

FREE

YOUR GUIDE TO BOOKS & AUTHORS • DISTRIBUTED BY 700 OUTLETS IN BC

THANK YOU TO OUR READERS & DISTRIBUTORS • 1987-2007

VOL. 21 • NO. 3 • AUTUMN • 2007

BC

BOOKWORLD

th won nd onlee

bill bissett

Winner of the **George Woodcock**
Lifetime Achievement Award. SEE P. 13

FIND
MORE THAN

8500

B.C. AUTHORS

www.abcbookworld.com

LAURA SANCHUK / TRIPLE AAA PHOTO

RECKONING
2007

16 ESSAYS INSIDE



20th

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

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 consider.

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.

I HAVE FIVE GENERATIONS OF ANCESTORS who have approved of the name British Columbia—but increasingly I ask myself why other places on the planet have seen fit to jettison that adjective British, rejecting their colonial names and redefining themselves, whereas we haven't even talked about it.

The archaic name of British Columbia is not a burning issue. It doesn't haunt anyone's dreams.

Of course it would be costly to change it. And we'd have difficulty deciding on a new name.

But it's a literary issue that has intrigued me for decades. Anyone interested in onomastics—the study of names and naming practices—might be entertained by a brief enquiry into the origins of our province's name.

Before we consider getting a new name, it's a good idea to understand how we got the old one.

To understand the genesis of the name British Columbia, you can consult **Jean Barman's** *The West Beyond The West* or perhaps the Akriggs' *British Columbia Chronicle 1847-1871*.

Or you can contact the experts on naming things, the folks who are members of the Canadian Society for the Study of Names or the American Name Society founded in 1951.

But it's a lot quicker to Google the answer from Wikipedia.

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 Columbus, 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. Columba, 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 combined an adjective that



Reckoning 07

ALAN TWIGG

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 Waldseemuller** 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. After **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.

So 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 *Encyclopedia 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).

"Sticking 'British' in front was consistent with the naming method used

all over the empire, as in 'British East Africa,' 'British Guiana,' 'British Honduras,' etc. As the Akriggs wrote, 'It preserved the name of the empire lost to the Americans and at the same time it served as a reminder that a portion of it had been saved, to grow and mature in another tradition.'

"I am sure this is closer to the Queen's thinking and that of her advisors than the idea she was naming it after the Columbia River or the Columbia District, which by this time had been formally ceded to the US. So I think it is a bit of a short circuit to say B.C. was named after an American ship and an Irish saint. There is a connection, but it is not the main one."

Okay, okay.

The name of British Columbia is acceptable if we want to respect the wishes of a British queen who never saw the place.

But is that good enough?

Do the majority of British Columbians want to be defined as a British post-colonialists?

Let's have a vote.

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.

BC

BOOKWORLD

Autumn Issue
Vol. 21, No. 3

Publisher/ Writer: **Alan Twigg**

Editor/Production: **David Lester**

Publication Mail Agreement #40010086

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: BC BookWorld, 3516 W. 13th Ave., Vancouver, BC V6R 2S3

Produced with the sponsorship of **Pacific BookWorld News Society**. Publications Mail Registration No. 7800.

BC BookWorld ISSN: 1701-5405

Advertising & editorial: **BC BookWorld, 3516 W. 13th Ave., Vancouver, B.C., V6R 2S3. Tel/Fax: 604-736-4011 • Email: available on request. Annual subscription: \$19.08**

Contributors: Grant Shilling, Mark Forsythe, Sheila Munro, Joan Givner, Louise Donnelly, Hannah Main-van der Kamp, Heather Ramsay, Cherie Thiessen, Shane McCune.

Writing not otherwise credited is by staff.

Photographers: Barry Peterson, Laura Sawchuk.

Proofreaders: Wendy Atkinson, Betty Twigg.

Design: Get-to-the-Point Graphics. Deliveries: Ken Reid

We acknowledge the assistance of Canada Council and the Province of British Columbia, through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services.

THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS SINCE 1957

LE CONSEIL DES ARTS DU CANADA DEPUIS 1957

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARTS COUNCIL

We acknowledge the support of the Province of British Columbia through the British Columbia Arts Council

All BC BookWorld reviews are posted online at www.abcbookworld.com

INDEX

to Advertisers

Annick Press...35

Arsenal Pulp Press...16

Banyen Books...35

BC Book Prizes...41

BC Historical Federation...33

Bolen Books...20

Book Warehouse...29

Caitlin Press...26

Crown Publications...20

Douglas & McIntyre...2

Douglas College/EVENT...35

Ekstasis Editions...28

Ellis, David...33

Federation of BC Writers...33

Friesens Printers...42

George Ryga Prize...23

Galiano Island Books...40

Granville Island Publishing...42

Harbour Publishing...44

HarperCollins...26

Heritage House...4

Hignell Printing...42

Jardine, Lori Beale...35

Lammar Printing...43

Leaf Press...33

Literary Press Group...8, 35, 40

Maa Press...39

McArthur & Co...15

McKee Screenwriting...35

New Society Publishers...22

New Star Books...35, 37, 40

NeWest Press...35, 40

Now or Never Publishing...8

O'Keeffe, Toni...33

Oolichan Books...16

Orca Books...24

Penguin Books...18

People's Co-Op Books...40

Playwrights Canada Press...37

Positive Connections...40

Printorium...42

Ronsdale Press...7

Royal BC Museum...8

Salal Press...40

Save-On Foods...20

Self-Counsel Press...26

SFU Writer's Studio...38

SFU Writing & Publishing...15

Sidney Booktown...37

Sono Nis Press...12

TalonBooks...10

Thistledown...35, 37

Thomas Allen...30, 33

Thomson, Ann...40

Timeless Books...40

UBC Press...8

U. of Toronto Press...33

Vancouver Desktop...42

Vancouver Writers' Festival...18

Wayzygoose SFU...42

Woewoda, James...42

Wood Lake Publishing...30

Yoka's Coffee...20

TO ADVERTISE CALL **604-736-4011**

3 BC BOOKWORLD AUTUMN 2007

FIRST FIRST NATIONS BESTSELLER: GEORGE CLUTESI

Anephew 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 and felt powerless so avoided the issue as much as possible.

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 her and she would be sitting in her chair knitting or weaving. With her hands moving steadily on her craftwork she could slam somebody quite harshly in her gentle voice.

Uncle Georgie and Auntie Margaret lived in an unusual house for an Indian reserve. It may have appeared nor-

mal for a middle to high class neighbourhood anywhere else other than an Indian reserve. It had a long gravel driveway coming off the Pacific Rim Highway, which we used to know as Sproat Lake Road.

Past the entrance to the driveway was a small shed where George used to paint, write, and meditate. The yard was quite large with a well-manicured lawn, an abundance of fruit trees, berry bushes, and flowers. The house was always immaculately clean.

I always felt intimidated walking along the driveway up to Uncle and Auntie's house. It seemed so out of place; so different than the other houses and yards on our reserve.

My first real encounter with Uncle Georgie was in the Alberni Indian Residential School in the early 1960s. By the time I attended, the school was massive with a half a dozen or so large outbuildings, but it was a much smaller building during his schooldays.

Being a creative soul with a great sense of humour, Uncle Georgie left the traditional Tseshaht mark on the school. Be-

tween the boys' side and the girls' side was an auditorium capable of holding more than 300 people. There was a foyer outside the auditorium door. This is where the rope was to pull the large bell to signal for mealtimes, church times etc.

On the foyer floor George created a beautiful motif using the floor tiles. It was an image of a whale with a thunderbird on its back. This motif within a circle is what our tribe, Tseshaht, still to this day use as our logo. I believe



it was Uncle Georgie's way of marking the spot as traditional Tseshaht land. That piece of property has since been returned by the United Church of Canada to the Tseshaht tribe.

Uncle Georgie could see what the Indian residential school was doing to our culture. He was okay about teaching kids from other nations our songs and dances. Later he started a dance group on our reserve.

I recall Uncle Georgie asking me once why I had not joined up with his dance group. He told me I was Tseshaht and the dance group sang and danced to Tseshaht songs, my songs and dances.

I was dumbfounded. I knew I loved the songs and dances. I did not know then I was feeling shame about being Indian. He never pressured me.

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

Our people felt he was selling out our culture. This feeling extended further to his published works. When *Son of Raven*, *Son of Deer* was first published he was far from being a hero on our reserve.

I admire him. He persevered. He published more books and got into acting and did well at it.

Despite his fame he never looked down on any

Tseshaht person. He was always welcoming. He was also forgiving.

Slowly, the feelings of Tseshaht people changed up to the point of pride for his accomplishments. Now it is well understood he was instrumental in preserving and promoting Tseshaht culture.

Uncle 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 writing of the book. Like an unseasoned publisher fool I believed her to the point of mocking up a book and advertising it. What a heartbreaker! I don't even know if she ever returned the material to the Clutesis.

I was glad Uncle and Auntie didn't hold anything against me for the failure of the project. Instead, our relationship drew closer. After that, I never felt intimidated entering that long driveway.

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.

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

— RANDY FRED

George Clutesi

HOW THE WEST WAS WRITTEN

As 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.

WHEN **PELÉ** CAME TO VANCOUVER IN 1972, only our family showed up at the airport to see him.

Having lived in Brazil while my husband Roderick, a newly-arrived UBC historian, was completing his doctorate, we were among the soccer star's devoted fans. Pelé didn't seem to mind that we constituted the city's unofficial welcoming committee and chatted amicably.

At the far edge of the soccer universe, Vancouver was a very different place a generation ago, as that anecdote indicates.

And I was different, too. A sense of detachment toward my new home echoed the city's apparent lack of curiosity towards newcomers.

My expertise in Russian foreign policy seemed a world away, and I was comfortable with my childhood stereotype of totem poles set against the Rocky Mountains, as featured in the *National Geographic*.

I had little notion then I would reinvent myself as a B.C. historian.

New journals and books first tweaked my attention. *BC Studies*, which I would later co-edit, began in 1969, and the *Raincoast Chronicles* and *Sound Heritage* series three years later.

Robin Fisher's landmark *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, was published by UBC Press in 1977.

Rolf Knight's counter-narrative, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Indian Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930* appeared from New Star in 1978.

That same year **Peter Ward's** innovative *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* appeared from McGill-Queen's University Press.

The 1980s were a turning point for British Columbian history.

About the time UBC Press accepted my first book, *Growing Up British in British Columbia: Boys in Private School*, I was invited to 'integrate' the Vancouver Centennial Commission established to celebrate the city's 100th anniversary in 1986 by becoming its first female member.

The Literary Arts and History Resources Committees, which I chaired, became vehicles not only for encouraging writing and publishing but for spearheading the BC Book Prizes.

The Literary Arts Committee reformed itself in its entirety, except for me due to a possible conflict of interest, to initiate the prizes, which from 1985 onwards annually honour the best of B.C. writers, writing, and publishers.

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 privilege. 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



Reckoning 07

JEAN BARMAN

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 *Sojourning Sisters: The Lives and Letters of Jessie and Annie McQueen*, about two young Maritimers 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 Northwest Coast*, co-written with **Jan Hare**, appeared with UBC Press as a reminder that the entire province is integral to British Columbian history. *Maria Mahoi of the Islands* was placed with New Star and *The Remarkable Adventures of Portuguese Joe Silvey 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. British Columbian history is all of our responsibilities.

Jean Barman is working on two book manuscripts, tentatively entitled "Lost British Columbia: A history of Aboriginal interraciality" 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.

HOW OUR ENCYCLOPEDIA WAS BORN

If 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.

THE *EBC* BEGAN AS THE GERM OF 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's liking, 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 that point—it was 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 Howie was there on business. I commissioned an article 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-impaired 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 Zuckerman**.

As I say, it was 1990. Looking ahead, I calculated that in 1992 much fuss would be made about the 200th anniversary of **Captain Vancouver's** arrival on the coast. The public coffers would 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 would celebrate 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, singlehandedly, in two years. In the event, it would take ten, and the assistance of many contributors.

Naiveté 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 his 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 be-

gan 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 inducted 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 reached toward the ceiling.

