward Straight editors and workers (he even had a private office!), and his as- sumption that he now “owned” the Straight, built up to the point where Milton and I especially, and Peter Hlookoff in a more detached way, wanted to confront Dan and air the issues. But Dan, as usual, became more uncommunicative than he usually was, and did his best to avoid commit- ting himself to a meeting.

Finally, we were able to force a meet- ing of the editors just before the 7th is- sue (Nov. 10, 1967) came out. Present at that meeting were Milton Acorn, Peter Hlookoff, John Laxton, Dan and myself. A few others may have been present, but they were not essential to the discussion. John Laxton was sup- posed to act as an unbiased mediator, but as it turned out, Dan was at the same time incapable of speaking for himself, so Laxton did most of his arguing for him, and seemed to be acting on Dan’s
We refused to have anything to do with private ownership, a corporation, or anything less than a true co-operative.

— PIERRE COUPEY

The GRAPE

I supported the co-operative’s efforts to reclaim the Georgia Straight, because the paper was founded on the principle of co-operative ownership, tried to return to that principle in November 1967, and needs to return to that principle now. Since leaving the Straight in November 67, I recognize I have no personal claims on the paper at all, and don’t wish to make any. In this account of my own involvement with the Straight, however, I meant to reaffirm that at the time the Georgia Straight started, the spirit of the group founding the paper mitigated absolutely against its private ownership by any person or group. At no time did the group that founded the Georgia Straight, or the community from which it derived its resources, authorize the private ownership of the Georgia Straight, or give consent to its being anything but a co-operative.

We had hoped he would cease his arrogant assumption of ownership, and recognize he was part of a community larger and more important than himself alone. But, given his refusal to recognize the Straight’s origins as a co-operative free press, given his obstinate and arrogant assumption of ownership, given our powerlessness at the time to force him out—when we broke to close with him and the Straight rather than to continue in the sham of presenting the Straight as a free press when it was being subsumed and run by one who apparently did not believe in a free press at all.

The 7th issue (on which I had already done much of the layout, and which carried a collage of mine on the back cover), Dan announced that “Four editors—Pierre Coupey, Peter Hlookoff, Milton Acorn and Tony Grinuk—have resigned from the paper. They are going to form a new (and different) paper and we have agreed to lend them our support. The growth of the fifth estate media is necessary in order to keep all communication lines open and honest.” The announcement was dishonest for several reasons: 1) it implies that we asked for Dan’s “support” to help us set up The Western Gate, something we never did ask for; 2) it neglected to mention that we resigned in protest of Dan’s refusal to maintain the paper as the co-operative it was originally intended to be; 3) the last statement is especially suspect in view of the fact that Dan’s communication lines with us at the time of our meeting and before were certainly less than “open and honest.” Dan McLeod’s co-opting of the Straight culminated in his forming, without the staff’s knowledge, Georgia Straight Publishing Limited, at the end of November 1967, with himself as owner.

It is interesting to note that Dan has once again graciously offered assistance to a “new and different paper,” this time The GRAPE. Slick, but empty PR work.

WHY I SUPPORT THE GRAPE

I supported the co-operative’s efforts to reclaim the Georgia Straight, because the paper was founded on the principle of co-operative ownership, tried to return to that principle in November 1967, and needs to return to that principle now. Since leaving the Straight in November 67, I recognize I have no personal claims on the paper at all, and don’t wish to make any. In this account of my own involvement with the Straight, however, I meant to reaffirm that at the time the Georgia Straight started, the spirit of the group founding the paper mitigated absolutely against its private ownership by any person or group. At no time did the group that founded the Georgia Straight, or the community from which it derived its resources, authorize the private ownership of the Georgia Straight, or give consent to its being anything but a co-operative.

We refused to have anything to do with private ownership, a corporation, or anything less than a true co-operative.

— PIERRE COUPEY

The GRAPE

I supported the co-operative’s efforts to reclaim the Georgia Straight, because the paper was founded on the principle of co-operative ownership, tried to return to that principle in November 1967, and needs to return to that principle now. Since leaving the Straight in November 67, I recognize I have no personal claims on the paper at all, and don’t wish to make any. In this account of my own involvement with the Straight, however, I meant to reaffirm that at the time the Georgia Straight started, the spirit of the group founding the paper mitigated absolutely against its private ownership by any person or group. At no time did the group that founded the Georgia Straight, or the community from which it derived its resources, authorize the private ownership of the Georgia Straight, or give consent to its being anything but a co-operative.

Pierre Coupey is a writer and painter who founded The Capilano Review in 1972. He has published several books of poetry.
MOTHER & DAUGHTER

When Emily Givner died suddenly in 2004 of an allergic reaction, at the age of 38, she left a considerable amount of writing, edited by Sean Virgo, and endorsed by Alice Munro, for her posthumous collection, *A Heart In Port* (Thistledown $16.95). We invited biographer, critic and novelist Joan Givner to comment on bringing her daughter's book into the world.

---

Debra Muller

In her last years, Emily Givner’s work began to attract growing attention, though it was not her own long-desired recognition. She was from a generation that knew itself as the first generation of women to write about their lives. But in her writing, she pushed women to new categories of self-knowledge.

Even her earliest stories were based on the self-examination of a woman; her first published piece, a story about a woman who is married too young and reluctantly has her children, was written when she was only 15. This was a new genre for women writers: a way of expressing the truth of women’s lives. As Emily described it in *Letters and Jottings Inward and Outward*: "Women's lives had always been the stuff of fiction but there is no enduring recognition of mother-daughter passion and rupture."

But Emily’s work was not just about her own life. She knew that she was part of a larger movement, that her writing was part of a larger trend. She wrote in *Letters and Jottings Inward and Outward*: "And now we have the success of Canada and the women's movement, and these things are happening at the same time.

Emily, who was 21 when she wrote those words, had no way of knowing that her own life would be the stuff of fiction—of dramatic events and of the process of writing. Her first book, *A Heart In Port*, was published when she was 22, and it was quickly followed by *Private Eye*, which became her critical success. But her life was not easy. She was a woman in a man's world, and she had to navigate the transi- tion from one stage of her life to the next. She was a woman in a world that was not always ready to recognize her.

Yet Emily was not alone. She was part of a larger trend, a movement of women writers who were beginning to find their voice. She was part of a group of women who were writing about the lives of women, and their work was beginning to be recognized. Emily's work was not just about her own life, but about the lives of all women. She knew that she was part of a larger trend, a movement of women writers who were beginning to find their voice. She was part of a group of women who were writing about the lives of women, and their work was beginning to be recognized.

Emily's work was not just about her own life, but about the lives of all women. She knew that she was part of a larger trend, a movement of women writers who were beginning to find their voice. She was part of a group of women who were writing about the lives of women, and their work was beginning to be recognized.
Rhenisch wins Ryga Award

The winning book for this year’s George Ryga Award for Social Awareness in BC Literature is *The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century* (Brindle & Glass) by versatile poet, essayist and fiction writer Harold Rhenisch.

“I’m not surprised at all,” says John Lent, Ryga Prize co-coordinator and North Okanagan College Dean. “Harold Rhenisch is increasingly recognized as one of the best writers in the country.”

Runner-up manuscripts were *Nobody’s Mother*, edited by Lynne Van Luven with a foreword by Shelagh Rogers, and *Red Light Neon: A History of Vancouver’s Sex Trade*, by Daniel Francis. This year’s final judge was professor Sharon Josephson, who teaches Communications and Media Studies at Okanagan College.

“The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century is history about home and family, about colonialism and labour, about land, earth and nation, about Germany, British Columbia and Canada,” says Josephson. “It is about Rhenisch’s journey to find the freedom to re-imagine a way of being in the world.”

The George Ryga Award is sponsored by The George Ryga Centre, Okanagan College, BC BookWorld and CBC Radio One, Kelowna. The presentation on July 27th was hosted by CBC Daybreak’s Marion Barschel.

For more information on Harold Rhenisch and George Ryga, visit www.abcbookworld.com
Here Harbour Publishing’s Howard White, who recently received the Order of Canada, recalls starting up his publishing company in the 1970s.

Howard White, and me to do something we dreamed of doing. We just never thought we would really be able to make it happen here in BC in the 1970s. We were both English majors from UBC and we were both looking for something worthwhile doing when we found ourselves stopping over in my home town of Pender Harbour in the fall of 1970. The first hippies and back-to-the-landers were coming in and the local police were beating them up, putting dogs on them and illegally trying to banish them from the Sunshine Coast—“get out of Dodge City by sundown” type of thing. Our sense of outrage was aroused so we started a one-issue newspaper to compare the cops and the local rednecks to southern US segregationists.

