FEATURE INTERVIEW

“Nearly everyone is going to write a children’s book someday when they have a free weekend.”

— Kidlit maven Ann Walsh looks at why kids might be our most important readers.

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Wreck Beach as seen by agnostic nudist Carellin Brooks

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DEREK EVANS’ CLIMATE OF FEAR IN NORTH KOREA

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PEACE RIVER POET DONNA KANE

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COAST CRUSADER IAN MCGALLISTER

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NELSON NOVELIST ANNE DEGRACE

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PURCELL NATURALIST K. LINDA KIVI

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The reaction has been mixed. Some rednecks, even on Commercial Drive, have shouted obscenities, complaining that I’m naked, despite my sky-blue skimpy swimsuit! On Davie Street others have angrily called me gay.

Many more passers-by have congratulated me, in part because Wreck Beach has done much to help free attitudes about nudity for 37 years. Wreck Beach—the book—is also filling a gap. Full of wit and integrity, it’s a vital historical summary that supports the preservation of this freedom destination.

Although Carellin Brooks is herself a young Vancouver “agnostic nudist” (or naturist), she is moody objective telling the ups and downs of the beach community. She matter-of-factly relates how the beach was named, why it’s nude, the legality, and the politics, including the beach being a largely self-policing enclave.

Some people mentioned in the book might be a little embarrassed (including me), but their treatment is pretty fair. She goes into drugs (legal and illegal), but their treatment is pretty fair. She goes into drugs (legal and illegal), the politics, including the beach being a largely self-policing enclave.

My own activism for the beach, and for nudism, goes back to when I organized the first two (and only) demos to defend nudity at Wreck Beach. Nobody has been charged with nudity (a federal crime) at Wreck Beach since our “Nude-In” on August 23, 1970. We protestted numbered 3,000 (not 2,000, as the book says). At the time I was a young U.S. war resistor. Not quite as dack as Brooks writes, but it reads funny, anyway. Then in 1978 we welcomed the Rev. Bernice Gerard, city councillor, as she tried to exercise the nudity out of us.

Do I claim to have “started” nudism at Wreck Beach? No. As the book explains, nudity with the First Nations is not a crime or a fetish, as it is for the invaders. They swam but had no swimsuits. Among the many revealing conversations, Brooks talks with Musqueam elder Larry Grant. We’re reminded that all of greater Vancouver is part of Coast Salish territory (First Nations).

The indigenes’ attitudes, private nudist clubs, and the Doukhobors’ nude protests in BC in the 1960s helped set the stage for popularising Wreck Beach nudism in the 1970s.

You might say that the generational attitudes shift about nudity reflect a trend in our culture toward tolerance. That trend is prompted in large part by nude beaches, especially Canada’s most famous beach of any kind, Wreck Beach.

Vancouver being home to Wreck Beach has played no small part in nudist spreading to the stage (such as at the Fringe Festival), to the World Naked Bike Ride (which began in Vancouver), and the budding topfree movement (females legally doffing their shirts wherever males can).

As an example of Vancouver attitudes slowly regressing to indigenous-like views, the October front cover of Vancouver’s Shared Visions magazine had a huge tasteful nude colour cover photo of Stephanie MacDonald, the author of their lead story on breast thermography to detect cancer.

I would have liked a similar photo of Brooks in her book, but she and her publisher have opted for posing her like a bespectacled 1940s “girl reporter,” although they will provide a nude publicity shot, as seen in Xtra West.

Carellin Brooks has managed to cover with sensitivity even the material which is disturbing, such as the rare unnatural death.

She discusses the nudist movement and philosophy and their relation to this beach. Whereas some nudists deny any sexual motive for their nudity, Brooks doesn’t buy that argument completely. She nonetheless makes it clear that social nudity is not the Hugh Hefner poolside fantasy that many imagine.

Brooks celebrates the triumph of people to keep a piece of the earth a near wilderness, and to create there an enduring human community of liberation and love.