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

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 same house in North Vancouver that she and her family had lived in when they immigrated to Canada in the early 1950s. She recalled particularly the large sawdust burning furnace in the basement and leaping into 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 contributors, I could 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 to 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 it 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 decided that we better 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? So we delayed for another year and submitted the entire text to another vetting.

Finally, in the year 2000, we celebrated the new millennium by launching the book with a huge party at the Vancouver Public Library, inviting all the people who had contributed to the finished product. The book was such a success that it made us all look like we knew what we were doing. In fact, most of the time we were flying by the seat of our pants. As I said on the night the book won a pair of BC Book Prizes, Howie and I both sensed from the beginning that if we waited to raise the necessary money, to set up the editorial committees, to consult all the experts, and 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.



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

— DANIEL FRANCIS



REMEMBERING R2B2: A NAÏF'S STORY

"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.



Reckoning 07

RENEE RODIN

In the mid-eighties I worked at Octopus West, a wonderful used bookstore in the 2100 block of West 4th in Kitsilano. "Brownie" (**P.R. 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. So that's what I sold them for. I soon 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 instalment 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 a faulty extension cord. I learned later he had also been an ethical marijuana dealer and there were many high school kids, including mine, at his funeral.

Most of our stock and the store were water-damaged. Our insurance just covered our move to a tiny spot at 2742 West 4th Avenue in January of 1987, next to the Naam restaurant, and in the same block as Ariel Books, run by **Margo Dunn**.

Billy, who remained involved in the store for its first couple of years, suggested changing our name to R2B2 Books to signify our second time around. Even though we carried little science fiction, the name stuck.

Poetry was as vital to my generation as music and movies. As a baby beatnik in Montreal in the early sixties I'd loved going to readings in small bookstores and at coffee houses.

I'd visited Vancouver before but moved there in 68. In the sixties and seventies I attended memorable readings at **Milton Acorn's** Advanced Mattress and at Intermedia. I also remember readings curated by **Trudy Rubinfeld** at See Site, the photography workshop she ran with

Rhoda Rosenfeld. There were readings at Mona Fertig's Literary Storefront, where I worked for a while. Jules and Brownie hosted events at their stores, too.

For me having readings was part and parcel of having a bookstore so I started a weekly series as soon as R & B Books opened. I have yet to unearth who gave the first reading in October 1986. But it was interrupted by **P.X. Belinsky** with whom I'd just ended a relationship.

P.X. Belinsky, a brilliant writer and also the enfant terrible of the Vancouver literary scene, had a compulsion to disrupt readings when he got drunk. He heckled many poets including **Allen Ginsberg** and **Robert Creeley**, who were part of a series organized by **Warren Tallman** at the Italian Cultural Centre.

The series at R2B2 kept attracting great writers because of the writers who read there. Some of the participants

were **bill bissett**, **Robin Blaser**, **George Bowering**, **Carole Chambers**, **Judith Copithorne**, **Margaret Dragu**, **Maxine Gadd**, **Gladys (Maria) Hindmarch**, **Avron Hoffman**, **Jam Ismail**, **Carole Itter**, **SKY Lee**, **Billy Little**, **Dorothy Livesay**, **Lee Maracle**, **Daphne Marlatt**, **Al Neil**, **Miranda Pearson**, **Stan Persky**, **Helen Potrebenco**, **Jamie Reid**, **Lisa Robertson**, **Rhoda Rosenfeld**, **Tom Sandborn**, **George Stanley**, **Goh Poh Seng**, **Sharon Thesen**, **Warren Tallman**, **Ed Varney**, **Victoria Walker**, **Betsy Warland**, **Charles Watts** and **Fred Wah**.

As well, writers such as **Dionne Brand**, **Di Brandt**, **Nicole Brossard** and **David McFadden** came from different parts of Canada, and writers came from Australia, Britain and the United States, including **Diane di Prima**. The audiences were extremely attentive so 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

out 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 always 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, 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 toke up. 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.

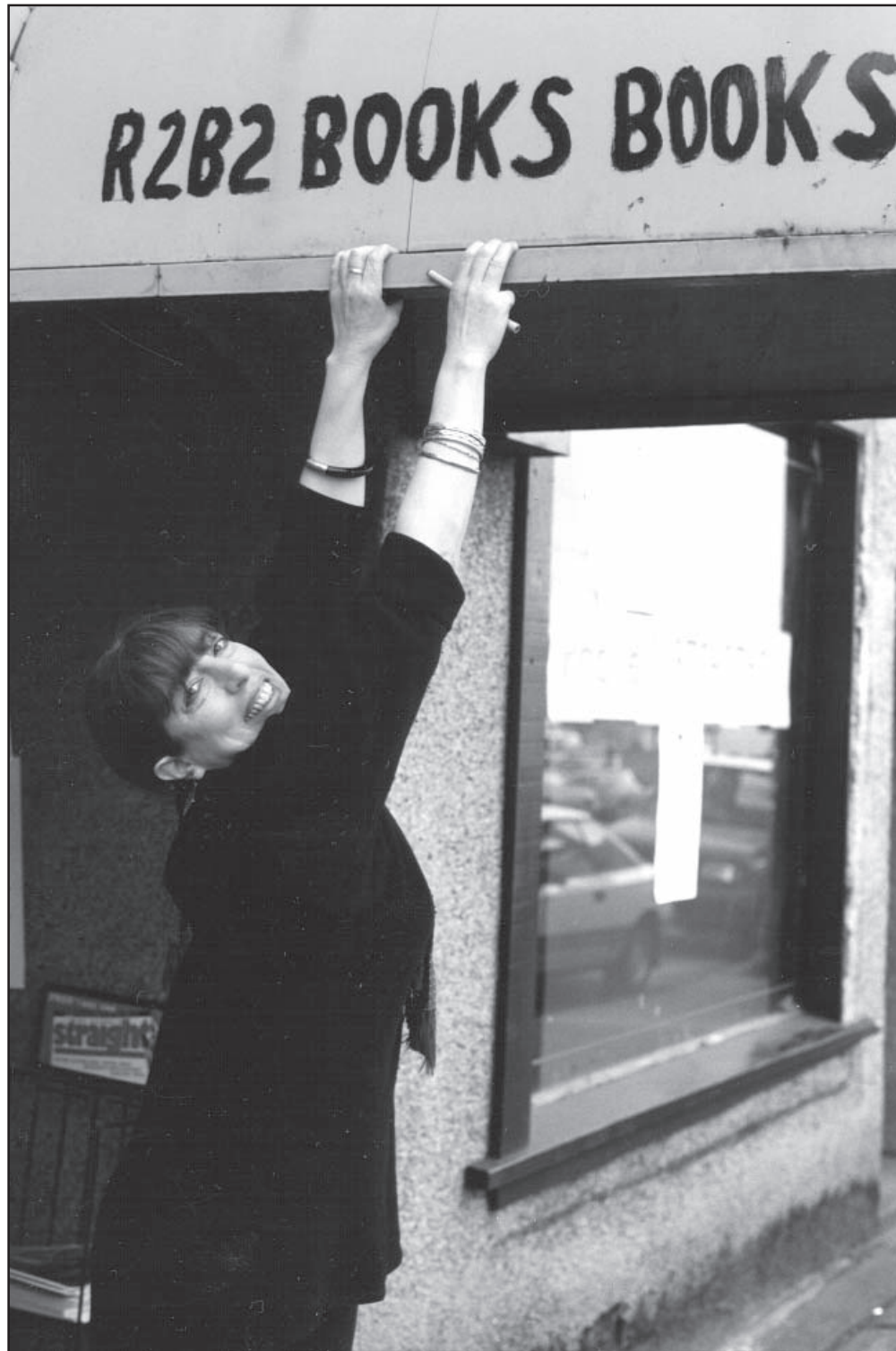
Mainly because of the series' reputation, I was able to sell R2B2 in 1994 to **Denise** and **Trent Hignel** who renamed it Black Sheep Books. They continued the readings for the next three years before they sold it to **George Kroller** who continued for another three years. So the weekly series went 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, bill 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," bill 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 the TISH poetry movement was forming at UBC, bissett, according to his Talonbooks publisher **Karl Siegler**, was "universally recognized as one of the grooviest, stonedest, weird freaks—one of the great Olympians of the Kitsilano hippie scene."

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 tempul* OR *the jinx ship n othr trips* (*Very Stone*

continued on page 14



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.

"bill bissett is my astral twin"
—MARGARET ATWOOD

"bill bissett is a one-man culture...
he is a lesson to us all." —JAMES REANEY

"The greatest living poet today"
—JACK KEROUAC ON BILL BISSETT,
PARIS REVIEW

continued from page 13

House/blewointment) as well as *we sleep inside each other all* (**bp nichol's** Ganglia Press).

In 1966, after speaking out against the Vietnam war on a CBC-TV documentary, bissett 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, bissett 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 bissett's life occurred at a Kitsilano house party in 1969.

Having performed earlier in the evening at a concrete poetry show, bissett 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." (The door had been unlatched to let the cat downstairs for its milk. A two-year court case was won by the insurance company and bissett never received any compensation.)

bissett was paralyzed and catatonic, and about to be sent to Riverview for electric shock treatments, when an internist neurologist rescued him by correctly diagnosing his inter-cerebral bleeding.

After an emergency operation, bissett 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. bissett 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 bissett would be dead within a week. The case was dropped.

bissett's poetry was the subject of a six-month brouhaha in Parliament in 1977-78 over the fact that

LAURA SAWCHUK / TRIPPLE AAA PHOTO



"a civil n demokratik societee without support uv th arts will sink in2 brutalitee...."

—bill bissett

taxpayers were subsidizing allegedly profane poetry. A nucleus of Conservatives led by Fraser Valley West MP **Bob Wenman** complained to the Canada Council about grants to bissett's main publishers since the mid-1970s, Talonbooks. The controversy arose from material in a book by CJOR hotliner **Ed Murphy** called *A Legacy of Spending* in which bissett's work was reprinted without permission.

"I'm a taxpayer, too," bissett later responded, "but I don't tell an engineer how to build a bridge."

The defence of bissett 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*. bissett recalls, "th censorios n akusing buzzards wer kept at bay 4 ovr 2 yeers warren tallman held a yeer uv huge poetree reedings dfending my self n othr poets n blewointment n othr small presses n great lawyr friend sid simons prepared writs 2 serv."

To silence their critics, bissett 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 bissett 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

bill bissett
has humourously written that he was "on th first shutful uv childrn from lunaria 2 erth i was with th othr childrn combing th orange life evree morning the main sours uv enerjee on lunaria i came 2 b heer on erth as part uv a reserch teem 2 undrstad erth wayze iuv bin heer 300 years in lunarian time n am getting nowher..."

1982. Two friends paid off bissett's creditors and kept blewointment afloat on an interim basis. After 20 years of Vancouver-based activity, the press was moved to Ontario. It has re-emerged back in B.C. as Nightwood Editions, chiefly managed by **Silas White**.

bissett comments "now publishing in bc is huge," he says, "totalee multifasitid

vigourous n prinsipuld n tho th forces against art n kultur may try 2 stamp us out we continu on with sew manee voices sew manee platforms ull uv wch is totalee necessaree 2 a civil n demokratik societee without support uv th arts a countree will sink in2 brutalitee.... th rite wing nevr sleeps."

As much a painter as he is a poet, bissett 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 bissett's art, curated by **Scott Watson**, in 1984, called *fires in th tempul*. "The magical world of the child," wrote Watson, "with all his libidinal precociousness, is what bissett 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 bissett has been one of the most original and widely appreciated poets Canada has ever produced.

Since the 1990s, bissett 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.

bissett'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 *inkorrekthots*, and in 2003, for *peter among th trowing boxes*) and he received the Milton Acorn People's Poet Award in 1991. Capilano College devoted its 25th anniversary issue to bissett in 1997, edited by **Patrick Friesen**, in concert with a tribute at the Vancouver Writers Festival.

Following an art exhibition and performance of bissett's concrete poetry entitled *The Writing on the Wall*, curated by **Lenore Herb**, in Vancouver in 2004, editors **Jeff Pew** and **Stephen Roxborough** solicited poems for a tribute volume about bissett entitled *radiant danse uv being* (Nightwood, 2006), a blewointment book.