We were surprised at how much support we got and how much even those who disagreed with us appreciated having a local voice. We called the paper the Prolonga Voice and kept publishing it until 1974. At first we printed it in Vancouver, but after a couple years my dad and I built a building and I bought a printing press and taught myself how to print while Mary mastered the darkroom, typesetting and bookkeeping. Mary and I both came from families where the mother and the father worked as a team running small enterprises so it came naturally to us. I did all the dreaming and Mary did all the ordering of supplies and collecting of bills and meeting of schedules. We were a good team.

Almost immediately people began coming around with books they wanted us to print. They wanted us to print them, but they didn’t expect to pay for it. Somewhere they all had picked up this idea that it was immoral for writers to pay for having books printed and looked at me very askance when I brought the subject of payment up. I began printing books about building floor looms, tuning dulcimers and Chinook Jargon without payment. When the bills for the paper came in, I found myself knocking on bookstore doors trying to sell copies of Dulcimer Tuning and Floor Loom books because it turned out the writers also felt it was immoral to have anything to do with selling, though they certainly expected a share of whatever we sold.

This was how we became book publishers.

In 1972, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who was a bit of a hippie himself, began giving all our hippie friends grants to experiment with chicken raising or make composting toilets, or whatever they happened to be doing, so we got a grant to do what we were doing, only we had to make it sound good so we proposed turning our newspaper into a journal about the coastal area we were living in, and so in October 1972 we published the first issue of a perfect-bound, 56-page publication called Raincoast Chronicles, which we said would explore BC Coast character. I have often said it was inspired by a very popular magazine from the Ozarks called Firefly, but in fact I had never seen a copy of Firefly, I had only heard about it from some American hippies. What I had seen was Canada Week, a little staple-bound journal that had for several years been published in Summerland by Bill Barlee.

Bill wrote about the ghost towns of the Boundary country that I loved exploring myself, and I wanted to do for the coast what he was doing for the interior. The name Raincoast was my personal reaction to the name of the place I lived, which a real estate promoter had dubbed the Sunshine Coast even though it is cloudy 10 months of the year. I wanted our journal to sound a contrasting note of realism and truth-telling. We were playing around with various combinations of “rainforest” and “coast” and it was a poet named Scott Lawrence who finally made the obvious agglutination “Raincoast.” We were the first to use the name. Raincoast Books and a host of other enterprises followed our example, which we always felt complimented by. When someone explained to us we also needed an imprint name for our publishing operation, we chose “Harbour” because everything in Pender Harbour was Harbour this or Harbour that—Harbour Diesel, Harbour Hairdressing, Harbour Septic Tank Pump-out Service, etc. Unfortunately there was also a Har- bour Pub, and our deliveries still get confused.

Raincoast Chronicles was right for the times and by the third issue we were printing 10,000 copies per issue. Even then we ran out, and by issue five we were in the position of having a publication that was in great demand but no stock. I got the idea of putting all five out in one bound edition and tested the idea on the only book publisher I knew, Jim Douglas. He said, don’t do it. People had already bought the journals in softcover for $1.25 and were used to the low price. Following up a paperback edition with a hardcover was just something you didn’t do in book publishing. It was conventional wisdom, the type I might give to a young publisher myself today, but we had fallen in love with the idea of a big handsome Christmas book and decided to go ahead anyway. Raincoast Chronicles First Five came out in November 1975 in a hardcover 272-page edition priced at $12.95. It sold out by Christmas, won the Eaton’s BC Book Award and is currently in its 14th printing.

That is the event that committed Mary and me to a life in book publishing, though it was five more years before we quit our day jobs and dared to refer to ourselves as publishers. For years we never really believed book publishing would support us and our anticipated family over the long haul, and were continually surprised when it did. But the First Five proved to us that there was a very strong market in BC for regional non-fiction if it was well-written, well-produced and well-marketed. We followed that discovery with a series of books like Now You’re Logging by Bus Griffiths, Keepers of the Light by Don Graham, Spilsbury’s Coast by myself and Jim Spilsbury, and Fishing with John by Edith Iglauer, all of which sold over 10,000 copies. Many of these books were expansions of subjects we had first es- tayed in Raincoast Chronicles.

Over the 32 years since First Five we have published approximately 500 books all exploring aspects of BC character and all addressing that regional-interest market we first tapped in 1975. From the avails Mary and I raised two sons who are now well established in their own literary careers and we currently employ 15 people who seem to take it as the most natural thing in the world to work in book publishing in Pender Harbour.

Howard White is only the fourth British Columbian to win the Leacock Medal for Humour. He is also a member of the Order of British Columbia.
When I arrived in B.C. in the fall of 1968 on a propeller-driven Trans-Canada Airlines-operated Viscount, Simon Fraser University was being visited by the RCMP anxious to make the acquaintance of a fair number of US and UK radical professors and students.

It never occurred to me to leave school when there were more possible degrees to be earned—so I watched the library stacks by day from my office in the Academic Quadrangle and read about what happened in the newspapers that night—The Vancouver Sun was then an evening paper—with a good deal of my naivety.

I was taken aback by the lack of high culture in Vancouver compared to my hometown, Winnipeg, where I was used to year-round theatre, ballet, symphonies, European films, art galleries and so on, but I was equally surprised by male tolerance of difference on the West Coast.

Going into a bar as a young man in Winnipeg meant conforming to rigid dress and behavioural norms, such as never making eye contact with a frequent patron and ensuring that your hair was no longer than a half-inch. In Vancouver no male bar patron appeared to pay any heed to any other previously unknown to him.

My initial task was to transform myself from an educational psychologist to a communications professor with a specialization in books and publishing.

The first book research I undertook in the later 1970s examined the content of school texts of British Columbian and other Canadian elementary school students. Two elements stood out—restrictive sex-role stereotyping, most notable in portrayals of adult women, and a lack of any sense in the texts of culture and place.

There was virtually no Canadian content, and certainly no sense of the distinctive nature of Canadians, let alone, British Columbian, culture anywhere in the school curriculum including “social” studies.

In 1990, some 22 years after my arrival, I had my first chance to look at BC trade book publishing in some depth—not the content, but the nature of the industry. It was a small industry composed of some 22 firms that had published some 220 books in 1989 with a total value of $16 million. Working against their potential success, and unexplainable from a public policy perspective, only one British Columbian firm appeared to have access to provincial business-based assistance.

National statistics showed that 97 percent of the Ontario market was served by firms based in that province and Ontario was the dominant Canadian supplier for all other provincial markets except Quebec. From a business perspective, book publishing in BC was not just risky, it was well nigh impossible. But from the point of view of civilization, at the end of the rainbow there was the potential satisfaction to be gained from publishing the next great novel or poet, or publishing an exposé of an established corporation, government practice, business sector, or institution that would bring power begging at the altar of public forgiveness.

My contribution was to deliver to the provincial government a foundation of information about the industry and a recommendation for funding which the relevant bureaucrats and politicians would see as appropriate. My recommendation for funding of this $16 million industry, which the government of the day accepted, was $500,000 per annum.

That was the beginning of a formula-based provincial industry support for British Columbia beyond the cultural support of certain types of titles.

Provincial support has lasted, and developed somewhat, to this day. The difficulty, until 2003, was that the funds provided to the industry did not grow in any appreciable manner. Successive BC governments seemed to see the sum as a temporary annual subsidy to help the industry stabilize after which it could be withdrawn. Growth of the industry appeared to be viewed by governments as confirmation that their support was not crucial.

Being blessed with mountains, forests, ocean, sea life, minerals, all combining into a spectacular scenery and a sublime climate unmatched anywhere else in the Great White North, the hunter-gatherer...
Rowland Lorimer is past editor and current publisher of the Canadian Journal of Communication. He is a past president of the Canadian Association of Learned Journals. He is director of PExOD, the Publishers Extensible Online Database and is assisting scholarly journals to begin publishing online. He will manage the Technology & Our Future portion of the Reckoning 07 conference.

BC has boasted North America’s and perhaps the world’s fastest-growing on-demand service book publisher.” — ROWLAND LORIMER

Governments of Supernatural BC saw no reason why they should not also be blessed with a book industry as well as other cultural industries. In part, they were right. This garden of books and authors, untended by them, grew year after year.