Brooks explains the mounting danger of further building and paving at UBC. With such development, the university risks its people, its art and artifacts at the Museum of Anthropology, its other buildings, and its (our) investment. Even in our lifetimes, more sand slides onto the beach could bring some edifices down.

The whole peninsula on which UBC sits is mostly sand. The university planners don’t always consult their own experts on that, but Brooks does. UBC sometimes consults with us, the public—largely because Judy Williams, the Mother of Wreck Beach, insists it does. Luckily, chunks of the cliff usually don’t collapse on clear, calm days when the most people are there. However, watch out for earthquakes.

Brooks challenges the powers that be to justify the risk of continued development of UBC—classrooms, apartments, and a big, new shopping mall. The powerful will try to ignore this book, not wanting to bring attention to their weak arguments.

Right now UBC students have set up a People’s Park (illegal occupation) to protest the coming commercial mall smack in the middle of campus, at the old bus loop. Visit it on your way to the beach. Maybe this generation won’t be lost do-nothings after all!

Why do half a million people from around the world annually head to this beach that is just west of—and outside of—Vancouver city limits? Because it’s one thing to be influenced by the media, by school, by church; it’s quite another to go to Wreck Beach and be thoroughly re-educated, mentally and emotionally, through all five of your senses.

Although Brooks refused my fact-checking, she gets nothing major wrong. My detailed suggestions: www.korky.ca/nude-peace.html.

Wreck Beach is for now the only book on the store shelf focusing on our spectacular beach in the rain forest. It’s a 96-page soft cover with 27 black-and-white photos and one map. The next two books I hope will be published are a big colour photo book and a book by or about Judy E. Williams, whom you get to know in Brooks’ book.

Korky Day, one of the early young upstarts in the collective that owned and produced the Georgia Straight newspaper, has long been an activist for nudism.
The collapse of the bridge was my personal Titanic.

— Gary Geddes

Three events in British Columbia drew world attention during the 1950s. Englishman Roger Bannister and Australian John Landy eclipsed the four-minute-mile barrier at Empire Stadium during the Miracle Mile (on August 7, 1954); north of Campbell River, engineers generated the largest non-nuclear peacetime explosion in human history at Ripple Rock (on April 5, 1958); and eighteen steel workers and one rescue diver were killed when the Second Narrows Bridge collapsed during its construction (on June 17, 1958). In 1958, having just graduated from King Edward High School, Gary Geddes was working on the waterfront at BC Sugar Refinery, loading boxcars with 100-pound sacks of sugar, so the news of the bridge collapse did not take long to reach him.

“What I did not know at the time,” he says, “was that my father had been called out as a former navy diver to stand by in the search for bodies in the wreckage. I’ve carried for a long time the image of him dangle from his umbilical cord of oxygen in that caldron of swirling water and twisted metal.”

Geddes has imagined the voices of those most directly affected by the incident for an unusual collection of poetry, prose and archival photos called Falsework (Goose Lane $19.95). The title is an engineering term that refers to temporary supports that are required for a cantilevered bridge under construction.

“In this case,” he says, “a mistake was made and the horizontal I-beams were inadequate to support the weight. It was a simple mathematical error that should have been picked up by both the contractor, Dominion Bridge, and the consulting engineers, Swan Wooster and Associates.”

The Second Narrows Bridge was renamed the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge in 1994 to commemorate the tragedy. To this day many British Columbians are haunted by the event. This summer, when Geddes read from Falsework at the Denman Island Writers Festival, a woman affected by the accident overheard on the audience recalled working as a telephone operator in New Westminster when the Memorial Bridge collapsed. It was a simple mathematical error that should have been picked up by both the contractor, Dominion Bridge, and the consulting engineers, Swan Wooster and Associates.”

Jeremy Clark and Emily Read

End of Document
Brain jumps her greatest hurdle

For young girls who want to learn how to compete at the highest level, KAREN BRAIN has become a model of perfection.

Eight months after an equestrian accident left her partially paralyzed with a spinal cord injury, Karen Brain started riding again. Unable to place her feet in the stirrups, she used two small whips to direct her horse, in lieu of her legs.