Also in 2006, bissett was the subject of a Bravo film, *heart uv 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 bissett, damning 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.

GRAPE GRIPE

One man's version of why the Georgia Straight once spawned a rival underground newspaper called The Grape

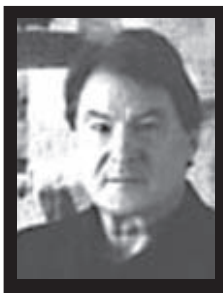
The Georgia Straight has been hugely influential in the B.C. literary scene. The list of writers who have found their way into print via its Vancouver-based pages since 1967 is staggering.

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

This essay by **Pierre Coupey** on the origins of the *Georgia Straight* first appeared in *The Grape* weekly newspaper, an offshoot of the *Georgia Straight*, in March of 1972 (Issue #8, March 8, pages 12 and 13). Retyped by long-time Straight worker Korky Day on September 6, 2006 and proofread 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 preface. "NOTE: In writing this, my purpose is not to malign 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's, Peter Hlookoff's, Rick Kitaeff's, 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.



Pierre Coupey

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-ordinating 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 a 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-ordinating editors, to activate an editorial board and staff, and to get the first *Georgia Straight* out.

LAUGHING ON THE WAY TO THE BANK

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 *Gastown Press*. 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, with both of us responsible 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, I, 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-ordinating editors, and accordingly I passed on my own position to Peter Hlookoff for the second issue. We idealistically 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 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 our other activities, partly because we wanted to maintain the co-operative principle and allow others beside ourselves to play important roles in putting the paper out. 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 mini-

continued on page 18

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 Kitaeff** about starting a paper, and he liked the idea. We called up **Milton Acorn**, and the three of us met at Rick's to discuss the idea further. We agreed it should be a community paper, and that to arouse community interest and participation, we should call an open 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 7:30.

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 the most active in the discussion were Milton Acorn, Rick Kitaeff, **Peter Hlookoff**, **Tony**

Grinkus, **Kim Foikus**, **Claude Jordan**, **Gerry Gilbert**, **John York**, **Peter Auxier**, **Stan Persky**, **John Mills**, **Barry Cramer**, and Dan McLeod. The consensus of the group was that a free press was 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**



Staff photo of Vancouver's rebel underground press *The Georgia Grape* in 1972: 1. Mick Lowe, 2. Tony Tugwell, 3. Irving Stowe, 4. Mike Quigley, 5. Korky Day, 6. David Garrick, 7. Peter Burton, 8. Rick McGrath, 9. Robert Sarti, 10. Jeff Marvin, 11. Ken Lester, 12. Eric Sommer, 13. Sylvia Hawreliak, 14. Brad Robinson, 15. Lori Rosenthal, 16. Shelley Reitberger, 17. Ellie Waldman, 18. Dara Culhane.

Celebrating 20 years of events for readers.

October 16–21 on Granville Island.

One hundred writers from around the world at the 20th Vancouver International Writers & Readers Festival, October 16–21, 2007 at various venues on Granville Island. Six days of the written word—readings, book signings, interviews and performances.



PETER BEHRENS



BARRY CALLAGHAN



KIRAN DESAI



WILL FERGUSON



GARY CEDDES



ELIZABETH GEORGE



WILLIAM GIBSON



BARBARA COWDY



FAÏZA GUÈNE



ELIZABETH HAY



LLOYD JONES



JANICE KULYK KEEFER



VINCENT LAM



JEN SOOKFONG LEE



ALISTAIR MACLEOD



HELEN OYEYEMI



PETER ROBINSON



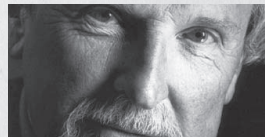
SEÁN VIRGO



ELEANOR WACHTEL



MICHAEL WINTER



RICHARD B. WRIGHT

CONGRATULATIONS

to BC Bookworld on its 20th Anniversary!

Tickets on sale September 17 at all Ticketmaster outlets, charge-by-phone at 604.280.3311 or online at www.ticketmaster.ca. Information: www.writersfest.bc.ca or call 604.681.6330.



VANCOUVER
INTERNATIONAL
WRITERS
& Readers FESTIVAL



THE VANCOUVER SUN
SERIOUSLY WESTCOAST

continued from page 17

mizing the co-operative nature of the paper.

THE NOVEMBER 67 SPLIT

Between the appearance of the 1st issue and the 7th, a vortex of events surrounded the *Straight*, too many to recount here. The license suspension brought down by **Milt Harrell** and **Tom Campbell** was, however, the most important event, for two reasons. First, instead of crushing the *Straight*, it virtually established, by itself, the *Straight* as a permanent fixture in Vancouver. In becoming a major censorship issue, the suspension vaulted the *Straight* into national prominence, and the media in its eagerness to exploit the issue did what it usually does: simple-mindedly identified the *Straight* with one personality, Dan McLeod. Dan, of course, must have been pleased with the national publicity he was getting as the courageous editor of a cruelly suppressed radical paper. So the second reason the event was important was this: as so often happens, as the national media established a clear identification of the *Straight* with Dan McLeod, so Dan himself began to believe the publicity and identified himself as the only person responsible for the *Straight*.

At the same time as this was developing, dissension within the *Straight* was growing, a situation that was only aggravated by Dan's media-encouraged personality cult. I, and others, were becoming more concerned that Dan was not respecting the original principles of the *Straight*, and that he was assuming dictatorial control over a paper that was meant to be co-operative. This understanding emerged in 3 areas: in the editorial policy of the paper, in the finances of the paper, and in the total control of 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 *Georgia Straight* in his private possession, steps that would rationalize his growing psychological belief, 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 contributed 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, that the paper depended solely on his presence for its continuance, or even that there would have been a paper at all had he, in fact, been alone in putting the paper out. Nonetheless, his attitude had become one of "L'etat c'est moi," an arrogance Dan had no right to assume, the arrogance of an aristocrat or a capitalist boss who sees the efforts of others as nothing more than extensions of his will. This attitude on Dan's part showed itself more and more, to the point where one saw him treat with contempt everyone working at the *Straight*, especially those who fawned on him. In short, it had become clear that Dan had so far abandoned the

co-operative spirit, that he was already considering 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 becoming a private enterprise, both psychologically and factually. We wanted this to stop.

As to finances, there was a further aggravating 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, for Dan had 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 (the *Straight* sold for 15 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 subtraction: 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 \$7,500 a month to allow for printing costs, office equipment, office rental, legal costs and incidental expenses. That still leaves \$2,500 a month profit, even at the above generous 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. Obviously we suspected a measure of financial mismanagement.

We also began to question Dan's editorial 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 hippy liberal/NDP mix, as to fail to offer any real alternative to the politics of the Vancouver *Sun/Province* complex. All of these dissatisfactions: Dan's editorial policies, his financial vagueness, his arrogance toward *Straight* editors and workers (he even had a private office!), and his assumption 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 became elusive, even more uncommunicative than he usually was, and did his best to avoid committing himself to a meeting.

Finally, we were able to force a meeting of the editors just before the 7th issue (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 supposed to act as an unbiased mediator, but as it turned out, Dan was at times so incapable of speaking for himself, that Laxton did much of his arguing for him, and seemed to be acting on Dan's

behalf. The three basic issues were raised: editorial policy, control of finances, and control of the paper, but the last was obviously the most important. We began by discussing Dan's attitudes, the fact that he now acted openly as a dictator, and that he assumed he "owned" the paper (because he had done "all" the work, and had the bank account in his name). Laxton supported Dan's assertions that he had done "all" the work, and that on that basis, he did "own" the paper. We reminded Dan that the paper had started as a co-operative and was never meant to be anyone's private possession. We proposed that we form a co-operative non-profit society under the B.C. Societies Act, as we should have done right at the beginning, and, better late than never, legalize the co-operative nature of the paper, and thereby eliminate capitalism at the *Georgia Straight*. Dan refused the proposal, which was supported by Milton, Peter, and myself,

and asserted that he did not have to consider the paper a co-operative since he now "owned" the paper. In refusing, however, Dan and Laxton offered what they considered a "just" and generous compromise: they

had the nerve to propose that ownership of the *Straight* be shared between Dan, Peter, and myself—Dan to have 50%, Peter and I to have 25% each. We, of course, refused such a deal. The *Straight* was formed as a community co-operative, and did not belong to Dan, nor could it belong to Peter or me. We refused to have anything to do with private ownership, a corporation, or anything less than a true co-operative. In the process of this discussion we had demanded a public audit of the *Georgia Straight* books (if there were any) in order to discover what had been happening to *Straight* money, and to discover where the paper was financially. Dan refused to consider an audit, and denied that he had to. In short, Dan was totally intractable, and Laxton supported him so strongly in his mediation, it became apparent it was futile to try to achieve a workable arrangement with Dan, and that it was equally futile to try to work with the *Straight* under his control. There was no point, given that most of the *Straight* staff at that time was composed of McLeod lackeys who had no vision of the paper, who had not been around at the time the *Straight* started, and had been chosen by Dan precisely because of their subservience to him, in trying to form a staff revolt. There was no point, in view of Dan's insistence, and Laxton's support of that insistence, that he "owned" the paper "legally" in trying to force him out of the *Straight* without going to court, and we simply did not have the resources to take such action. And, in spite of everything, we did not want to have to make such an either/or choice. We had hoped Dan would be open enough to recognize he had violated the fundamental spirit and principles of the *Straight's* founding group and of the community the *Straight* was responsible to. 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, we chose to break 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.

In 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 Grinkus—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*, some-

thing 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 militated 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.