By 2000, a time of fiscal difficulty caused by an Ontario distributor whose problems, in turn, were caused by an ongoing transformation of book retailing, BC book publishing consisted of 64 firms doing nearly $100 million in business annually, a size that represented a growth rate from 1990 onward that outstripped the national norm by about one-third.

Most surprisingly, given BC history, in February 2003 the ever-persistent fortune-seeking book publishers of British Columbia, and hence their authors, and hence readers, struck gold. A minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services, George Abbott, whose responsibilities included the cultural industries, followed in the footsteps of Peter Lougheed who once allocated $8.37 million in provincial oil royalties, when $8.37 million was a huge amount of money, to a heritage educational publishing project.

George Abbott found a receptive ear in the premier and British Columbia agreed to all-but-match federal government business grants to BC publishers on an annual basis. The publishers’ risk for had finally yielded a rich and substantial vein of support even if it was not exactly the motherlode.

True, some have claimed, it might be a plot to keep the literati happy during the sell-off of British Columbia’s public resources and services such as BC Hydro, a cleverly renamed BC Gas, BC Ferries, and so on, but the literary dividends in terms of wonderful authors and stupendous books have been considerable.

As of 2005, (a Harry Potter year), British Columbia boasted revenues of $175 million carried on by 206 active publishing establishments. Of those, the top third most likely accounted for about $170 million. Those figures represent growth by a factor of ten from 1989.

By 2005, BC also boasted North America’s and perhaps the world’s fastest-growing on-demand service book publisher (Trafford), North America’s and perhaps the world’s most significant online used-book sales facilitator (Abebooks), and Canada’s only research-based graduate degree program in publishing (Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing) complemented by a set of national publishing summer workshops as well as ongoing professional development programs at a variety of post-secondary institutions.

The growth of BC’s writing and publishing is a cultural success story, well worthy of a celebratory gathering. I look forward to rubbing shoulders with many of the key individuals responsible for that growth at Reckoning 07.

27 BC BOOKWORLD AUTUMN 2007

Caitlin Press
PROVOCATIVE POETRY FROM CAITLIN PRESS

All Things Said & Done
Marita Darchel
978-1-894759-22-4 $15.95

Soft Geography
Gillian Wigmans
978-1-894759-24-8 $15.95

NEW FOR FALL 2007

Finding Ft. George
Rob Buddle
978-1-894759-27-4 $15.95

“Rob Buddle sees what glimmers at the edge of our peripheral vision.” — The Georgia Strait

Finding Ft. George is the poetic record of Buddle’s growing love of the Cariboo. Each poem explores a place, a time and the process of building a relationship between the two. Sometimes gritty, sometimes ironic, the poems are all love poems to a new home—gifts of arrival.

CAITLIN PRESS
Box 219, Madeira Park, BC V0N 2H0
Toll-free ordering: 1 800 667-2969 (toll) • 1 777 604-9449 (fax)
caitlin@harbourpublishing.com • www.caitlin-press.com

Rowland Lorimer
Born and raised in Nanaimo, Anne Cameron remains most widely known for Daughters of Copper Woman, her interpretation of stories given to her by Ahousat elders. Reprinted at least seventeen times since it appeared from a feminist publisher, Press Gang, in 1981, it is easily one of the most successful works of fiction to be published from and about British Columbia. But its success almost ruined her career.

Press Gang went belly-up and didn’t tell their writers. Instead they handed us over, like a pack of foster kids, to Raincoast. From there things get murky, and I don’t really feel like getting sued, so let’s just say I got my book back and Harbour has re-published it. It matters to nobody but me that somebody else was doing it.

During the Press Gang debacle, the frikken lawyers made more than me. Which left me with five times the square root of sweet f—– all. Standing up for my rights got me blackballed from CBC, NFB and CFDC for years. Now I just try to keep a jar of vinegar handy. When you’re a writer, sooner or later, you’re going to get a rough dry hand. When you’re a writer, sooner or later, you’re going to get a rough dry windmill. For me, The Bookstore on Bastion Street was the best damned book store in the country and did far more for writers in B.C. than Malaspina College, which should get the spud-butt award for the spread of illiteracy in this province. They, and some other colleges and universities, have acted as if the printed word was dinosaur dung. Statistics indicate this province has one of the highest book buying and reading rates in the country. If the colleges and universities aren’t an active part of this, they are choosing to cut themselves out of the very culture whose taxes help support the institutions.

It matters to nobody but me that somebody else was doing it. Your books do not fly off the shelf quickly. My books sell steadily, to a very loyal readership, but the chains aren’t interested in that. They want books flying off the shelves so they can put in more books. They seem incapable of seeing that if increasing numbers of readers are dissatisfied with the quality of choice, fewer books will be sold. Certainly a more restricted range of choice will be available.

As the chain bookstores apply their self-serving pressures and the corporate control puts the American eagle in an increasingly powerful position, publishers are faced with the choice of being boiled or barbequed. The only way the publishers can stay in business is to get their books into the chains and the only way they can manage that is to publish what the chains say they want.

My books do not fly off the shelf quickly. My books sell steadily, to a very loyal readership, but the chains aren’t interested in that. They want books flying off the shelves so they can put in more books. They seem incapable of seeing that if increasing numbers of readers are dissatisfied with the quality of choice, fewer books will be sold. Certainly a more restricted range of choice will be available.

I am a minor writer. I am never going to win the Giller, I am certainly never going to get wealthy or famous or anything else older with each passing day, anything about it is a total wingnut.
but I've had thirty books published, and some of them have been translated into languages I will never learn to speak. I also have ten novels which aren't going to see publication because they are critical of corporatism, and of the spread of the military imperialism of Amerikkka, and the impact that has on the everyday lives of working people on this coast.

I often rage against the wholesale slaughter of our forests by foreign-controlled corporations who do not have our best interests at heart and, yeah, I'm a conspiracy theorist. I believe, and say, and write, that the flow of hard drugs on this coast is protected by people who influence the federal government. That is flat-out too radical for any publisher in his right mind to take a risk, because the chain bookstores, who are, after all, an arm of corporate power, aren't going to want to put those novels on their shelves.

Feminist analysis has taught me to ask two questions: "Is it an accident?" and "Who benefits?" Well, it is no accident that I've written myself out of the picture. It's exactly what the mangy bird wants. And the losers will be our children and grandchildren who may not have the opportunity to know there was once a fiercely independent culture on this coast.

You don't have to invade, bomb and slaughter the way they've done it in Iraq and will soon do in Iran. All you have to do is slowly, steadily and systematically choke the life out of the publishers and writers and the rest will fall into your hands. Muffle the voices of those who protest and you can shave the slopes, fill the bays, inlets and fjords with fish feed lots, wipe out the natural fishing resource, gouge entire hillsides, wrench out the mineral wealth and then drill for oil and who will stand against you and say no more?

You no longer have to take the poets and novelists, the lyricists and performers to the soccer stadium and machine gun them into silence. You just suffocate them by putting the publishers between a rock and a hard place.

But there will always be kids who learn to read, find books, and one day think, hey, these stories were written by someone. And if someone else can do it, why not me? Minor writers will meet small publishers, books will appear which will cause readers to feel that magical spark of recognition. "Hey, that's us."

In the long run we are the most precious natural resource this coast has and there's no way we can be bought off, muzzled, or made ineffectual. When the last tree is felled, the last precious mineral shipped out, the last wild fish has perished and the coast is a rain-drenched wasteland, there are always a few kids who say, "Hey..."

After 33 books and the screenplays for Dreamspeaker, Ticket to Heaven and The Tin flute, Anne Cameron lives in Tahsis where she tends a flock of neighborhood children and looks askance at increasingly conservative times.
The University of Victoria is raising funds to set up a memorial scholarship to honour Robin and Sylvia Skelton. That will be given annually to a student in the Faculty of Fine Arts. For more information or to donate to the fund, please contact Karen Walker, the Development Officer for Fine Arts, at 250-721-6305 or kmwalker@uvic.ca.

Robin Skelton was a northerner, a Yorkshireman, the sort people in the south found somewhat naïve if not downright risible, the way many over the years were to do with people who weren’t anarchists (or at least those who weren’t anarchists) among the galaxy of libertarians and Latin American fabulists whom only Robin ever seemed to have heard of, much less published in English.

By contrast, Woodcock, of course, was interested in Canada foremost. His own journal, significantly, was Canadian Literature, published at UBC. Or as he often said, he was a Vancouverite first, a British Columbian second, a Canadian third. The order was a reflection of his lifelong anarchism, which people in Britain, at least those who weren’t anarchists themselves, found somewhat naïve if not downright risible, the way many others here found his dog-like devotion to the Dalai Lama, which originated with his strong-willed (not to say thoroughly impossible) wife, Ingeborg.