As outlined in Nikki Tate’s juvenile biography Double Take: Karen Brain’s Olympic Journey (Sono Nis $12.95), doctors discovered during a ten-hour surgery that Brain’s lung was also collapsed from the weight of the horse on top of her during her fall. Brain received a new 12th vertebrae, from her 10th rib, enclosing it in a titanium cage.

“I hear models will remove their last ribs to get a smaller waist,” she remarked, cheerfully, “so I guess I’m halfway there with one of my 10th ribs gone.” Brain has since competed at the highest level in both able-bodied and disabled riding competitions. She won two Bronze Medals at the 2004 Athens Paralympic Games with the mare Dasskara, and won two Silver Medals in 2005 at the Dutch Open International Dressage competition for disabled riders in Helvoirt, Netherlands with the Dutch gelding Mozart.

In 2005, Brain moved home to BC, after living and training in Germany, the US and Eastern Canada for nine years. Having represented Canada in 3-Day Eventing at the World Equestrian Games in Rome in 1998, with her horse Double Take, and won the Advanced Canadian Championships in 3-Day Eventing that same year, Karen Brain now hopes to win a gold medal for Canada at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games.

NUGGETS YARN SUPERSIZED

Rick and Brian Antonson first heard about Slumach’s lost gold mine in 1957. Fifteen years later, the brothers co-wrote and published one of B.C.’s most enduring tales of murder and gold, In Search of a Legend: The Search for the Slumach-Lost Creek Gold Mine (Nunaga, 1972), co-written with Mary Trainer. This title reputedly sold more than 10,000 copies in various editions, making it a B.C. classic.

Fast-forward another 25 years and the threesome has expanded their research for Slumach’s Gold: In Search of a Legend (Heritage House $14.95). Without being overly didactic, the storytellers reveal the extent to which racism might have played a significant role in the embellishment of the tale.

The legend of a lost gold mine in the Fraser Valley, near Pitt Lake, about 35 miles from Vancouver, only arose after an elderly First Nations man named Slumach was hanged to death for murdering a bruitish Métis man. Louis Boulier, also known as Louis Beer, at Lillooet Slough near the Pitt River, in 1890.

Newspapers brazenly described Slumach as a murderer long before he was caught and brought to trial. If the suspect (probably Salish) had a lawyer, a plea of self-defence might have been sufficient to save his life. Prior to being hanged in New Westminster in 1891, the elderly Slumach supposedly placed a curse on anyone hoping to find his hidden motherlode, also known as the Lost Creek Mine. In the early 1900s an American miner named Jackson reportedly found Slumach’s Mine, but died soon afterwards, leaving behind an intriguing letter that provided hints as to the site of the mine in a remote part of what is now Garibaldi Provincial Park—and becoming the first victim of the mine’s alleged curse. The Vancouver Province once estimated 30 people have died trying to find Slumach’s mine.

The Antonsons and Trainer note that stories of Slumach spreading his gold nuggets in local “sporting houses” and taking women into the bush with him—never to be seen again—only emerged after his death. In hindsight, it’s possible Slumach’s unsavoury reputation for consorting with non-Aboriginal and Métis women could be rationalized by white society if he was believed to have had access to wealth.

Nobody knows for certain what Slumach looked like—this early sketch is based on a description of him.

In recent years Rick Antonson was contacted by a former Columbian newspaper publisher who confirmed that gold seekers had found what he believed to be the legendary mine. This tidbit helps to justify a 35th anniversary edition, triple the size of the original version, which introduces new material (three television documentaries have been made) as well as expanded research and more photos. There are only imaginary images of Slumach and verification that he ever had access to gold nuggets from a hidden mine does not exist, but Slumach’s reputation is global. There are more than 2,000 references for Slumach on the internet.