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

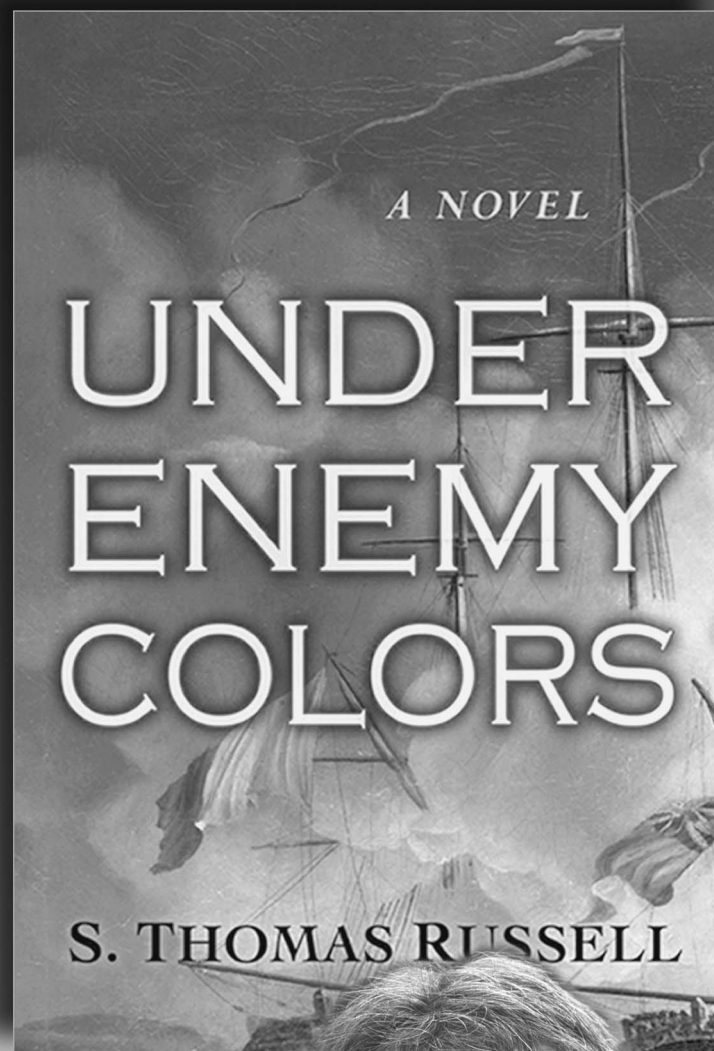
— PIERRE COUPEY

A SWEEPING NOVEL OF MARITIME MUTINY

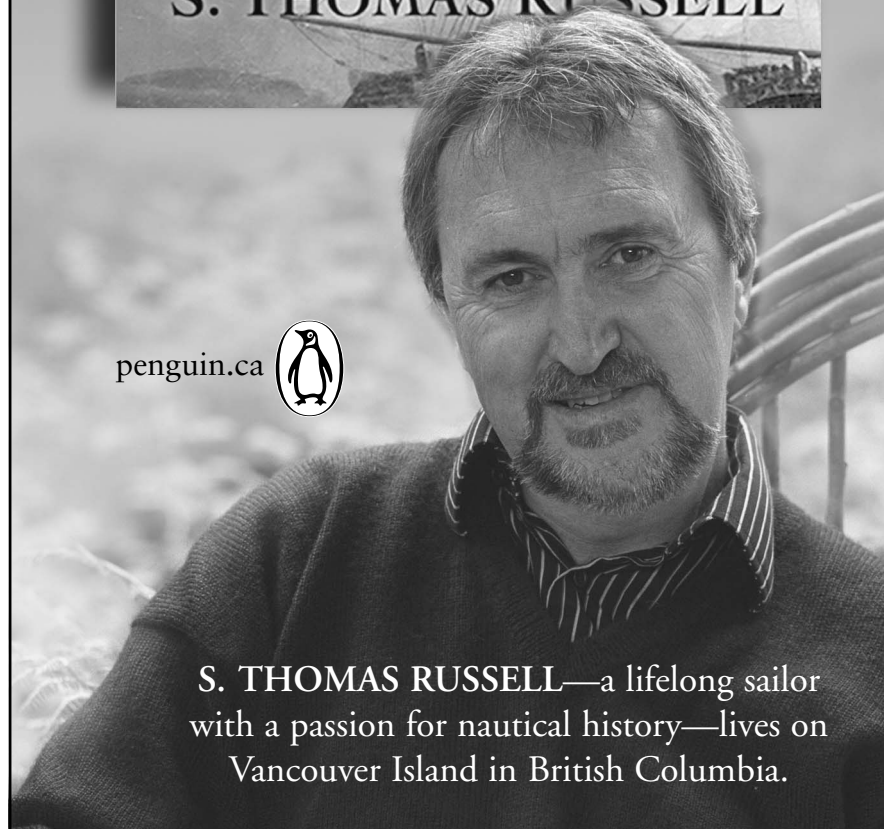
Set in a turbulent time of rapid change—as 18th century England embarks on a war with Revolutionary France—*Under Enemy Colors* announces S. Thomas Russell as a master of high-seas adventure.

“[Russell] creates characters and situations that stay in the reader's memory even as memories of broadside and cutlass-duels fade. **ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECOMMENDED.**”

—NEAL STEPHENSON, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Cryptonomicon* and *The Baroque Cycle*



penguin.ca 



S. THOMAS RUSSELL—a lifelong sailor with a passion for nautical history—lives on Vancouver Island in British Columbia.

MOTHER & DAUGHTER REUNION

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.

1897235321

DURING THE PAST YEAR, I'VE OFTEN BROODED ON THE following paragraph from the jacket of one of my own books:

These stories are about women, about daughters relating to mothers, mothers to daughters. In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich observes that "the loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter is the essential female tragedy. We acknowledge Lear and Hamlet and Oedipus as the embodiments of the human tragedy, but there is no enduring recognition of mother-daughter passion and rapture."

Those words, besides providing a striking example of art's tendency to prefigure life, describe the focus of much of my work.

In several essays, I took issue with Rich's statement. I argued that women have written endlessly about mother-daughter passion and rapture (rupture?), but their preoccupation has not always been discerned by readers. In my fiction, I wrote obsessively about mothers who lost their daughters in various ways.

Emily touched on the same subject often enough to describe our overlapping stories as "this bizarre conversation," and always from the daughter's point of view. In *Private Eye*, she wrote about the mother of a runaway daughter.

Before I left, she was working on a collection of short stories. *Mishaps* it was called. I found myself in several of the stories, transparently veiled by a different name. I bet she was spinning a story this very minute, and I would get caught in the mishap like a black fly.

It is a not-so-veiled reference to my *Unfortunate Incidents*. For years, Emily felt bitter about the resemblance she discerned between herself and my fictional characters. That changed when she became a writer herself, and our mother/daughter relationship evolved into one of writing colleagues.

Then she understood the imperatives that govern a writer's choice of material. She acknowledged the undeniable authenticity of writing grounded in autobiographical experience, and she learned to maneuver a creative distance so that characters become autonomous and lead their own lives.

There were greater changes than the personal ones, however, in the quarter century between my first book of fiction and hers. One is evident in the photograph of Emily's desk that I keep on my own desk. She took a computer for

granted, where I began with minimal typing skills. Cutting and pasting was a scissors-and-Scotch tape-job, and I ironed out rejected manuscripts literally with an iron set for delicate fabrics over a piece of a brown grocery bag.

That difference is not so trivial as it might seem, for it is emblematic of the huge technological advances in the production and dissemination of our writing. I'm

ambivalent about the computer I now use, feeling that what is gained in efficiency is lost in some indefinable way. I don't altogether trust the slick, mechanical process.

I have no ambivalence, however, about another aspect of those early days—that is the excitement in the air. The women's movement, Feminist Criticism, and the emergence of Women's Studies gave a huge impetus to women's writing. Women's lives had always been the "stuff of fiction" written by men, but we changed the landscape. We were engorged with new stories to tell, or new points of view from which to tell the old stories. Feminist Criticism evolved into Literary Theory, Gender Studies and Identity Politics, each wave renewed the original impetus.

Many of us are still writing, and the autobiographies and memoirs are pouring out thick and fast. But the sheen is off them, and the hunger for them

has dried up. More shocks are needed to make an impact—the sure sign of an exhausted genre. As a septuagenarian, who has been writing for forty years, I have the sense of being at the end of an era.

There's plenty of ink spilled these days on establishing the guilt for the indifference to literary fiction. Favourite culprits are reviewers, review editors, the critical establishment, the academy, the corporate world, and a celebrity culture that values human interest stories over good writing. It is as if literature is in its death throes, and we have to find out who killed it.

I do not believe that literary fiction is dying. For, as I consider the above changes—in technology and women's writing—in the context of literary history, I'm struck not by their singularity but by their predictability and their cyclical nature. The industrial revolution happened when women were emerging as prominent writers for the first time; the twentieth century leap into the machine age saw women achieving the status of artists. So it seems to

me that we are in a lull before another surge forward.

Naturally I wonder how Emily would have navigated the transition to the next stage. Already, she was turning in a new direction. Whereas my literary

territory was limited to North America and Western Europe, her work in Asia and Eastern Europe had given her a wider global perspective. I suppose she was a creature of a time characterized by globalization, cosmopolitanism, and cultural identity in the context of ever-expanding transnationalism—all those isms and entities in which **Pico Iyer** saw the new promise of Canadian fiction, and others denounced as a fatally ahistorical North Americanism.

Between writers of different generations, a delicate tug-of-war takes place between resistance and affirmation. Emily was not entranced by my brand of literary feminism—after all she grew up with it and took it for granted. In this, too, we were probably emblematic of our times. But she found her

own compulsion to write about women's lives through her sojourns in Korea and Poland, where an unattached female and a free spirit was regarded with suspicion.

Another subject on which we differed was the need to publish. I've always believed in getting work ritualized in print, and learning from the feedback. She, on the other hand, quoted my own literary foremother, **Katherine Anne Porter**, back at me—"I think it is the most curious lack of judgment to publish before you are ready." I worried that by the time she published, I might not be around. Perhaps that fear prompted me one day to write to her (in an excess of maternal pride):

"I can't tell you how much it means to me to know that you have turned into such an accomplished intelligent writer, full—it seems to me—of maturity about your work and full of wisdom about writing. And with your own distinctive vision and sort of inner centre to it. The getting published part compared with that is insignificant (to me of course but understandably not to you)."

When I walked into Emily's room a few days after her death, I found that fragment, torn from the letter I wrote and set aside. It pleased me to think that she had got my vote of confidence.

Joan Givner

lives in Mill Bay, Vancouver Island, and contributes regularly to *BC BookWorld*.



Reckoning 07

JOAN GIVNER

“For years, Emily felt bitter about the resemblance she discerned between herself and my fictional characters.”

As winner of the 4th annual Ryga Award, Harold Rhenisch (right) receives *The Censor's Golden Rope*, a unique piece of sculpture recreated annually by Armstrong sculptor Reg Kienast (left), at Vernon's Powerhouse Theatre.



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: A Journey 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,

GEORGE RYGA A W A R D For Social Awareness in British Columbia Literature

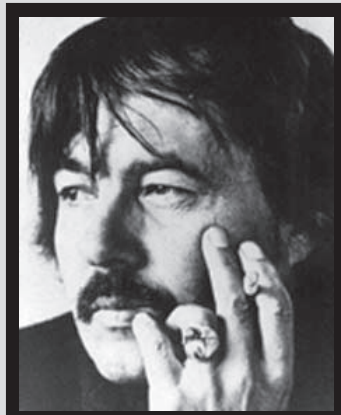
earth and nation, about Germany, British Columbia and Canada," says Josephson. "It is about Rhenisch's journey to find the freedom to re-imagine a way of being in the world."

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.abcbokworld.com



George Ryga (1932-1987)

Sponsored by the George Ryga Centre (Summerland),



CBC radiONE (Kelowna) and Okanagan College.

Information: jlent@junction.net

THE LONG & WINDING ROAD FROM PENDER HARBOUR TO OTTAWA

Here Harbour Publishing's **Howard White**, who recently received the Order of Canada, recalls starting up his publishing company in the 1970s.



Reckoning 07

HOWARD WHITE

HARBOUR PUBLISHING WAS IN SOME WAYS AN ACCIDENT, or a series of accidents, though they were accidents that allowed my wife, **Mary Lee 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 *Peninsula 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 businesses 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



Silas White (right), now publisher of Nightwood Editions, with Howard White in the mid-1970s.

from the Ozarks called *Foxfire*, but in fact I had never seen a copy of *Foxfire*, I had only heard about it from some American hippies. What I had seen was *Canada West*, 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 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 Lawrance** 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 Harbour 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 essayed in *Raincoast Chronicles*.

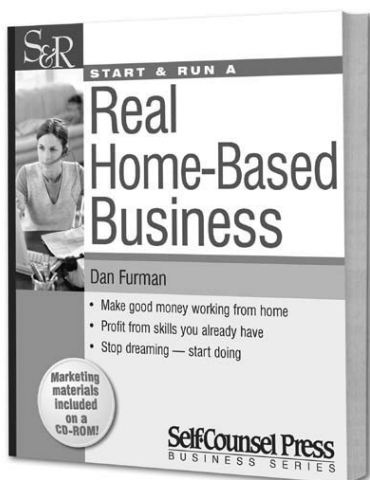
Over the 32 years since *First Five* was published we have published approximately 500 books all exploring aspects of BC character and all addressing that regional-interest market we first tapped in 1975. From the avails Mary and I raised two sons who are now well established in their own literary careers 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.