George was of Anglo-Welsh ancestry, as reflected in the fact that he sounded English but looked Welsh. In fact, he closely resembled the actor Desmond Llewelyn, who played Q in the early James Bond films.

Robin was a northerner, a Yorkshireman, the sort people in the south consider a bit rough round the edges, and he looked—well, he looked like no one else alive. He made sure of that. Robin was a practising witch (he disdained more talented people from suicide and wrote them more grant references than anyone else of his day. He made sure of that. And he always dressed in black. He sported large rings on all eight fingers; one of them contained a secret compartment (for poison or a potion?). He wore thick grey hair touching his shoulders and sported a beard, a somewhat wiry and greying one, that almost touched his belly.

And he always dressed in black. He once told me, without any irony whatsoever, that young Anglo flight attendants on Air Canada—those wishing to get ahead in the organisation by displaying initiative—automatically served him the kosher meal.

The Doukhobors and Gabriel Dumont, still exercise a hold on people’s imaginations. He published about 150 books in all, most of them (though not the most famous ones) after a severe heart attack in 1966, when he was 54; concentrated his mind wonderfully.

None of Robin’s books is well known, though Memoirs of a Literary Blockhead perhaps deserves to be. He wrote quite a lot of other prose as well, but laboured mostly in the eternal twilight of poets and poetry. Over the years, he published several selected and even collected volumes. As death from diabetes and a weakening heart approached, he was working on a manuscript of new poems, perhaps deserves to be. He wrote quite a lot of other prose as well, but laboured mostly in the eternal twilight of poets and poetry. Over the years, he published several selected and even collected volumes. As death from diabetes and a weakening heart approached, he was working on a manuscript of new poems and writing once he returned to Canada after the Second World War. He did, however, resume writing poetry in the 1970s, working in a discernibly Canadian form of it that would be incomprehensible to his old English self.

George Woodcock’s most famous book, still in print, is Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements, followed by The Crystal Spirit, a critical memoir of his friend and collaborator of the same age as Woodcock did. He was shy, and worked hard to make cultural activity happen all round him—whether it is in Victoria, where he sort of presided over everything.

Robin organised readings, lectures and art exhibitions and he got young writers into print and out of trouble. He dissuaded more talented people from suicide and wrote them more grant references than anyone else of his day.

The Malahat Review, the quarterly he founded at the University of Victoria, has just come out with a memorial issue. I was pleased to be asked to contribute to it.

Under Robin’s editorship, it was a wildly international journal, publishing only a small group of Canadians (those with some foothold of a reputation in other countries) among the galaxy of East European controversialists and Latin American fabulists whom only Robin ever seemed to have heard of, much less published in English.

By contrast, Woodcock, of course, was interested in Canada foremost. His own journal, significantly, was Canadian Literature, published at UBC. Or as he often said, he was a Vancouverite first, a British Columbian second, a Canadian third. The order was a reflection of his lifelong anarchism, which people in Britain, at least those who weren’t anarchists themselves, found somewhat naïve if not downright risible, the way many others here found his dog-like devotion to the Dalai Lama, which originated with his strong-willed (not to say thoroughly impossible) wife, Ingeborg.

George was of Anglo-Welsh ancestry, as reflected in the fact that he sounded liked the term warlock, considering it sexist). Incredulous people have vouched¬safed to me that he had genuine powers as a healer. His actual witchcraft I’m not qualified to judge. The Globe and Mail once ran an enormous photo on the front page showing him outside the Peace Tower in Ottawa where he was casting a spell to drive out the GST.

“Sometimes it works,” he said sheepishly, “and sometimes it doesn’t.” The Wicca faith was to him as anarchism was to George. He sported large rings on all eight fingers; one of them contained a secret compartment (for poison or a potion?). He wore thick black-framed glasses, kept his grey hair touching his shoulders and sported a beard, a somewhat wiry and greying one, that almost touched his belly.

And he always dressed in black. He once told me, without any irony whatsoever, that young Anglo flight attendants on Air Canada—those wishing to get ahead in the organisation by displaying initiative—automatically served him the kosher meal.

The University of Victoria is raising funds to set up a memorial scholarship to honour Robin and Sylvia Skelton. That will be given annually to a student in the Faculty of Fine Arts. For more information or to donate to the fund, please contact Karen Walker, the Development Officer for Fine Arts, at 250-721-6305 or kmwalker@uvic.ca.

Robin Skelton was a northerner, a Yorkshireman, the sort people in the south consider a bit rough round the edges. And he looked—well, he looked like no one else alive. He made sure of that. Robin was a practising witch (he disdained more talented people from suicide and wrote them more grant references than anyone else of his day. He made sure of that. And he always dressed in black. He once told me, without any irony whatsoever, that young Anglo flight attendants on Air Canada—those wishing to get ahead in the organisation by displaying initiative—automatically served him the kosher meal.

The University of Victoria is raising funds to set up a memorial scholarship to honour Robin and Sylvia Skelton. That will be given annually to a student in the Faculty of Fine Arts. For more information or to donate to the fund, please contact Karen Walker, the Development Officer for Fine Arts, at 250-721-6305 or kmwalker@uvic.ca.
**FUTURE IMPERFECT:**

"I’m not sure the damage being done by wild-eyed globalism is going to be reversible."

N

ovelist Robert Harlow was the CBC’s Director of Radio in B.C. from 1954-1964. When Earle Birney left UBC in 1965, Harlow became head of the newly-formed Department of Creative Writing, the first such department in the country. He retired as head in 1977 but taught in the department until 1988. Over the years he has published eight novels. Here he surveys how we might be coming of age all over again.

In 1962, my first novel, *Royal Muchoch*, was one of three such books issued in Canada that did not first have a contract with a foreign publisher. Macmillan, McClelland & Stewart, Ryerson and others imported the guts of books of fiction, put their own covers and boards on them, and sent them out to bookstores. Until then, much of the business of Canadian publishers was to be an agency press for fiction put out by publishers in “real” places like London and New York. This level of agency publishing had gone on for a long time, since the 1923 trade agreement between Washington and Ottawa that made Canada a cultural vassal of the USA. Our thriving movie industry and more than viable book publishing sector were strangled. *Maze de la Roche* became an American possession, Ralph Connor and other romancers of our West were hardly welcome in a country as provincial as the U.S. Authors such as Morley Callaghan found it necessary to set their books and stories in either America or in a limbo that Americans could identify as their own. Imprisoned with New York and London culture, governed by creatures in Ottawa who were always cowed to the point of corruption by English America, and wreathed clear of two seminal and nurturing cultural forces, Canadians began to believe that they were not good enough or creative enough to have an identity.

A country village boy, I grew up reading the five New York magazines my mother subscribed to (*Good Housekeeping*, *Redbook*, *Women’s Home Companion*, *American Magazine* and *Cosmopolitan*) and believed that was where life was lived. *Maclean’s* was unknown to me until I'd been shot at in anger by the Luftwaffe and was at UBC, where I met, thankfully, Earle Birney, a cultural nationalist who didn’t laugh at my *Redbook* short stories and made me conscious of the load one takes on when a decision is made to be a writer. Earle Birney helped get me to Iowa in 1948. My thesis book was a novel about my war that, fifty years later and vastly changed, became *Necessary Dark*. Called then *Hell’s Easiest Room*, the writing of it let me understand that the USA wasn’t my spiritual-cultural home. The fifties and early sixties were spent working for the CBC, an institution invented, perhaps out of guilt, by Ottawa, the perfect workplace for a newly-minted Canadian to begin to mature. I still believe that without the CBC, the Canada we live in now would have had very little chance of happening.

It wasn’t until 1961 that I had a book ready. At a cocktail party I was introduced to John Gray, the great Macmillan publisher, who asked me if I was writing anything and, if so, could he see it. The Canada Council had been in place for three years, we were beginning to get used to seeing ourselves on television. Art, drama and literature were beginning to be more than a gleam in the eyes of creators. Some Canadians thought our own work not just possible, but necessary. Many others still laughed at the idea of a Canadian identity, but the move toward it had begun quietly in new little magazines like *Tamarack Review* in Toronto and *Prism* in Vancouver and on the CBC via *Anthology*.