Fred Braches of Whonnock maintains an excellent reference site for skeptics at www.slumach.ca with encouragement from Rick and Brian Antonson, Mike Collier, Ann Lunghamer, Rob Nicholson, David Martinson, Joanne Peterson, Don Waite and the staff of the New Westminster Public Library, Vancouver Public Library, and BC Archives.
WHO'S WHO

BC

A is for Ackles

Any BC Lions fan who wants a plainspoken insider’s summary of the team’s operations need look no further than Bob Ackles’ autobiography, The Water Boy: From the Sidelines to the Owner’s Box: Inside the CFL, the XFL, and the NFL (Wiley $32.99), co-written with Ian Mulgrew. As the little guy who went from being Lions’ first water boy in 1953 to a cronie of XFL owner Vince McMahon and Miami Dolphin’s head coach Jimmy Johnson, the Sarnia-born Ackles freely disses QB Casey Printers, sportswriter Al Davidson and others.

B is for Baldry

After musician Long John Baldry ended his roller-coaster ride at age 64 on July 21, 2005 in Vancouver, his protégé and friend Rod Stewart acknowledged the enormous debt that British musicians owe to Baldry for bringing Black blues to England. “Not just myself but the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, the Yardbirds, Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck…” said Stewart. After two years of research, Paul Myers has provided a thorough biography, It Ain’t Easy: Long John Baldry and the Birth of the British Blues (Greystone $22.95).

C is for Christie

Gordon Christie has edited Aboriginality and Governance: A Multidisciplinary Perspective (Thrysus $40.95), a compilation of articles by Quebecois academics who examine the complexities of Aboriginal governance from English, French and Aboriginal perspectives. Originally from Inuvik, Christie earned a law degree from the University of Victoria and a Ph.D in philosophy from the University of California. His mother’s family is Inupiat-Inuvialuit. Christie joined the UBC Faculty of Law in 2004.

D is for Delehanthy

In response to her mother’s terminal illness, Kootenay-based Eileen Delehanthy Pearkes has written a deeply personal spring-to-winter narrative, The Glass Seed: The Fragile Beauty of the Heart, Mind and Body (Timeless Books $19.95) that examines the politics of womanhood and social issues germane to compassion. Influenced by yoga, this poignant work also explores the nature of memory and healing.

E is for Ellis

Sarah Ellis has won the $20,000 TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award established in 2005 to honour the most distinguished book of the year for children aged 1 to 13. The publisher of Ellis’ sixteenth title, Odd Man Out (Groundwood 2006) also receives $2,500 for promotional purposes. Entries were judged on the quality of the text and illustrations and the book’s overall contribution to literature.

F is for Fodi

Magic, monsters and mythology abound in the stories and art of Lee Edward Fodi who grew up in the Okanagan and now lives in Vancouver. In Kendra Kandlestar and the Door to Unger (Brown Books $20.95), a giant named Unger enables young Kendra to match wits with dwarves and a magic-wielding faun in order to untangle the truth about her long-lost family in the mysterious forbidden land of Een.

continued on page 10
Aerospace historian Chris Gainor examines why plans to build Canada's own jet fighter planes were cancelled by the Diefenbaker government in 1959 (after the U.S. gave notice no Canadian jets would be bought.) In his Who Killed the Avro Arrow? (Folklore $18.95), Gainor notes the decision to halt production of the Arrow was made on the 50th anniversary of J.A.D. McCurdy’s first powered aircraft flight in Canada. Ex-Avro engineers later played key roles in Apollo moon landings, a brain drain that Gainor recalled in Arrows to the Moon: Avro’s Engineers and the Space Race. 978-1-894864-68-8

Born in the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in 1948, Ibrahim Honjo is a sculptor and painter who arrived in Vancouver in 1995. Having worked as a journalist and economist, editing books and newspapers, publishing books of poetry and organizing literary events in Europe, he now finds himself in Port Moody, struggling to re-emerge as a writer. He has self-published Do Not Write This Down [Ovo Ne Zapisuj] ($15), a collection of poems in both English and the Serbo-Croatian language. 245B Evergreen Dr., Port Moody, BC V3H 1S1. Tel: 604-936-2442