SelfCounsel Press

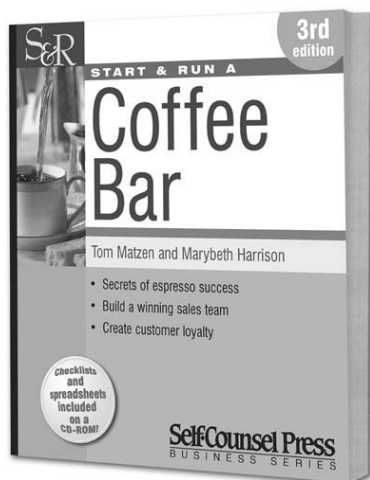
Start & Run a Real Home-Based Business

- Make good money working from home
- Market your professional skill or talent online
- Stop dreaming — start doing



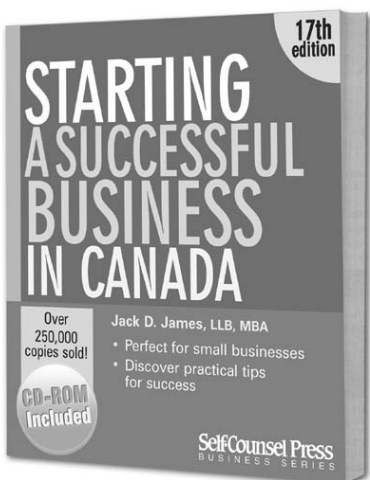
Start & Run a Coffee Bar

- Start your own successful café
- Learn the secrets of espresso success
- Create customer loyalty



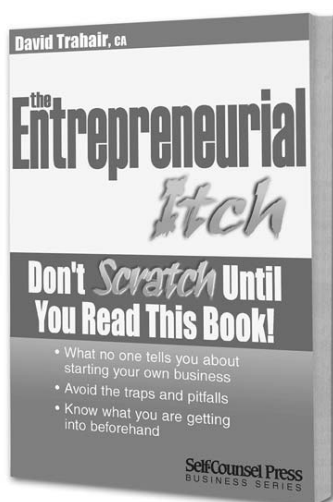
Starting a Successful Business in Canada

- Written for Canadian entrepreneurs
- Perfect for small business enterprises
- Discover practical tips for success



The Entrepreneurial Itch: Don't Scratch Until You Read This Book!

- Find out what no one will tell you about starting your own business
- Know what you are getting into before you start your business



LUST FOR RISK: HOW BC PUBLISHERS SURVIVE & THRIVE

As Director of the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University and its Master of Publishing program, **Rowland Lorimer** has focused his research for ten years on the publishing industry, mass media and online technology. Here he provides a personalized view of the rise of B.C.'s publishing industry.

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 sit-ins 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 naiveté.

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 Canadian, 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 novelist



Reckoning 07

ROWLAND LORIMER

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.

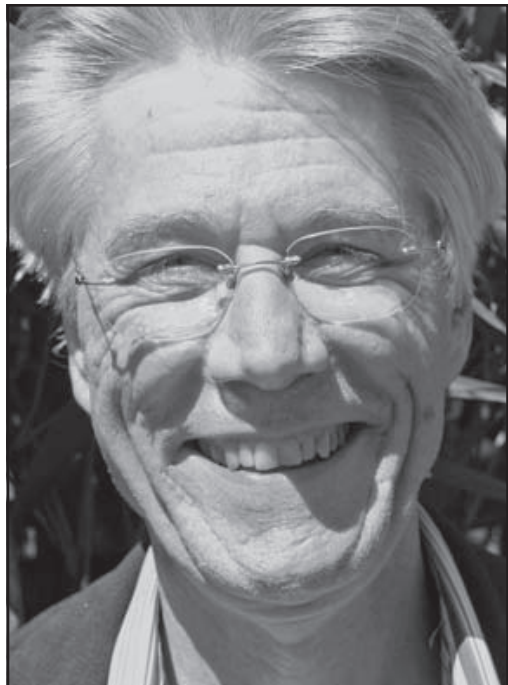
My contribution was to deliver to the provincial government a foundation of information about the industry and a recommendation for funding which the relevant bureaucrats and politicians would see as appropriate. My recommendation for support of this \$16 million industry, which the government of the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

www.self-counsel.com



LAURA SAWCHUK / TRIPPLE AAA PHOTO

“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’ lust for risk had finally yielded a rich and substantial vein of support even if it was not exactly the motherlode.

True, as 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 wondrous authors and stupendous books have been considerable.

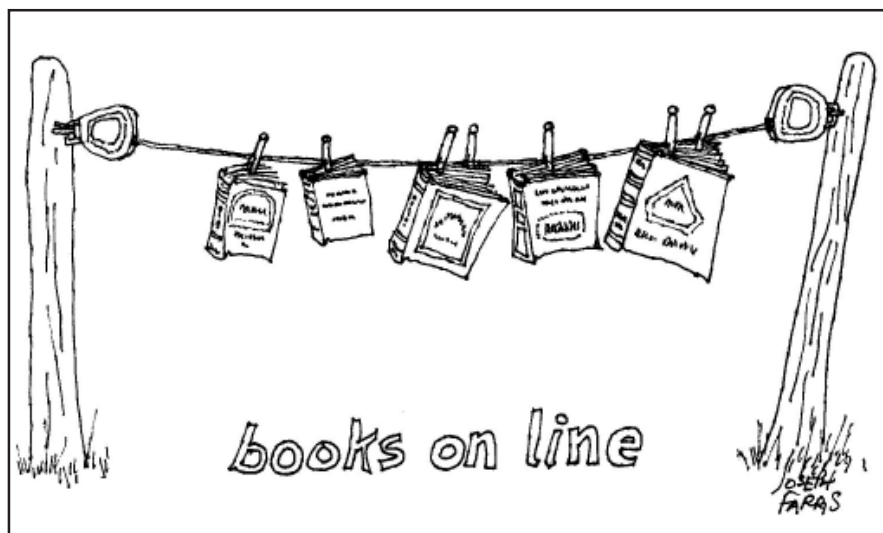
As of 2005, (a *Harry Potter* year), British Columbia boasted revenues of \$175 million carried on by 206 active publishing establishments. Of those, the top third most likely

accounted for about \$170 million. Those figures represent growth by a factor of ten from 1989.

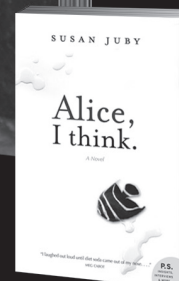
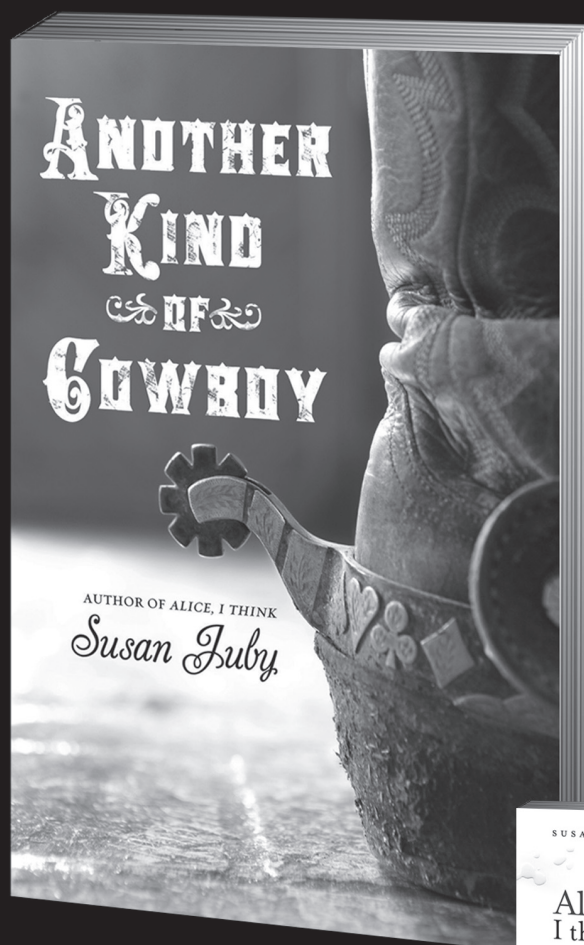
By 2005, BC also boasted North America’s and perhaps the world’s fastest-growing on-demand service book publisher [Trafford], North America’s and perhaps the world’s most significant online used-book sales facilitator [Abebooks], and Canada’s only research-based graduate degree program in publishing [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 B.C. 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.

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.



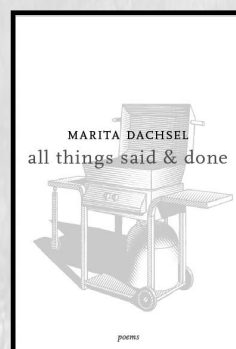
*A boy, a girl, and a horse.
The ultimate love triangle.*



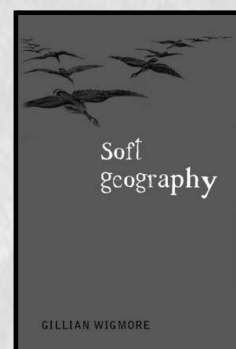
harcollins.ca | firstlookbooks.ca

Caitlin Press

PROVOCATIVE POETRY FROM CAITLIN PRESS



All Things Said & Done
POEMS
Marita Dachsel
978-1-894759-22-9 • \$15.95



Soft Geography
POEMS
Gillian Wigmore
978-1-894759-23-6 • \$15.95

NEW FOR FALL 2007



Finding Ft. George
POEMS
Rob Budde
978-1-894759-27-4 • \$15.95

“Rob Budde sees what glimmers at the edge of our peripheral vision.” —*The Georgia Straight*

Finding Ft. George is the poetic record of Budde’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: 1 800 667-2988 (tel) • 1 877 604-9449 (fax)
caitlin@harbourpublishing.com • www.caitlin-press.com

CORNCOBS & COPPER WOMAN: A CAUTIONARY TALE

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 somewhere in the tangle I got ripped for fourteen thousand dollars, but, hey, what's money to people like us?

During the Press Gang debacle, the frikken lawyers made more than the writers did, which was no surprise to me. Years ago I found me a spavined horse, climbed on it, and took on the CBC, NFB, CFDC and a particular producer and after several years of fury and near ulcers I wound up winning thirty thousand dollars. Which was promptly placed in the pockets of the Queens Counsel lawyer who had represented me. Which left me with five times the

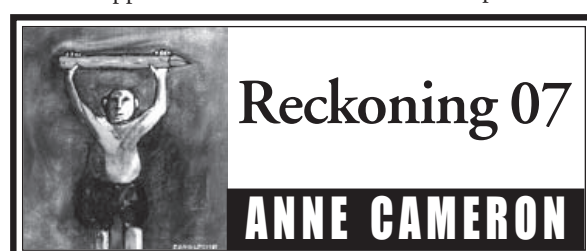
square root of sweet f--- all. Standing up for my rights got me blackballed from CBC, NFB and CFDC for years.

Now I just try to keep a jar of vaseline handy. When you're a writer, sooner or later, you're going to get a rough dry corncob right up the old basic fundament and anyone who thinks she can do anything about it is a total wingnut.

—

The only publisher who never poked

me in the eye with a sharp stick was Harbour. Generally speaking, Harbour put out one book a year for me, and all I had to do was write. For years my snuggled-in relationship with Harbour meant I didn't need an agent, I didn't have to flog my work. I began to believe that was what life was supposed to be like.



The problem with that comfy little bubble is that things happen in the outside world which go unnoticed by the obsessive-compulsive. I knew independent booksellers like Thora and Jerry Howell in Nanaimo were up against corporation bullying because they were tilting that windmill. For me, The Bookstore

on Bastion Street was the best damned bookstore 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.

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 except older with each passing day,

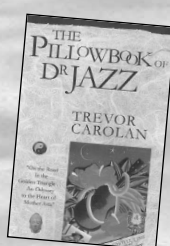
“ You no longer have to take the poets and novelists, the lyricists and performers to the soccer stadium and machine gun them into silence.” — ANNE CAMERON

Ekstasis Salutes BC Bookworld for 20 Years of Publishing!