John Gray was one of the literary catalysts. He wanted a list that featured Canadian published fiction. At this time, publishers were still, and often, educated gentlemen who loved literature and would pick up a book, not just as a book, but as a religious object, like a priest would lift up the wafer that was the body of Christ. Authors he thought had promise became an investment and sometimes a lifetime friend. If the gamble was a good one then over the course of ten or twenty books the author would make him perhaps a decent profit. I think John hoped I’d be one of those. My first two books were published by him. And then, I wrote *Scann* (a novel about a town that very closely resembled Prince George, where I mostly grew up). Macmillan’s rejection was abrupt and final. The few copies of *Royal Muchoch* and *A Gift of Echoes* left in-house were shipped to me, along with Scann’s rejection, and I was demoted from author to mere reader.

Trouble is, while Canadians may publish their literature in its own terms, we are again subject to the fashion whims, oversight, business plans and bottom line motives of American and European publishers. Our literature is not, in fact, materially different since 1923 once more, but it could be worse. Back then we were given that freedom which comes from having nothing left to lose. Rendered null and void, we had a chance eventually to grow without foreign corporate oversight. It was a dry forty years, but they were our years.

I’m not sure the damage being done by wild-eyed globalism is going to be reversible. Getting used to what’s happening (and has happened) is not going to be good enough. I believe a new organization along the lines of the Writers Union, founded thirty-five years ago, needs to be considered again, but this time we need something larger, more encompassing, to support our indigenous publishers, distributors and booksellers. A new organization should be aimed at making our industry unattractive to corporate conglomerates through economic and political (nationalist, if you will) initiatives and pressures.

This will not retake lost ground, but it could allow for the creation of a Canadian cultural industry with its own national and international intentions.

Meeting, celebrating and talking is always good. The forthcoming Reckoning ’07 conference is a welcome and timely concept. Let’s see if we can use the occasion to generate renewed vigour and guidelines to protect our future.

Robert Harlow lives on Mayne Island. His novel *Necessary Dark* is available for Print on Demand (POD). "POD is the future," he says, "and will be the future for status quo publishers and those who find agents, editorial annointment (meaning the sales department) and current methods of distribution less than tasty."
I N A M A N I F E S T O TO FELLOW W R I T E R S P U B L I S H E D F E W YEARS AGO, DORIS LESSING wrote: “Without me the literary industry would not exist; the publishers, the agents, the sub-agents, the accountants, the libel lawyers, the department of literature, the professors, the theses, the books of criticism, the reviewers, the book pages—all this vast and proliferating edifice is because of this small, patronized, put down, and underpaid person.”

That writers are essential yet undervalued is no secret. It’s the extent to which writers support this “vast and proliferating edifice” through the subsidizing of their own books that may surprise readers.

As in many countries, our publishers are eligible for financial support in the form of grants from various national and provincial government agencies such as the Canada Council for the Arts, whose mandate is to develop Canadian writing and publishing. Canada Council guidelines clearly state that titles not eligible for support include “publications for which the author receives no royalties, and books to which the author has contributed financially toward the publication costs (this includes an author’s obligation to purchase a given number of copies of his or her book as a condition of publication).” In addition, the publisher is expected to use “appropriate and effective means to market, distribute and create public awareness of its publications, and to issue clear royalty statements” on a regular basis. Finally, “no grants will be issued to publishers who owe outstanding payments to writers as of the application deadline.” Sounds pretty straightforward, no?

And yet, grants are issued, year after year, to publishers who ignore some or all of these requirements. Why? Because Canada Council will not withdraw support from a publishing house without a formal complaint and proof of unfair publishing practices. Reluctant to jeopardize their own slim opportunities for publication or draw government attention to the misuse of public funds, writers remain silent—and become unwitting collaborators in fraud.

Authors grumble about “sweetheart deals” wherein it’s understood they’ll have to pay in order to see their book published, but rarely do they stop to consider the ethical implications involved when a grant-funded publisher asks them to “assist” with the production costs or purchase large quantities of their own books—or neglects to pay royalties year after year, much less issue a royalty statement.

In extreme cases, being dependent on government money has led to the growth of “welfare” publishers who churn out season after season of new titles for the sole purpose of meeting their grant quota. These books, often poorly edited and cheaply produced, languish in the publisher’s basement or are sold back to the author to duck the costs of marketing, promotion and distribution. In effect, the books are printed but are not made readily available to the public. I suspect public money dedicated for the publication of books constitutes the primary source of income for a handful of publishers across the country. Adding insult to injury, these rogue publishers “top up” their grant-funded publishing program with financial resources donated by writers they only pretend to serve.

How do we ensure that books of merit are being produced if the man—or woman—with the fattest wallet wins out? And faced with a book which must then be promoted, marketed and distributed again, in some cases, on the writer’s dime, who really wins? Authors find themselves not only in the position of sustaining the press at the expense of their own financial viability, but also risking their reputation in the process.

Unfair publishing practices and the unprincipled manipulation of a grant system that was designed to create and promote Canadian literary culture and the development of an audience ultimately weakens our publishing industry and hurts every writer.

There are nearly three times as many government-supported publishers now as there were thirty years ago and they are all fighting for a piece of the ever-shrinking funding pie. Eliminate these rogue presses and everyone benefits: reputable publishers receive larger grants which in turn allow them to serve the writing—and reading—community in a responsible manner.

As tax-paying Canadian citizens who contribute to an estimated $400 million cultural industry, writers are invaluable creators, not frivolous hobbyists or self-sacrificing bankrolllers. They should inform themselves about questionable practices and suppress any hesitation in registering legitimate complaints because of a misplaced desire to protect a publisher—or publication.

As Lessing implies, writers, “small, patronized, put down, and underpaid,” are deserving of respect, not least from those whose very livelihood depends on their sustained output. Writers, all too ready to adopt the humble gratitude the industry wishes upon them for the slightest fleeting of recognition, maintain a code of silence that keeps the Gingerbread Man running. Maybe it’s time for the fox to open its jaws.

Fernanda Viveiros is editor of WordWorks, the magazine of the Federation of BC Writers, which represents over 600 B.C. writers.

PUT DOWN, PATRONIZED & UNDERPAID:
CAN WRITERS AFFORD TO REMAIN SILENT ABOUT BEING UNDER-PROMOTED, TOO?

As in many countries, our publishers are eligible for financial support in the form of grants from various national and provincial government agencies such as the Canada Council for the Arts, whose mandate is to develop Canadian writing and publishing.

Canada Council guidelines clearly state that titles not eligible for support include “publications for which the author receives no royalties, and books to which the author has contributed financially toward the publication costs (this includes an author’s obligation to purchase a given number of copies of his or her book as a condition of publication).” In addition, the publisher is expected to use “appropriate and effective means to market, distribute and create public awareness of its publications, and to issue clear royalty statements” on a regular basis. Finally, “no grants will be issued to publishers who owe outstanding payments to writers as of the application deadline.” Sounds pretty straightforward, no?

And yet, grants are issued, year after year, to publishers who ignore some or all of these requirements. Why? Because Canada Council will not withdraw support from a publishing house without a formal complaint and proof of unfair publishing practices. Reluctant to jeopardize their own slim opportunities for publication or draw government attention to the misuse of public funds, writers remain silent—and become unwitting collaborators in fraud.

Authors grumble about “sweetheart deals” wherein it’s understood they’ll have to pay in order to see their book published, but rarely do they stop to consider the ethical implications involved when a grant-funded publisher asks them to “assist” with the production costs or purchase large quantities of their own books—or neglects to pay royalties year after year, much less issue a royalty statement.

In extreme cases, being dependent on government money has led to the growth of “welfare” publishers who churn out season after season of new titles for the sole purpose of meeting their grant quota. These books, often poorly edited and cheaply produced, languish in the publisher’s basement or are sold back to the author to duck the costs of marketing, promotion and distribution. In effect, the books are printed but are not made readily available to the public. I suspect public money dedicated for the publication of books constitutes the primary source of income for a handful of publishers across the country. Adding insult to injury, these rogue publishers “top up” their grant-funded publishing program with financial resources donated by writers they only pretend to serve.

How do we ensure that books of merit are being produced if the man—or woman—with the fattest wallet wins out? And faced with a book which must then be promoted, marketed and distributed again, in some cases, on the writer’s dime, who really wins? Authors find themselves not only in the position of sustaining the press at the expense of their own financial viability, but also risking their reputation in the process.

Unfair publishing practices and the unprincipled manipulation of a grant system that was designed to create and promote Canadian literary culture and the development of an audience ultimately weakens our publishing industry and hurts every writer.