Set in the red-light district of Bombay, Anosh Irani’s play about a powerful eunuch, The Matka King, premiered at the Arts Club Theatre in Vancouver in 2003. His follow-up play about Bombay’s most famous dancer, Bombay Black, premiered at Toronto’s Theatre Centre in 2006. It’s a harrowing tale of love, revenge, myth and magic. Both are contained in The Bombay Plays (Playwrights Canada $19.95). 070-0-00774-548-3

Having had a CTV television series called Alice, I Think made from her books about Alice MacLeod of Smithers, a teenager, home-schooled by hippie parents, who becomes anxious about conforming in high school, Susan Juby has spread her wings to write a love triangle about a girl, a boy and a horse, Another Kind of Cowboy (HarperCollins $17.89). Available in December, it’s the story of two dressage riders, Alex and Clio. She’s hot to trot for romance, but beyond his macho façade Alex is another kind of cowboy. 9780060765187

Having received the fourth annual Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Literary Excellence earlier this year, Patrick Lane has released a collection of new poems, Last Water Songs (Harbour $16.95), including his recollection of sixteen deceased Canadian writers. Among those recalled are his brother Red Lane, Adele Wiseman, Al Purdy, Alden Nowlan, Anne Szumigalski, Bronwen Wallace, Earle Birney, Elizabeth Smart, Frank Scott, Gwendolyn MacEwan, John Newlove, Milton Acorn (known as “Uncle Miltie” to Lane’s kids), the murderer Roy Lowther, Pat Lowther and Irving Layton. 155017-450-2
WHO’S WHO

Teresa McWhirter’s first novel about urban girls who drink too often, and hang out with male losers, Some Girls Do (Raincoast 2002), has been followed by a novel about a young woman named Spider who drifts through a similar malaise in Dirtbags (Anvil $20).

Sated with loud music, drugs and parties, these are not the hip, irony-driven quipsters from Douglas Coupland novels, biding their time, hoping for elevation into a higher level of consumerism; McWhirter’s generation of urban drifters and outlaws are jumping over the edge of despair into pits of self-destruction. Romance is a luxury they can’t afford.

In sympathy with the 1.8 million people who currently comprise the Iraqi diaspora, with an English mother and an Iraqi father who left Baghdad in the 1960s, and degrees from McGill and Edinburgh, Leilah Nadir has written a family-fueled memoir, The Orange Trees of Baghdad: In Search of My Lost Family (Key Porter $32.95), a story of Iraq by someone who has never been there. “This is a book about what loss really means,” says Naomi Klein in her endorsement, “the theft of history and homeland.”

Betty Pratt-Johnson learned to dive in 1967 at the YMCA in Vancouver when there was only one dive shop in the city. First released in 1976, her authoritative guide to scuba and skin diving in B.C. and Washington, 141 Dives, has been reprinted and updated many times. In 1994 it was re-released in two volumes, 99 Dives and 101 Dives but now it has been revised as 151 Dives (Adventure $34.95), available via Sandhill Distributing. “I personally have enjoyed every dive included in this guidebook,” she says. GPS datum are included for every boat dive to help locate dive sites.

Allesandra Quaglia is from Toronto and Jean-Francis Quaglia is from Marseilles. After the husband-and-wife team met in Nice, France, they came to Canada in 1992 and opened their first Provence restaurant in Vancouver in 1997. After opening a second restaurant in 2002 called Provence Marinaside, they have gathered more than 120 recipes, augmented by 32 colour photos, for New World Provence: Modern French Cooking for Friends and Family (Arsenal $26.95).

Ask for Us at Your Local Bookstore

Yamotsha and His Beaver Wife

as told by Vital Thomas
Illustrated by Archie Beauregard

In this legend, Yamotsha forgets his promise to his wife and as a result she turns into a giant Beaver. This story tells of how this great medicine man shaped the land in the Tl’chep region and surrounding areas into what it is today.