EKSTASIS EDITIONS ~ WWW.EKSTASISEDITIONS.COM



The Mysticism of Sound
INAYAT KHAN
ISBN 978-1-896860-11-4
Sufism 128 pages
\$15.95



The Pillowbook of Dr Jazz
TREVOR CAROLAN
ISBN 978-1-894800-79-2
Fiction 320 pages
\$21.95



Hierarchy of Loss
STEVEN MCCABE
ISBN 978-1-894800-94-5
Poetry 96 pages
\$18.95



Geraldine
DAVID WATMOUGH
ISBN 978-1-894800-99-0
Fiction 146 pages
\$22.95

Starstruck
a teen's guide to astrology
GWENYTH LUPTAK
ISBN 978-1-894800-60-0
Astrology 188 pages
\$18.95



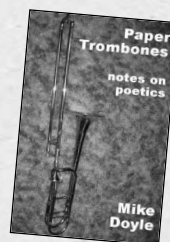
The Butcher's Apron
a dream play comedy
CHARLES TIDLER
ISBN 978-1-894800-88-5
Drama 108 pages
\$18.95



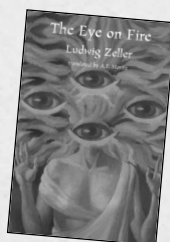
Ordinary Days
CORNELIA HORNSTY
ISBN 978-1-894800-97-6
Poetry 80 pages
\$18.95



Kites
GEORGE WHIPPLE
ISBN 978-1-897430-09-5
Poetry 88 pages
\$18.95



Paper Trombones
notes on poetics
MIKE DOYLE
ISBN 978-1-897430-05-7
Criticism 180 pages
\$19.95



The Eye on Fire
LUDWIG ZELLER
TRANSLATED BY AF MORITZ
SPANISH *EN FACE*
ISBN 978-1-894800-84-6
Fiction 132 pages
\$19.95



Wintering
ROSEMARY BLAKE
ISBN 978-1-897430-08-8
Poetry 64 pages
\$18.95

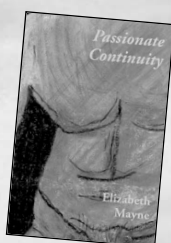


Splitting the Heart
JANET ROGERS
ISBN 978-1-897430-04-0
Poetry 124 pages
\$18.95

His Doubtful Excellency
JAN DRABEK
ISBN 978-1-894800-87-7
Memoir 220 Pages
\$21.95



A Passionate Continuity
sex at seventy
ELIZABETH MAYNE
ISBN 978-1-894800-85-3
Poetry/illustrations
120 pages \$19.95



Poets & Centaurs
YOLANDE VILLEMAIRE
TRANSLATED BY LEONARD SUGDEN
ISBN 978-1-894800-84-6
Fiction 132 pages
\$19.95



1970
ELIZABETH RHETT WOODS
ISBN 978-1-894800-98-3
Poetry 106 pages
\$18.95



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF PUBLISHING FINE LITERATURE

EKSTASIS EDITIONS ~ BOX 8474, MAIN POSTAL OUTLET ~ VICTORIA, B.C. V8W 3S1

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..."

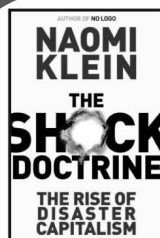
After 33 books and the screenplays for *Dreamspeaker*, *Ticket to Heaven* and *The Tin Flute*, **Anne Cameron** lives in Tahsis where she tends a flock of neighborhood children and looks askance at increasingly conservative times.

All BC BookWorld articles are posted online at www.abcbookworld.com



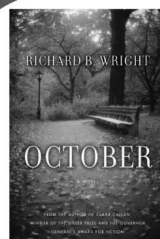
DAVID LESTER ILLUSTRATION

new fall releases!



September 4

The Shock Doctrine
Naomi Klein



September 7

October
Richard B. Wright



September 25

Rick Mercer Report
Rick Mercer



October 2007

The Gum Thief
Douglas Coupland

kitsilano
3066 W. Broadway

broadway
632 W. Broadway

west tenth
4444 W. 10th

lonsdale
1524 Lonsdale

yaletown
1068 Homer

seymour
552 Seymour

davie
1051 Davie

Book
WAREHOUSE

www.bookwarehouse.ca

PRODIGIOUS TALENTS: WOODCOCK & SKELTON

George Fetherling, one of Canada's foremost men of letters, credits two prolific B.C. writers, **George Woodcock** and **Robin Skelton**, as major influences on him, particularly in terms of how they functioned as writers within society. Here Fetherling provides an appreciation of the extraordinary pair of ex-Brits who produced more than 200 books. "George wrote far more books than even Robin did," he notes, "which is saying something, indeed." Woodcock died in 1995; Skelton died in 1997.

GEORGE WOODCOCK WAS A PARENTAL figure—a model—whereas Robin Skelton was a mentor.

George Woodcock came to B.C. from London when he was in his late thirties and went on to an astoundingly productive career as critic, historian, poet, editor, political philosopher and paterfamilias.

I later wrote a biography of him, *The Gentle Anarchist*, which is my own favourite of the books I have published (but absolutely no one else's evidently).

Robin Skelton, who was also English, came to the province in 1963 at about the same age as Woodcock did. He was as cosmopolitan as George but less worldly, almost wholly involved in his own poetry, along with teaching and a few non-competitive scholarly pursuits such as Anglo-Irish literature.

Robin was outgoing where George was shy, and worked hard to make cultural activity happen all round him—which is to say, 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.

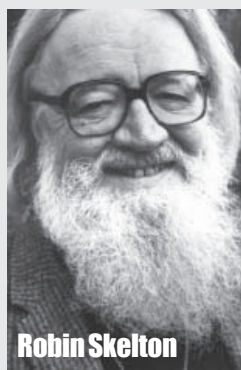
The *Malahat Review*, the quarterly he founded at the University of Victoria, has just come out with a memorial issue. I was pleased to be asked to contribute to it.

Under Robin's editorship, it was a wildly international journal, publishing only a small group of Canadians (those with some toehold 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 over 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

The University of Victoria is raising funds to set up a memorial scholarship to honour **Robin and Sylvia Skelton** that will be given



Robin Skelton

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

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 dis-



Reckoning 07

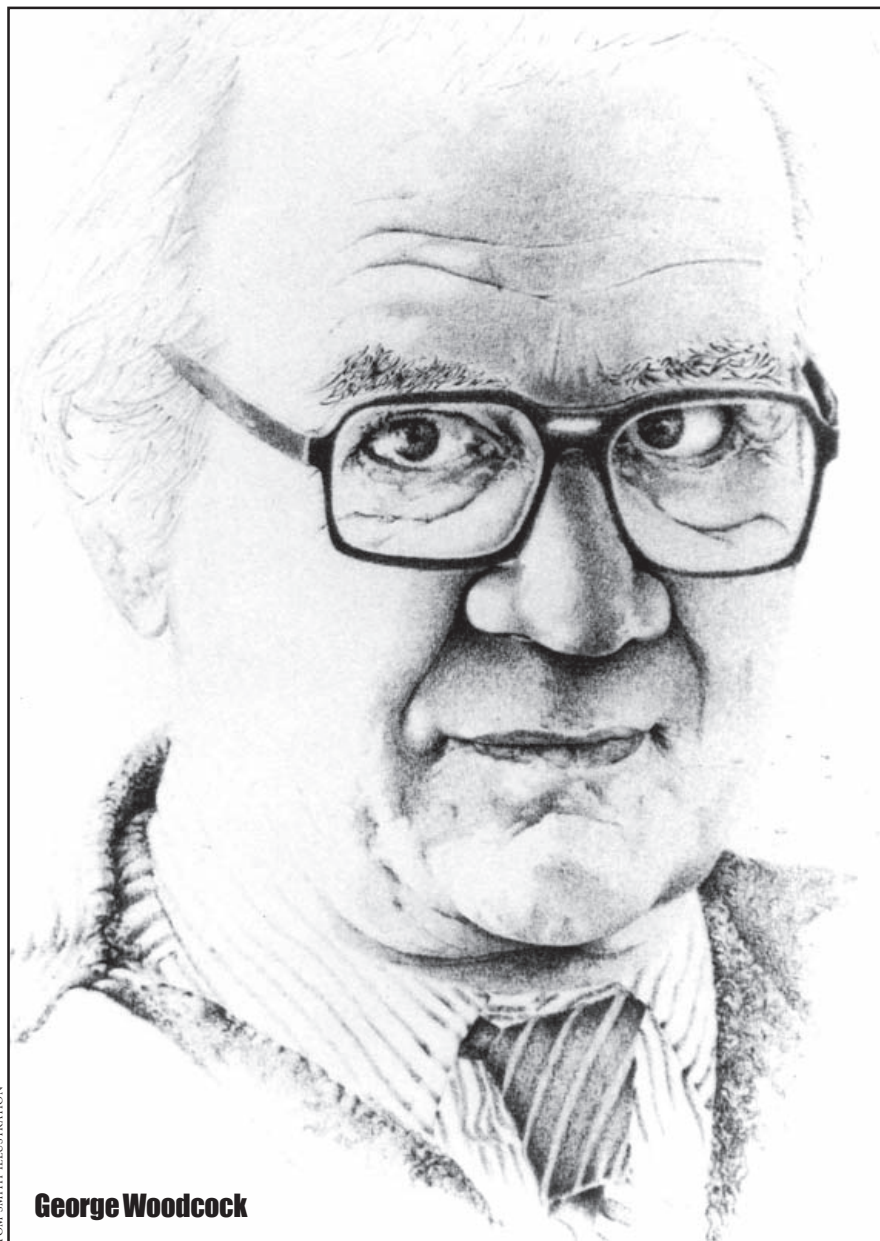
GEORGE FETHERLING

liked the term *warlock*, considering it sexist). Incredulous people have vouchsafed 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 whatever, 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.



George Woodcock

George by contrast shied away from any sign of personal eccentricity except the eccentricity of looking far too normal all the time. I never saw him without a necktie. No one did. The frontispiece photo

in my biography shows him panning for gold, unshaven, but wearing a tie and wing-tips.

George was born in Winnipeg but his parents took him and themselves back to Britain in failure when he was only a few months old. He was considered a promising young poet in the 1930s and early 1940s but the poetic urge got subsumed into other types of 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 **George Orwell**. As he aged, more and more of his books were on specific Canadian topics. A couple of these, *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 called *Facing the Light*, which is being published just now, another gesture to mark the anniversary of his passing.



The two men had even less in common that I've made it sound, but what they did share is that which I find most important about them. They believed in writing as the finest work of the individual consciousness, and they were not dissuaded by harsh criticism the way people who are less brave might be. They kept themselves alive by their pens so as to use those pens to produce all the things they felt they had to write. In the rush to do so, however, they never turned their backs on the community of writers and readers. On the contrary. They stayed current with the young. They were always *engagé*. They gave far more than they took, rejecting any suggestion that they were setting an example. To them, doing good was just another thing one did and tried to do well.

George Fetherling has written and edited more than 50 books in a wide variety of genres. He is the publisher of Subway Books which has re-issued his Woodcock biography, *The Gentle Anarchist: A Life of George Woodcock*.

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

Novelist **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 Murdoch*, 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, **Mazo 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. Inundated with New York and London culture, governed by creatures in Ottawa who were always cowed to the point of corruption by English America, and wrenched 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 after 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 there 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

small presses were founded, and there came then the revelation that a great number of Canadians had drawers full of writing that was not publishable under the rule that a book had to have a London or New York contract first.

A few small presses were already established, and suddenly there were a lot more. I won't bore you with lists. The point is that by 1972 (when *Scann* was brought out by **J. Michael Yates'** Sono Nis Press), some 900 Canadian books

had already been published without the benefit of a foreign contract. Out of that primordial mix came a literary culture, and out of that came something more valuable: a sense of ourselves that has not only sus-

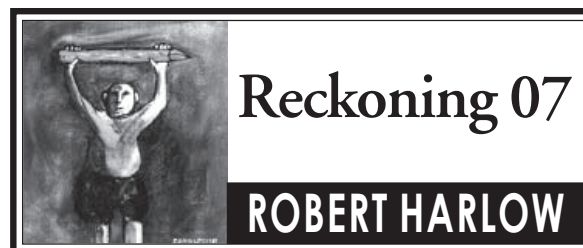
tained good writing but also helped give a green light to our own theatre, film, music and art.

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 interests. This is not quite 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 appointment (meaning the sales department) and current methods of distribution less than tasty."



wrote *Scann* (a novel about a town that very closely resembled Prince George, where I mostly grew up). Macmillan's refusal was abrupt and final. The few copies of *Royal Murdoch* 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 writer.

The excuse for this solipsistic saga is that my early history as a wannabe Canadian novelist was willy-nilly tied to the saga of publishers becoming thoroughly Canadian. They didn't do it by themselves. **Lester B. Pearson** and Canada's centennial did. We hear little about that moment when one of the PM's advisers noticed that publishing was not sharing in the celebration. Everyone from softball teams to civic centres were being funded and Pearson agreed something should be done. Block

Grants became the on-going answer, and over a short period of time



DAVID LESTER ILLUSTRATION

The guy who writes
dust jacket blurbs.

IN A MANIFESTO TO FELLOW WRITERS PUBLISHED a few 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.