There are nearly three times as many government-supported publishers now as there were thirty years ago and they are all fighting for a piece of the ever-shrinking funding pie. Eliminate these rogue presses and everyone benefits: reputable publishers receive larger grants which in turn allow them to serve the writing—and reading—community in a responsible manner.

As tax-paying Canadian citizens who contribute to an estimated $400 million cultural industry, writers are invaluable creators, not frivolous hobbyists or self-sacrificing bankrolllers. They should inform themselves about questionable practices and suppress any hesitation in registering legitimate complaints because of a misplaced desire to protect a publisher—or publication.

As Lessing implies, writers, “small, patronized, put down, and underpaid,” are deserving of respect, not least from those whose very livelihood depends on their sustained output. Writers, all too ready to adopt the humble gratitude the industry wishes upon them for the slightest fleeting of recognition, maintain a code of silence that keeps the Gingerbread Man running. Maybe it’s time for the fox to open its jaws.

Fernanda Viveiros is editor of WordWorks, the magazine of the Federation of BC Writers, which represents over 600 B.C. writers.

...writers are invaluable creators, not frivolous hobbyists or self-sacrificing bankrolllers.”
—FERNANDA VIVEIROS
Ernest Hekkanen suffers from what he calls oppositional disorder. Without that affliction, he would never have managed to become a prolific novelist, an independent publisher, or editor of The New Orphic Review, as a maverick intellectual. Based in Nelson, he and his partner Margrith Schraner survive outside the world of government grants. We asked him to explain his literary condition.

Back in the mid-1960s, I got involved in two activities that came to define my life: I started to write and I became an anti-Vietnam War activist. However, that was symptomatic of a deeper oppositional disorder. During my ninth-grade year at Lynnwood Junior High, President Kennedy placed a blockade around Cuba. His address to the nation was deep in oppositional disorder. After eight months or so I came to realize I was someone who straddled a border. As long as I hid my American attitude and spelling faux pas, I was able to get published in Canadian literary magazines. But because I now had a Canadian address, I found it difficult to get published in American magazines.

Later on, when I took an MFA at the University of British Columbia, my thesis advisor gave me the following advice: "If you expect to get Chasing After Carnival published up here, you'll have to change the location to a town in Canada."

No, the review wasn't a bad one. It maintained that I was a writer with promise. Had I not had a strong oppositional disorder, I might have given up the frivolous occupation of writing—and let's not fool ourselves, writing is a frivolous occupation, especially here in Canada where Canadians buy far more books by writers from other countries.

To date, I have published 38 Hekkanen titles and 20 issues of The New Orphic Review, which is now in its tenth year of publication. That is how I make my considerable living. I decided to go it alone in the mid-1990s, and now there are five writers in my New Orphicable. All of them have distinct voices not likely to be recognized by B.C. publishers.

I chose my particular path because it allowed me to flourish as a writer who employs many voices—in books that are unique in style and approach. My way of doing things has licensed me to be as creative as I can possibly be, in any genre I wish to tackle, without second-guessing whether I will find a publisher, because I inexorably do.

Writing has not only permitted me to make sense of this turbulent world, it has been my life preserver. I cling to it tenaciously, in opposition to the brutal times we live in and because I value something in myself that the larger society has little use for.

As Albert Camus said in his treatise on revolt, I am "a man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation."

Ernest Hekkanen's forthcoming book will be called Of a Fire Beyond the Hills, about the proposed Anti-War Monument in Nelson, that divided his community and led him to help finance its exhibition.

My way of doing things has licensed me to be as creative as I can possibly be.—Ernest Hekkanen
What do we do with the embarrassments in our literary history? The three novels by American-born Alex Philip (1882–1968) are a case in point.

Alex Philip, his wife, Myrtle Tapley Philip (1891–1986), are now mythologized as the “fearless pioneers” whose opening of Rainbow Lodge at Alta Lake in 1915, following the arrival of the PGE railway in 1914, initiated tourism in the Whistler Valley. The site of Rainbow Park preserves some of the resort’s early cabins and photographs, and a local elementary school is named after Myrtle, to honour her long record of community involvement.

Alongside the hard work of enlarging and managing the resort, which offered fishing in summer, skiing in winter, and by 1948 had become the most popular honeymoon destination west of Jasper, the ever entrepreneurial Alex found sufficient time and energy to pen three novels which exemplify the clichés of Western romance, transported to the coastal and interior landscape of BC: The Crimson Paradise (1924), The Painted Cliff (1927), and Whispering Leaves (1931). The Crimson Paradise, published by the Ottawa press (1924–32) that is now declared lost.

My curiosity about Philip’s books turned to dismay when I actually read them. In his efforts to exploit the BC landscape to create popular adventure fiction, Philip employed nearly every offensive stereotype of his age.

The Plot. The Crimson West is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain, The Painted Cliff, is a “crazed chief” with a gorgeous granddaughter who also loses her reason when deserted by her white lover. Whispering Leaves includes Mexicans and “Chinamen” who smuggle drugs and Asian labourers into the Cariboo. Of course most of the women are amorous wimps—“a veritable Rider of the Cariboo.”

These books are clearly not candidates for resurrection for the general reader. And I don’t think that undergraduates would get much out of them. If the racism of the 1920s is on the curriculum, students can read Milda Glynn-Ward’s notorious novel, The Writing on the Wall (1921), which was turned into an historical document when it was reissued in 1974, with an introduction by Patricia Roy, in the social history of Canada series edited by Michael Bliss for the University of Toronto Press.

What initially seemed to be an interesting discovery in relation to the literary history of BC—and a potential contribution to an historic identity for Whistler that is unrelated to the current Olympic frenzy—is now destined to gather dust in a remote corner of my bookshelf. I went out of my way to acquire copies of all three books, as the critic Helen Ward has not declared them lost. I actually read them. In his efforts to exploit the BC landscape to create popular adventure fiction, Philip employed nearly every offensive stereotype of his age.

The Plot. The Crimson West is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain, The Painted Cliff, is a “crazed chief” with a gorgeous granddaughter who also loses her reason when deserted by her white lover. Whispering Leaves includes Mexicans and “Chinamen” who smuggle drugs and Asian labourers into the Cariboo. Of course most of the women are amorous wimps—“a veritable Rider of the Cariboo.”

These books are clearly not candidates for resurrection for the general reader. And I don’t think that undergraduates would get much out of them. If the racism of the 1920s is on the curriculum, students can read Milda Glynn-Ward’s notorious novel, The Writing on the Wall (1921), which was turned into an historical document when it was reissued in 1974, with an introduction by Patricia Roy, in the social history of Canada series edited by Michael Bliss for the University of Toronto Press.

What initially seemed to be an interesting discovery in relation to the literary history of BC—and a potential contribution to an historic identity for Whistler that is unrelated to the current Olympic frenzy—is now destined to gather dust in a remote corner of my bookshelf. I went out of my way to acquire copies of all three books, as the critic Helen Ward has not declared them lost. I actually read them. In his efforts to exploit the BC landscape to create popular adventure fiction, Philip employed nearly every offensive stereotype of his age.

The Plot. The Crimson West is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain, The Painted Cliff, is a “crazed chief” with a gorgeous granddaughter who also loses her reason when deserted by her white lover. Whispering Leaves includes Mexicans and “Chinamen” who smuggle drugs and Asian labourers into the Cariboo. Of course most of the women are amorous wimps—“a veritable Rider of the Cariboo.”

These books are clearly not candidates for resurrection for the general reader. And I don’t think that undergraduates would get much out of them. If the racism of the 1920s is on the curriculum, students can read Milda Glynn-Ward’s notorious novel, The Writing on the Wall (1921), which was turned into an historical document when it was reissued in 1974, with an introduction by Patricia Roy, in the social history of Canada series edited by Michael Bliss for the University of Toronto Press.

What initially seemed to be an interesting discovery in relation to the literary history of BC—and a potential contribution to an historic identity for Whistler that is unrelated to the current Olympic frenzy—is now destined to gather dust in a remote corner of my bookshelf. I went out of my way to acquire copies of all three books, as the critic Helen Ward has not declared them lost. I actually read them. In his efforts to exploit the BC landscape to create popular adventure fiction, Philip employed nearly every offensive stereotype of his age.

The Plot. The Crimson West is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain, The Painted Cliff, is a “crazed chief” with a gorgeous granddaughter who also loses her reason when deserted by her white lover. Whispering Leaves includes Mexicans and “Chinamen” who smuggle drugs and Asian labourers into the Cariboo. Of course most of the women are amorous wimps—“a veritable Rider of the Cariboo.”