The Old Man with the Otter Medicine

told by John Blondin (as told by Father, George Blondin) Illustrated by Archie Beauregard

It is winter and the people are starving. They must seek the help of a medicine man to save them. The Man with the Otter Medicine tells of medicine power and the struggle for survival. An important part of the history and culture of the Dene people.

The Legend of the Caribou Boy

told by John Blondin (as told by Father, George Blondin) Illustrated by Ray McSwain

A young boy is having trouble sleeping at night. He is being called to fulfill his destiny, which lives on today in the traditions and culture of the Dene people and their relationship to the caribou and the lands on which they live.

Continued on next page

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Teresa McWhirter is currently working on a memoir titled The Sea of Gold, about life in Iraq since the invasion.
Russell, a lifelong sailor, visits between honor and duty. For more on French mother, who must choose between her own career and family life, the protagonist is a young lieutenant, Charles Saunders, who must rule the waves, this time against revolutionaries in France. Rule the Waves is a historical thriller, set in the 18th century. It is the first in a series of nautical historical thrillers that will likely out-write most who do. After a series of acclaimed fantasy novels by S. Thomas Russell, the protagonist is a Canadian Aboriginal woman. Becoming the Kind Father is one of those non-flavour-of-the-week novelists who don't get invited to writers' festivals but will likely out-write most who do. This is a biography of a 500-page nautical history novel that was awarded the Canada's Book Award in the category of Fiction Book of the Year Award 2007. It is for B.C. BookWorld subscribers.

In 1991, Terence Young, of Victoria convinced renegade high school students to let him teach a new Writing 12 class. After Young showed his colleague, Bill Stenson, some of the work they students produced, Stenson became the driving force behind The Claremont Review, a periodical specifically created to publish new works of fiction and non-fiction. This periodical has been a driving force behind the success of more than 80,000 people of Indian ancestry. The Claremont Review is one of the world's foremost marine art and has profiled one of the world's foremost marine artists, for which the protagonist, now a grandmother, must cope with the humiliation of being regarded as snobbish and crazy in her declining years, despite her extensive professional success in a man's world.

If you're looking for an Xmas gift that lasts all year long, for only $12.72, look no further than right here. For the price of a bottle of wine you can give up-to-date news of B.C. books and authors. There's a B.C. BookWorld subscription form on page 40.
When the widowed Baron Rezanov sailed to San Francisco Bay in 1806, desperate to obtain some badly-needed food supplies for his fellow Russians who were nearly starving in Alaska, he fell in love with the Spanish comman- dant’s beautiful daughter Doña Concepción.

Trading between Spain and Russia was illegal at the time, but the sudden betrothal between Rezanov and the teenage Spaniard enabled the Spanish governor to fudge the rules, ostensibly allowing trade between relatives. Unfortunately a papal dispensation was required to enable the Greek Orthodox baron to marry a Roman Catholic, so the lovers were forced to postpone their nuptials after a six-week courtship.

It’s a true story worthy of an opera, but Gough limits it to a few sentences. We learn, “shortly thereafter Rezanov died from an illness that led to a fatal fall from his horse at Krasnoyarsk in Siberia. Doña Concepción, it is said, did not learn about this for forty years after. So ended the first attempt to bring Russia and Spain into closer cooperation on the Pacific coast of North America.”

Gough refrains from turning this episode into Entertainment Tonight. His subject is, after all, the conclusion of empires, not hobbies.

Neither does he care to speculate as to how the history of the Pacific Coast might have evolved had Rezanov not fallen from his horse.

Watching Barry Gough play hopscotch with history is highly agree- able if you already know the broad outlines of the game; that way one can take pleasure in the details.

We learn, for instance, that when Alexander Mackenzie met David Thompson, he told the mapmaker that he (Thompson) had “per- formed more in ten months than he expected could have been done in two years.”

A hands up anyone who knew that José Narváez was the first Spaniard to encounter Rus- sians in person on the West Coast?

Cumulatively, Fortune’s a River is a grand performance by a maas- tro who can only be criticized by the likes of a Salieri who once disdained Mozart for having too many notes.