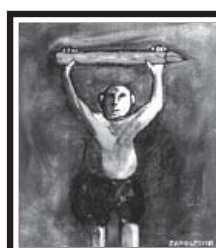
As in many countries, our publishers are eligible for financial support in the form of grants from various national and provincial government agencies such as the Canada Council for the Arts, whose mandate is to develop Canadian writing and publishing.

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?

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

Fernanda Viveiros, executive director of the Federation of BC Writers, argues some publishers are unworthy of public funding.

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



Reckoning 07

FERNANDA VIVEIROS

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

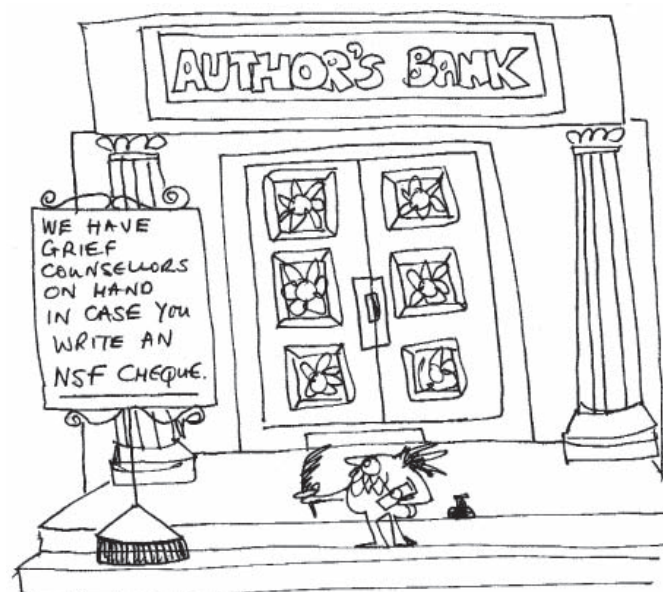
ago and they are all fighting for a piece of the ever-shrinking funding pie. Eliminate these rogue presses and everyone benefits: reputable publishers receive larger grants which in turn allow them to serve the writing—and reading—community in a responsible manner.

As tax-paying Canadian citizens who contribute to an estimated \$400 million cultural industry, writers are invaluable creators, not frivolous hobbyists or self-sacrificing bankrollers. 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 most 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.

BookWorms by George Matheson



"...writers are invaluable creators, not frivolous hobbyists or self-sacrificing bankrollers."

—FERNANDA VIVEIROS

INSIDE THE OUTSIDER

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 broadcast over the school's public address system. Afterward, my biology teacher said, "I'm sure everyone in this classroom will agree with what President Kennedy has done, except maybe Mike."

I went by my middle name back then. The girl sitting at the desk immediately in back of

me said to her deskmate, "Why did Mr. McLeod say that?" to which her deskmate replied, "Because Mike's last name is Russian."

When I shared that anecdote with my father, he got irate on my behalf. He told me about the Finns having been subjugated by the Russians for a hundred years, and later, in the Winter War, having fought them to a draw. That's when I learned what it was to be someone of Finnish descent. I learned that

Finlanders are a people who stand up for themselves, no matter the odds against them.

As you can see, my oppositional disorder has historic dimensions.

What does this have to do with literature in British Columbia? When I arrived in Vancouver as a draft dodger and published author in 1969, nationalism was raising its head and literature was struggling to find its Canadian legs.

After eight months or so I came to realize I was someone who straddled a border. As long as I hid my American

obviously an educated woman who led a solid middle-class life, someone who had gone through university and now fancied herself an adjudicator of good taste. Another editor remarked: "Real people don't act or speak the way your characters do. They're all so illiterate, so determined to be stupid."

I suspect such editors haven't been forced to experience anything outside their comfort zones. That's typical of people in the book industry in Canada—whether we're speaking in terms of writers, editors or publishers. After all,

literature is a business. Who buys the bulk of fiction in Canada? Middle-class readers do, many of them women. To survive as a publisher one must appeal to the middle class, otherwise one is likely to go un-

der financially, even with the support of the Canada Council and the B.C. Arts Council.

I'm happy that I have a well-developed oppositional disorder. Without it, 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 inconsiderable living. I decided to go it alone in the mid-1990s, and now there are five writers in my New Orphic stable. 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 invariably 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.



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.

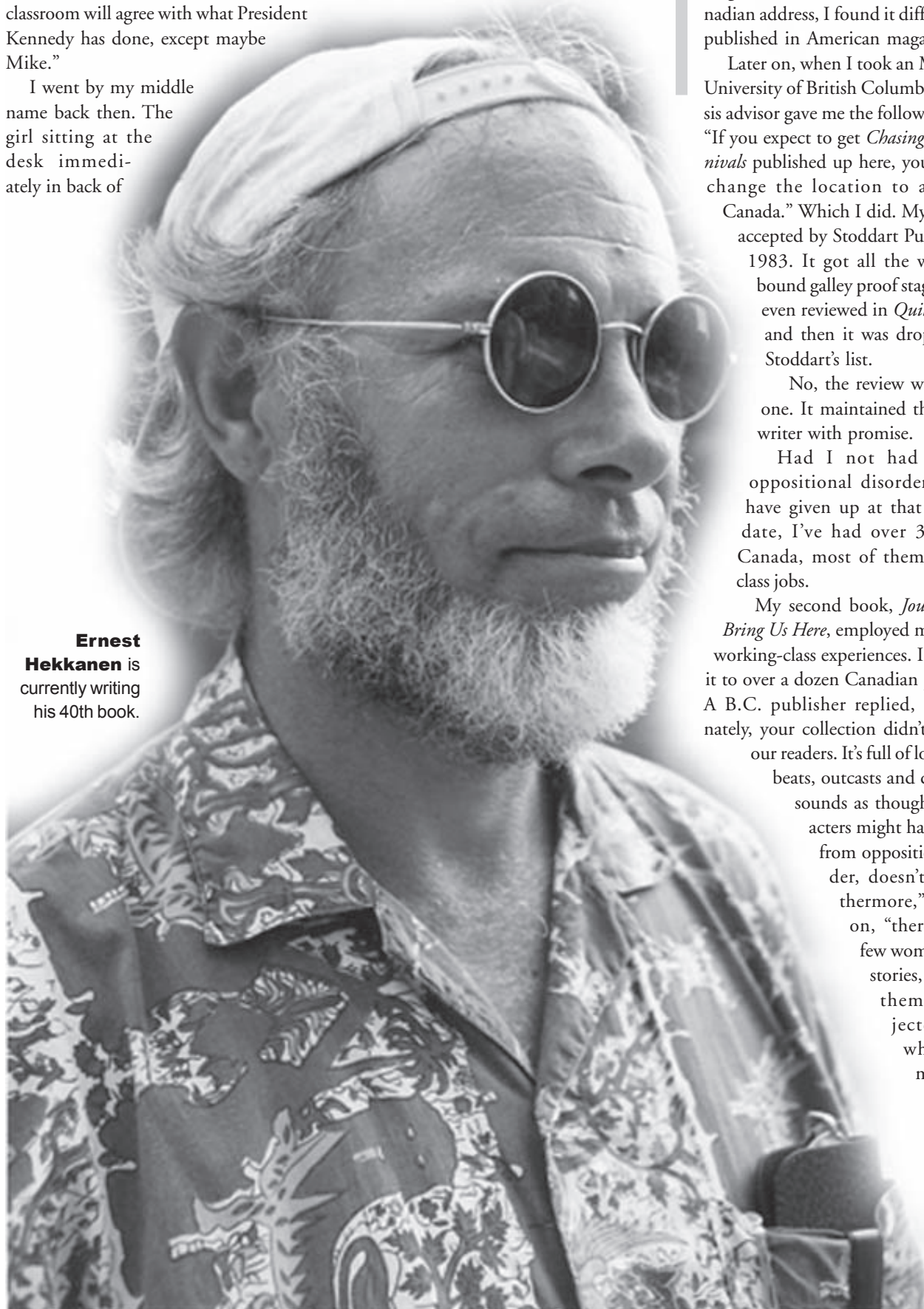
Later on, when I took an MFA at the University of British Columbia, my thesis advisor gave me the following advice: "If you expect to get *Chasing After Carnivals* published up here, you'll have to change the location to a town in Canada." Which I did. My novel was accepted by Stoddart Publishing in 1983. It got all the way to the bound galley proof stage, and was even reviewed in *Quill & Quire*, and then it was dropped from Stoddart's list.

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 at that point. To date, I've had over 35 jobs in Canada, most of them working-class jobs.

My second book, *Journeys That Bring Us Here*, employed many of my working-class experiences. I submitted it to over a dozen Canadian publishers. A B.C. publisher replied, "Unfortunately, your collection didn't appeal to our readers. It's full of losers, deadbeats, outcasts and drifters."

It sounds as though my characters might have suffered from oppositional disorder, doesn't it? "Furthermore," she went on, "there are very few women in your stories, and all of them are subjected to the whims of men." The editor was



Ernest Hekkanen is currently writing his 40th book.

“My way of doing things has licensed me to be as creative as I can possibly be.” — ERNEST HEKKANEN

GONE & WELL-FORGOTTEN

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, skating in winter, and by 1948 had reputedly 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 West* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1925), *The Painted Cliff* (Ottawa: Graphic, 1927), and *Whispering Leaves* (Ottawa: Graphic, 1931). Philip’s first title became the basis of Canada’s first talking film, *The Crimson Paradise*, made in Victoria in 1933, and 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 of *The Crimson West* is furthered by nasty labour organizers, unpleasant immigrants from eastern Europe, and deceptive Natives. The villain of *The Painted Cliff* is a “crazed chieftan” 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 in need of rescue.

Reviews preserved in the Myrtle Philip fonds in the Whistler Museum and Archives indicate that the books were generally well received, notwithstanding a few cavils about their amateurishness and stretching of credibility. The reviewer for the *Montreal Star* described *The Painted Cliff* as “a really excellent yarn” by “a veritable Rider Haggard of the Pacific Coast,” and commented that “the mountains of British Columbia can be made into as good a backdrop for the bizarre as anything in South Africa.”

It might be fun to examine the ways that Philip romanced the West by importing popular adventure conventions

into a BC landscape full of local details about railroads, logging, prospecting, and agriculture, and to analyze his construction of Anglo-Canadian-American masculinity (the rugged hero wins all the fist fights). His gratuitous racism and sexism could be studied as representative of the common mindset of the 1920s. But—who needs to know about him?



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 **Hilda 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.



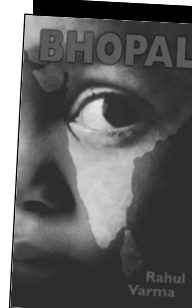
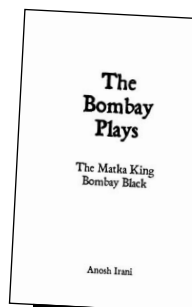
The Writing on the Wall (1921)

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 two were published by Graphic, a small Ottawa press (1924-32) that is now memorable for its efforts to create attractively designed books that were “100 p.c. Canadian.”

My copy of *Whispering Leaves* wears its original dust jacket, whose elegant unsigned front and spine illustrations—featuring vegetation that looks surprisingly tropical—are considerably more appealing than its contents. I may show the volume to students as an example of a nicely made book, but I’ll probably stop short of recommending that they actually read it.

[Canada’s first “talkie,” *The Crimson Paradise*, made in Victoria in 1933 and based on Alex Philip’s first novel, was very popular when it ran at the Victoria’s Capitol theatre, partly due to strong promotional efforts by the Bristol-born theatre manager Ivan Ackery who persuaded Famous Players to allow him to screen the made-on-Vancouver Island feature. The film was produced by Kenneth Bishop’s Commonwealth Productions.—Ed.]

Carole Gerson of SFU has co-edited Volume III of the *History of the Book in Canada*. She previously specialized in the study and appreciation of works by early Canadian women writers such as Pauline Johnson.