These books are clearly not candidates for resurrection for the general reader. And I don’t think that undergraduates would get much out of them. If the racism of the 1920s is on the curriculum, students can read Milda Glynn-Ward’s notorious novel, The Writing on the Wall (1921), which was turned into an historical document when it was reissued in 1974, with an introduction by Patricia Roy, in the social history of Canada series edited by Michael Bliss for the University of Toronto Press.

What initially seemed to be an interesting discovery in relation to the literary history of BC—and a potential contribution to an historic identity for Whistler that is unrelated to the current Olympic frenzy—is now destined to gather dust in a remote corner of my bookshelf. I went out of my way to acquire copies of all three books, as the critic Helen Ward has not declared them lost. I actually read them. In his efforts to exploit the BC landscape to create popular adventure fiction, Philip employed nearly every offensive stereotype of his age.

The Plot. The Crimson West is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain, The Painted Cliff, is a “crazed chief” with a gorgeous granddaughter who also loses her reason when deserted by her white lover. Whispering Leaves includes Mexicans and “Chinamen” who smuggle drugs and Asian labourers into the Cariboo. Of course most of the women are amorous wimps—“a veritable Rider of the Cariboo.”

These books are clearly not candidates for resurrection for the general reader. And I don’t think that undergraduates would get much out of them. If the racism of the 1920s is on the curriculum, students can read Milda Glynn-Ward’s notorious novel, The Writing on the Wall (1921), which was turned into an historical document when it was reissued in 1974, with an introduction by Patricia Roy, in the social history of Canada series edited by Michael Bliss for the University of Toronto Press.

What initially seemed to be an interesting discovery in relation to the literary history of BC—and a potential contribution to an historic identity for Whistler that is unrelated to the current Olympic frenzy—is now destined to gather dust in a remote corner of my bookshelf. I went out of my way to acquire copies of all three books, as the critic Helen Ward has not declared them lost. I actually read them. In his efforts to exploit the BC landscape to create popular adventure fiction, Philip employed nearly every offensive stereotype of his age.

The Plot. The Crimson West is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain, The Painted Cliff, is a “crazed chief” with a gorgeous granddaughter who also loses her reason when deserted by her white lover. Whispering Leaves includes Mexicans and “Chinamen” who smuggle drugs and Asian labourers into the Cariboo. Of course most of the women are amorous wimps—“a veritable Rider of the Cariboo.”

These books are clearly not candidates for resurrection for the general reader. And I don’t think that undergraduates would get much out of them. If the racism of the 1920s is on the curriculum, students can read Milda Glynn-Ward’s notorious novel, The Writing on the Wall (1921), which was turned into an historical document when it was reissued in 1974, with an introduction by Patricia Roy, in the social history of Canada series edited by Michael Bliss for the University of Toronto Press.

What initially seemed to be an interesting discovery in relation to the literary history of BC—and a potential contribution to an historic identity for Whistler that is unrelated to the current Olympic frenzy—is now destined to gather dust in a remote corner of my bookshelf. I went out of my way to acquire copies of all three books, as the critic Helen Ward has not declared them lost. I actually read them. In his efforts to exploit the BC landscape to create popular adventure fiction, Philip employed nearly every offensive stereotype of his age.

The Plot. The Crimson West is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain, The Painted Cliff, is a “crazed chief” with a gorgeous granddaughter who also loses her reason when deserted by her white lover. Whispering Leaves includes Mexicans and “Chinamen” who smuggle drugs and Asian labourers into the Cariboo. Of course most of the women are amorous wimps—“a veritable Rider of the Cariboo.”
Killing yields
Your review of the book A Long Way Gone by the former boy soldier Ishmael Beah ([BCBW Summer]) was a great relief to me. I have been hesitant to discuss my reaction to this book. Now I know there are others who also believe there were too many factors that made this a much less than believable book about a subject that needs honest reflection. It is not surprising to me that there was little enlightenment about the author's own capacity to kill.

Most who have been to war are not able to admit it much less describe it on a personal basis but there were too many inexplicable gaps and very little insight on transitioning from a world of death and destruction to gaining or regaining the thin veneer of civilization. I could not recommend the purchase of so suspicious a book on such an important topic.

Bill Bush
Vancouver

Ryganomics
I’ve just picked up the latest edition of B.C. Bookworld. I always look forward to it coming out. The photo and article on the George Ryga Award made my day! Thank you very much for promoting this wonderful award for social awareness in B.C. Literature. I feel strongly that these voices are needed to be heard. I’m also sure that George Ryga would also appreciate your kindness as well as the great work you do in promoting the stories and the story tellers in our part of the world! Thanks again!

Reg Kienast
Armstrong

Alcatraz calling
It is long overdue to say BC Bookworld just seems to get better all the time. You provide splendid coverage of local author news and book goings-on in B.C. Being a full-time scrivener, isolated on the Flow-ered Alcatraz of Vancouver Island, your magazine helps keep me up to date with activities in the real world.

Sidney Allinson
Cowichan

Corrections
I am a regular reader of BC Bookworld. Having read Running Uphill by Fil Fraser, I was interested to read your article on page 3 of the Summer issue. I was surprised and disappointed to see two errors. Harry Jerome was not the only black athlete in his high school—his friend Paul Wimm is regularly quoted in the book and attended the same school. He was even a better known athlete and student during their early days at North Van. The second sentence refers to his becoming the first human to run 100 metres in ten seconds flat. Not so! When he ran his world record time in Saskatoon, he tied the world record. It had been set earlier by Armin Hary of Germany—hence he was the second human to run this time.

L. Thompson
via email

Miner success
Your issue [BCBW Spring] has outdone previous issues. I also want to thank you for the great exposure you have given my Bill Miner book. While I have not been able to determine its impact on sales, I have had a few emails from fellow independently published authors for advice and commiseration following my comments on why I self-published. And I recently received an email from the BC Historical Federation advising me that I have received an Honourable Mention citation for BC historical writing. We have gone into a third printing.

Peter Grauer
Kamloops

Pauline Woodward
Pauline Woodward passed away on July 28, 2007, a few days short of her 93rd birthday. “She was a great supporter,” says publisher Howard White. “One of the old guard who was in it because she really loved the biz.” Woodward owned and operated Pauline’s Books, a full-service general bookstore that operated on Denman Street, in Vancouver’s West End, for many years. “Pauline will be remembered by the thousands of booklovers that frequented her shop for her dry sense of humour and no-nonsense approach to the business of life and literature,” says Walter Bruce Sinclair, of White Dwarf Books. “Her death marks the end of an era, the era that came before the onslaught of featureless chain and online outlets, an era before books themselves became featureless commodities, conveyed from press to shelf without ever touching human flesh. There was no computer, not even a cash register, on Pauline’s counter. You took the book from her hand—and it was, if you were wise, the one she recommended. She, and her era, will be missed.”

Bruce Serafin

“The Writer’s studio gave me the confidence to own the craft.”
— Gurinder Basran, TNS 2006

38 BC BOOKWORLD AUTUMN 2007
The glass is half full, not half empty

As your public library expands electronically and socially, Paul Whitney looks backwards and forwards at the status of one of society’s most important institutions, the meeting place where ideas are still freely available—in conjunction with the Internet.

An invitation to reflect on B.C.’s book culture takes me back to 1957 when Alan Twigg pitched the idea of BC BookWorld to a small group of public librarians at the 7th Avenue office of the Association of Book Publishers of B.C. Ever since then our public libraries have been key distribution points for this egalitarian of publications about books.

Back in 1987 the changes in our physical and virtual world caused by immigration from Asia and the arrival of the Internet were largely unanticipated. It is intriguing to note that in spite of, or because of these changes, libraries have grown in use and presence in our communities while bookstores have seen dramatic and, based on today’s reality, negative change.

An unprecedented and continuing library building boom since the early 1990s has included the Burnaby Public Library Bob Prittie Metrotown Branch, Richmond’s Brighouse Library, the Port Moody Main Library, Vancouver’s Moshe Safdie-designed Library Square and the Renfrew Branch, Parkgate Branch in North Van District, a new main library in Abbotsford and new branches on Vancouver Island. This is a remarkable affirmation of the importance of public libraries in our communities.

While library use has increased steadily over the past 20 years, in part spurred on by the new facilities, the nature of library use has profoundly changed. These changes have necessarily affected B.C. publishing.

From an overarching perspective, changing library use is most notably marked by significant increases in the borrowing of books for use by children and the borrowing of non-English language books and audio visual materials (CDs, DVDs, audio books...). The Internet has supplanted the library as the place to get an answer to a quick information question and certain categories of non-fiction publishing have experienced declining use.