In the process, readers gain a much-needed appreciation of the formative role played by such figures as John Ledyard, and the master- mind behind the Lewis & Clark expedition—in determining the fate of the Pacific Coast.

There’s also the odd pleasure of encountering a crusty professor, like the kind portrayed by the late John Housemann in movies, who can assert, with complete confi- dence:

“We can now see that it was the British, surprisingly, not the Russians, who had prevented the northern consolidation and expansion of the Spanish empire in this quarter.”

“By excluding the Spanish from Nootka Sound and Neah Bay, the British inadvertently handed the United States a remarkable gift.”

At 400-plus pages, Fortune’s a River is not for beginners. It needs to be digested slowly, so only time will tell if it becomes the primary overview for pre- Confederation history for the Pacific Northwest.

Having written the first book to be published by UBC Press in the early 1970s, Gough was returned from the decade of teaching in eastern Canada to publish Fortune’s a River with a B.C. company. It’s a homecoming, of sorts; one might go under-appreciated because he errs on the side of content in an age of piffle.

Barry Gough was founding director of Canadian Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. He now lives in Victoria where he is not a blogger, and he doesn’t have a website.
GET READY, THERE’S AN ARK A-COMIN’

ANIMALS

Another section focuses on specific threatened species. Some “solutions” are less concrete than others, and some are arguably facile. Developing nations are urged to “Practise Sustainable Forestry,” “Take a Stand Against International Whaling” and “Listen to the Dalai Lama.”

The final “Ten Global Solutions” are more manifesto than a how-to guide, with such headings as “Unite to End Suffering in Factory Farms” and “Practise Reverence for Life.” But even these are clearly written with the desire to inspire, not criticize. Speaking of clear writing, Building An Ark zips right along, with each chapter occupying precisely two pages including illustrations, fact boxes and lists of related materials such as books and websites.

It’s easy to read and suitable for readers of high school age and up.

It’s a pity there are only five solutions for schools, but some of these are among the most thoughtful and practical: Creating a humane biology classroom, adopting an endangered animal through an international agency and incorporating animal references throughout the curriculum, from math to art.

In her introduction, zoologist Dr. Jane Goodall says many of these activities will be applied in her foundation’s “Roots & Shoots” programs for children. “Building an Ark will give our (Roots & Shoots) groups so many new ideas,” she writes. “It will help us realize the importance of small actions we can take earlier.” When billions routinely make these little changes, we shall see big changes.”

Ethan Smith was raised in a remote valley in the West Kootenays, where he was home-schooled on a family farm with no electricity. He now lives in the Gulf Islands.

Founder of the Solutions Project, Victoria-based columnist Guy Dauncey is the author of Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change, also from New Society.

Shane McCune is a non-activist who lives in Comox.

OUR MAN IN ESTONIA

Many British Columbians are aware that Sir Bob Geldof began his career as a part-time music writer for the Georgia Straight but few know the current president of the Republic of Estonia, Toomas Ilves, was once involved in the management of Vancouver’s Literary Storefront.

Under Ilves’ presidency, Estonia has become the first country in the world to introduce voting via the internet for national elections. Estonia has also declared access to the internet to be an unalienable human right.

Mona Fertig, the main founder of the Literary Storefront, recalls Tom lives co-managed the Literary Storefront with Wayne Holder following her departure in the early 1980s. “In his CV,” says Fertig, “he says that he was director of the Vancouver Art Centre, which didn’t exist. I guess The Literary Storefront sounded too unofficial for a political candidate.”

During the early 1980s, according to Fertig, Robert Bringhurst was also involved in Literary Storefront-related readings that were held at a Dutchie’s bookstore outlet in the West End, on Robson Street. Rumours circulated at the time that lives could be involved with the CIA. Coincidentally, the current president of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, is also someone who lived in Canada for an extended period.

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Celebrating 20 years of publishing BC BookWorld

7 rides & 7 reads

I measure my reading by ferry rides, which are a necessary and almost daily part of my life. Your Reckoning 07 issue took me 7 ferry rides and a total of 5 hours to read, cover to cover. I read, and then re-read almost every article, because each one took me back to my beginnings as a librarian on the west coast.