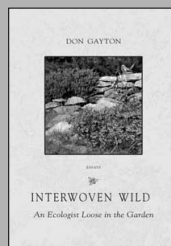
The Bombay Plays Anosh Irani
The Matka King: A powerful eunuch, Top Rani, operates an illicit lottery through his brothel. When a gambler who is deeply in debt makes an unexpected wager, stakes become life and death.
“Excellent characterization and humour.” —*Vancouver Sun*
Bombay Black: Charts the seduction of Apsara by Kamal, and Padma’s violent enmity toward the blind man and his secrets. Winner of 4 Dora Mavor Moore Awards.
ISBN 978-0-88754-560-3 \$19.95

Bhopal Rahul Varma
Bhopal, 1984: With the presence of the pesticide factory, the city begins to claw its way out of poverty. But what is to be made of the deformed babies born to women living near the factory? And the poison gas explosion that will leave three thousand people dead within minutes, and will kill tens of thousands more in the years to come?
ISBN 978-0-088754-810-9 \$16.95

Playwrights Canada Press  www.playwrightscanada.com

thistledown press presents
two new essay collections by British Columbian authors

Interwoven Wild:
An Ecologist Loose In the Garden
Don Gayton



978-1-897235-35-5
\$15.95

[Gayton] gives us a new place to start, and new tools to use, in our contemplation of the thorny problem of the human relationship to nature.

— Sharon Butala

Phantom Limb
Theresa Kishkan



978-1-897235-31-7
\$15.95

Upon a rough roadmap of everyday events, Kishkan imposes her own distinct and vivid cartography. Her movements are delicate, precise, and sensual. There is absolutely nothing ordinary going on here.

—Terry Glavin

www.thistledownpress.com

Beacon Books

The Book Cellar

The Children’s Bookshop

Country Life Books

Galleon Books and Antiques

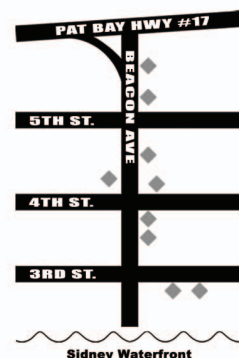
The Haunted Bookshop

Tanner’s Bargain Books

Tanner’s Books

Time Enough For Books

Sidney 
Booktown
a seaside treasure



Visit our sea-side town
and discover our
9 independent bookshops,
each with its own unique
style and treasures.


Visit Sidney by the Sea
Just minutes from the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal
www.sidneybooktown.ca

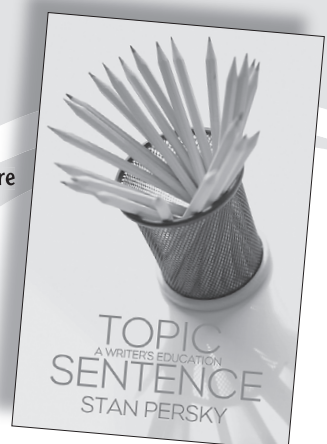
New from 2006 Hubert Evans Non-fiction Prize winner **STAN PERSKY**

Topic Sentence A Writer’s Education

Find it here

Duthie Books, West 4th Av. • People’s Co-op Bookstore
32 Books, North Vancouver • Magpie Books & Mags
Crown Publications • Bolen Books • Munro’s
Tanners Books • Sorensen Books
Little Sister’s • Blackberry Books
Chapters • Indigo Books + Music
chapters.indigo.ca • amazon.com

 Published by New Star Books



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

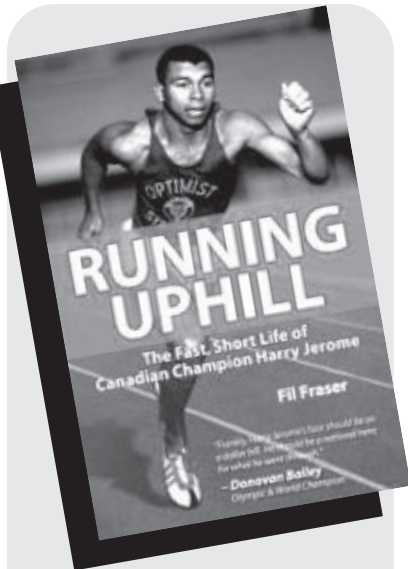
Alcatraz calling

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 Flowered Alcatraz of Vancouver Island, your magazine helps keep me up to date with activities in the real world.

Sidney Allinson
Colwood

BookWorms

by George Matheson



Corrections

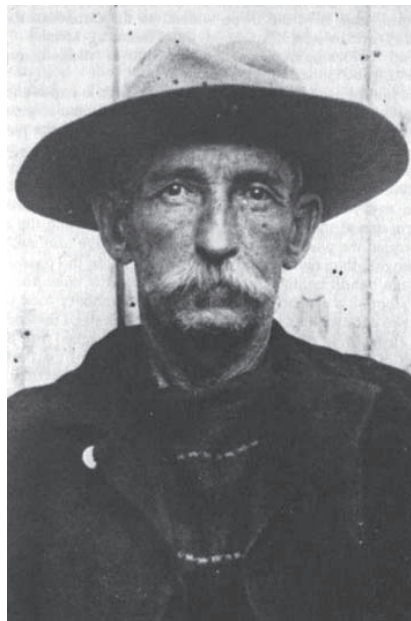
I am a regular reader of *BC BookWorld*. Having read *Running Uphill* by Fil Fraser, I was interested to read your article on page 3 of the Summer issue. I was surprised and disappointed to see two errors. Harry Jerome was not the only black athlete in his high school—his friend Paul Winn is regularly 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

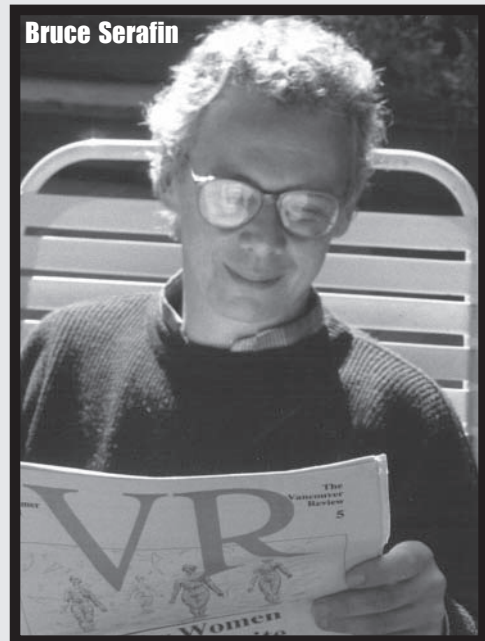


Bill Miner

Letters or emails contact:
BC BookWorld, 3516 W. 13th Ave.,
Vancouver, BC V6R 2S3
email: bookworld@telus.net
Letters may be edited for clarity & length.

BRUCE SERAFIN

Bruce Serafin, the main founder of *The Vancouver Review*, a literary periodical mainly devoted to reviews and opinions, died on June 6, 2007. Born in 1950, he worked at Canada Post for fourteen years and wrote two books, *Colin's Big Thing* (Ekstasis 2004) and *Stardust* (New Star 2007). "He was a strange, wonderful guy," **Brian Fawcett** told **John Burns** of *The Georgia Straight*, "who should have published a lot more, but didn't."



TWIGG PHOTO

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."

SFU

the writer's studio

2008 MENTORS ■ Wayne Compton, Narrative and Creative Nonfiction
■ Steven Galloway, Fiction ■ Rachel Rose, Poetry and Lyric Prose

THE AWARD-WINNING WRITER'S STUDIO IS

■ the core component of a one-year part-time certificate program ■ a one-on-one relationship with a professional writer/mentor ■ mentored workshops ■ courses, readings and book production ■ professional training in addition to writing practice.

778-782-5073 | wpp@sfu.ca | www.sfu.ca/wp

HARBOUR CENTRE ■ SFU VANCOUVER

Free info
session October 1
Apply by
October 29



Look for us in the new SFU
Continuing Studies catalogue
at www.sfu.ca/cstudies

"The Writer's
studio gave
me the
confidence to
own the craft."
— Gurjinder Basran,
TWS 2006

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 1987 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 most 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 Brighthouse 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 li-

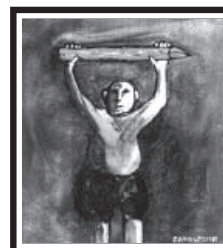
brary as the place to get an answer to a quick information question and certain categories of non-fiction publishing have experienced declining use.

Legal titles such as *Wills 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



Reckoning 07

PAUL WHITNEY

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 predominance 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 Duthie 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.



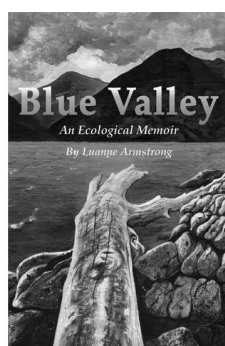
JOSEPH FARRIS ILLUSTRATION

Mountain Writing At Its Best

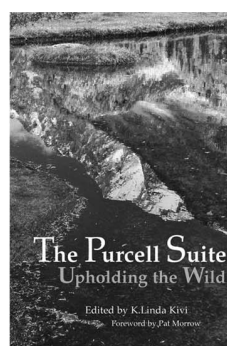
The Colours of
the Columbia Series

**MAA
PRESS**

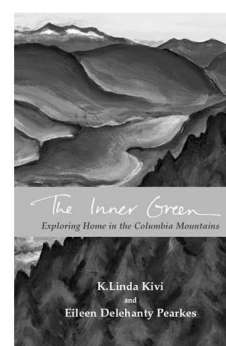
Available at independent
bookstores in BC and Alberta
www.maapress.ca



Blue Valley
by Luanne Armstrong
"...writing that sings with a provocative and evocative wisdom for living well in the world."
Carl Leggo, Professor & Poet,
University of British Columbia
ISBN 978-0-9685302-4-5



The Purcell Suite
"A stunning collection of insightful journeys through an inspiring and diverse landscape." Wade Davis, Author and Anthropologist
(All proceeds from this anthology go to supporting the campaign for Jumbo Wild and to protect the Purcell Mountain wilderness.)
ISBN 978-0-9685302-3-0



The Inner Green
by K. Linda Kivi and Eileen Delehanthy Pearkes
"If you want to explore one of the loveliest places on Earth, while gaining insights into its special beauty, its ecology and the people who inhabit it, this is a book you should read." Joan Snyder PhD, Wildlife Biologist
ISBN 978-0-9685302-2-2

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, Canada Council 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 abcbokworld reference site, allowing us to provide information for and about more than 8,500 B.C. authors.

Thanks to Rebus Creative for taking over the management of the B.C. Book Prizes ever since I had that brain tumour in 2001.

Thanks to our long-standing contributors such as Mark Forsythe, Joan Givner, Louise Donnelly, Gary Geddes, Hannah Main-van der Kamp, as well as dozens of other freelancers.

ON THE NAKUSP OF THINGS

TWIGG PHOTO

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.

Thanks to the delightful Wendy Atkinson for her invaluable proofreading, and her steadfast support, along with my mum, 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 Keating 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 pot-pourri 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

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

24TH ANNUAL

BC BOOK PRIZES

APRIL 26, 2008

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RECIPIENTS OF THE 23RD ANNUAL BC BOOK PRIZES



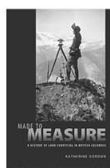
ETHEL WILSON FICTION PRIZE
Carol Windley
CORMORANT BOOKS



DOROTHY LIVESAY POETRY PRIZE
Don McKay
Strike / Slip
MCCLELLAND & STEWART



SHEILA A. EGGOFT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE PRIZE
Sarah Ellis
Odd Man Out
GROUNDWOOD BOOKS



RODERICK HAIG-BROWN REGIONAL PRIZE
Katherine Gordon
Made to Measure: A History of Land Surveying in British Columbia
SONO NIS PRESS



HUBERT EVANS NON-FICTION PRIZE
Heather Pringle
The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust
VIRING CANADA



BC BOOKSELLERS' CHOICE AWARD
IN HONOUR OF BILL DUTHIE
David Suzuki and Greystone Books
David Suzuki: The Autobiography



CHRISTIE HARRIS ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S LITERATURE PRIZE
Maggie de Vries and Renné Benoit
Tale of a Great White Fish: A Sturgeon Story
ANNICK PRESS



LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S AWARD FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE
Patrick Lane