Legal titles such as Will’s for British Columbia and travel guides used to be in constant and high demand, but this is less so now as the Internet is seen as a viable alternative for such time sensitive factual information.

It would seem inconceivable now that the Encyclopedia of British Columbia would be developed as a print-only publication. Public libraries used to be “the long tail” in our communities; the place you would go to get an out-of-print or obscure book title. Now, Advanced Book Exchange (ABEbooks) or the myriad of specialty dealers on the net provide more extensive options for those who can afford to buy. What the Internet cannot replicate is the serendipity of finding your perfect book by chance on a library shelf.

Despite all the changes underway, librarians receive ample evidence that books do change lives. One of the most satisfying things that can happen for a librarian is to receive confirmation of this belief and to learn that books you had a hand in making available have fulfilled this role.

Recently I heard a Governor General award-winning poet talk about the effect on her work of reading Alice in Wonderland borrowed from a local library as a 13-year-old. Similarly, one of Vancouver’s most accomplished photographers spoke of the profound impact of the novels of Philip K. Dick. I can recall ordering those books for the branch library he used more than 25 years ago.

There is no doubt in my mind that the public library network in B.C. is and will continue to be an integral part of the province’s ecosystem of publishing and reading. Libraries are committed to fostering a love of reading in young children, thereby developing the coming generations of readers.

We provide access to the wealth of new books is–sued each year and we will ensure that B.C. books past, present and future will be readily available.

But all is not rosy. Given the pre-eminence of a select few titles in the consciousness of the majority of readers (Da Vinci Code, Harry Potter) I have a nagging fear that the mainstays of our cultural output (short story collections and poetry primarily) will have a harder time finding an audience.

And no one predicted the upheaval that has occurred in retail book selling, particularly in Greater Vancouver. My awareness of the current moribund state of book retailing in Vancouver has only been heightened by recent visits to Victoria, Seattle and Portland, all of which have independent booksellers providing superior stock and service for the informed reader.

One bright light in the local scene is Vancouver Kidsbooks which gives some hope for the future of book selling in the region; Book Warehouse appears to be going strong; and, of course, it’s heartening to note that Durrhie Books, albeit reduced to one outlet, is celebrating its 50th year in business.

Nonetheless, looking back to 1987, it’s easy to see a rise and fall. We shifted from a modest but predictable independent bookseller presence to, for want of a better phrase, the short-lived golden age of book retailing in the mid-to-late 1990s, only to shift backwards into the doldrums.

Dublin-born Paul Whitney is Vancouver Public Library’s Chief Librarian. He played a leadership role in the evolution of the Lower Mainland library federation, InterLINK, which allows open access to library services for all residents of the area. He has served as president of the British Columbia Library Association (BCLA), the Canadian Library Association (CLA), and chaired the Council of Administrators of Large Urban Public Libraries. He is the Canadian appointee to the Copyright and Other Legal Matters Committee (CLM) of the International Federation of Library Associations. In 2002 he received the Canadian Library Association Outstanding Service to Librarianship Award, and the B.C. Library Association President’s Award.

Paul Whitney
The most important thing to say, after twenty years of making *BC BookWorld*, is thank you.

by ALAN TWIGG

Thank you to our readers. Thank you to our B.C. authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and cultural services in Victoria. Thank you to our 700 distributors. Thank you to our advertisers, some of whom have been with us, continuously, since 1987. Thank you to our delivery guy, Ken Reid, who has been with us for about seventeen years. Thank you to the gentle ghost of the late Russell Kelly (I’m still using the rolodex, Russell.) And thank you to Emiko Morita, Katja Pantzar and Lisa Kerr.

Thank you to our printers, Kodiak Press, especially Shannon, Danny and Hollie, who are good shepherds, every three months. Thank you to NewsGroup, BC Ferries, Kingdom Photo, U&I Type, Canpar, Coast Mailing and Microzip.

Thank you to our board of directors, for not directing me: Jean Barman, Margaret Reynolds, Andreas Schroeder, Paul Whitney, Rowly Lorimer, Lynn Copeland, Don Stewart, Howard White, as well as former director Jane Rule and the much-missed George Woodcock.

Thank you to SFU Library and Todd Holbrook for engineering and hosting our abcbookworld reference site, allowing us to provide information for and about more than 8,500 B.C. authors. Thanks to the Association of Book Publishers of B.C. and the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing and the Vancouver Public Library... and all the other groups we have worked with over the years to sponsor and present events. Thanks to early guiding lights such as Tony Gregson, Bob Mercer and Bill Barringer.

Thanks to Tom Shandel who helped us make those documentary films about B.C. authors. And thanks to bookkeeper Elaine Kearing and accountant Scott Palmer.

Thanks to the delightful Wendy Atkinson for her invaluable proofreading, and her steadfast support, along with my mam, Betty Twigg, who has proofread almost every issue, even after being hit by a taxi in a crosswalk.

Thanks to the Association of Book Publishers of B.C. and the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing and the Vancouver Public Library... and all the other groups we have worked with over the years to sponsor and present events. Thanks to early guiding lights such as Tony Gregson, Bob Mercer and Bill Barringer.

Thanks to Tom Shandel who helped us make those documentary films about B.C. authors. And thanks to bookkeeper Elaine Kearing and accountant Scott Palmer.

And thanks to more recent beacons, my sons Jeremy and Martin, who have wisely flown the coop and got real jobs, but who still don’t mind showing me how to do stuff.

Thank you to everyone who has enabled us to continue to have this privilege of providing as much information as possible, about as many B.C. books as possible, to as many people as possible, throughout Canada.

We are blessed to be doing what we are doing, chuckling every day, happy when the phone doesn’t ring, working, working, working. Most of the time we are as happy as the fish in Tara’s fish pond outside our window.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

To recognize our 20th anniversary, we have organized a get-together for book culture types called Reckoning 07, a literary Be-In, at Simon Fraser University downtown. In concert with that gathering, we’ve put together this rather unusual 20th anniversary issue, breaking the mold, just once, dispensing with the usual potpourri of middle-brow articles about books and inviting some folks to contribute memoirs and opinions.

After Reckoning 07, we’ll instigate, in conjunction with our friends at SFU Library, a new public reference site so everyone can record their own versions of our mutual history. So that’s the latest crusade. My colleague David Lester and I have no plans to quit.

Alan Twigg has produced *BC BookWorld* since 1987. You can write to BC BookWorld c/o bookworld@telus.net

---

ON THE NAKUSP OF THINGS

This summer, instead of attending the Writers Union meetings at UBC, I drove to the Kootenays for a gathering of writers in Nakusp. In mid-afternoon I asked everyone to take over the main street for a photo, whereupon, completely unbidden, Ken Firth performed a perfect somersault in the middle of the road. I like the way the acrobat’s hands straddle the white line. At B.C. BookWorld, David Lester and I are about halfway through our life expectancy. That is, we expect to continue making this cultural newspaper for at least another twenty years—if you’ll keep reading it. We feel we are in middle ground, with one hand in the past, another in the future, precariously balanced.— A.T.

---

ON THE NAKUSP OF THINGS

by ALAN TWIGG

To our delightful Wendy Atkinson for her invaluable proofreading, and her steadfast support, along with my mam, Betty Twigg, who has proofread almost every issue, even after being hit by a taxi in a crosswalk.

Thanks to the Association of Book Publishers of B.C. and the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing and the Vancouver Public Library... and all the other groups we have worked with over the years to sponsor and present events. Thanks to early guiding lights such as Tony Gregson, Bob Mercer and Bill Barringer.

Thanks to Tom Shandel who helped us make those documentary films about B.C. authors. And thanks to bookkeeper Elaine Kearing and accountant Scott Palmer.

And thanks to more recent beacons, my sons Jeremy and Martin, who have wisely flown the coop and got real jobs, but who still don’t mind showing me how to do stuff.

Thank you to everyone who has enabled us to continue to have this privilege of providing as much information as possible, about as many B.C. books as possible, to as many people as possible, throughout Canada.

We are blessed to be doing what we are doing, chuckling every day, happy when the phone doesn’t ring, working, working, working. Most of the time we are as happy as the fish in Tara’s fish pond outside our window.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

---

Call for Submissions

24th Annual BC BookPrizes

APRIL 26, 2008

For submission info, visit www.bcbookprizes.ca or call 604.687.2405. Submission deadline: December

---

The Last Word

41 BC BookWorld Autumn 2007