The Reckoning 20th anniversary issue [BCBW Autumn 2007] is heart-warming, mind-bending, nostalgic, brilliantly compiled, and very beautiful in a literary and artistic sense.

I particularly liked Anne Cameron’s article—I’m so glad she is still raging against the Machine. Her mention of Thora and Jerry Howell’s book store in Nanaimo brought back my own memories of meeting just about everyone on this coast at one time or another in that store.

In all my 25 years of librarianship I’ve never come across another couple who did so much for Canadian authors—local and national local.

BC BookWorld is still the first and foremost publication I read and recommend to all library patrons, readers, and writers. And isn’t it looking SO good after 20 years?!

Susan Yates
Vancouver Island Regional Library Nanaimo

Reddening’s path

Congratulations on BC BookWorld’s anniversary and thanks for your story of The Reddening Path. It’s amazing how many people have bought my book at the Hornby Farmer’s Market on the strength of it. It seems everyone reads BC BookWorld and is guided by it.

Amanda Hale
Hornby Island

Not all bad

I enjoyed the Reckoning 2007 issue [BCBW Autumn 2007] very much, but must protest the idea of renaming British Columbia.

In the first place, it would be very difficult to pick a better name that would please and represent our present ethnic mix.

Secondly, the present names of the Provinces of Canada and the States of the United States of America contain a symbolic and rich history of the exploration and settlement of the New World.

Thirdly, the British Empire wasn’t all bad. James Morris in his Pax Britannica trilogy decries the arrogance and brutality but “the good in the adventure, the courage, the idealism, the diligence had contributed their quota of truth towards the universal fulfillment.” And this is why people from all over the world want to come to Canada and British Columbia. Finally, both sets of my grandparents were pioneers in British Columbia—good, diligent, courageous people of English origin. I want to preserve and protect their contribution.

Barbara Whisler
Via email

More on Clutesi

I just want to corroborate Randy Fred’s article that characterized George C. Clutesi as one of the greatest Canadian Native artists, as well as a great humanitarian and philanthropist.

As a young man I lived in the Alberni Valley when there were two distinct towns, known as Port and Alberni. If you lived in downtown Port Alberni, you looked out on the rattle and bang of industry all day and night. Indeed sawdust was always in the air. This was one of the reasons I joined the Smoke Eaters. A man. Article in BC BookWorld [Summer 2007] has him as Jessie. Then claims that he was notorious. I don’t remember hearing anything bad about him.

George Harvey Bowering
Vancouver

Gender minder

Are there less women being published in B.C.? On the ferry over to the Reckoning 07 event in Vancouver I thought I’d see how many women had new books coming out. Of the approx. 150 authors, illustrators, translators and editors whose books are being promoted and published by 16 B.C. publishers in the autumn issue of BC BookWorld, only about 50 were women. I wonder if this figure will rise or are women writers finding it more difficult to find a publisher these days?

Mona Fertig
Salt Spring Island

Smoke alarm

The story of how the Trail Smoke Eaters got their name, as described in the Encyclopedia of B.C. and mentioned in BC BookWorld [BCBW Summer 2007], is a myth.

First of all, it was Carroll Kendall, not Craig Kendall, who smoked a pipe on the ice. Secondly, while a Vancouver Province cartoon depicting this event does exist, it actually appeared in 1931, a decade after the team unofficially became known as the Smoke Eaters. As to the true source of the name, one need look no further than the smoke-stacks towering over the city. A Trail baseball team was called the Smoke Eaters as early as 1901, while sports teams in Butte, Montana, another smelter town, also used the nickname. Cominco disliked the name, but their efforts to change it proved futile. It was convenient for them, however, to point to an origin that didn’t involve the smelter.

Greg Nesteroff
Castlegar

Jesse messy

Heads up: Jesse Owens was a man. Article in BC BookWorld [Summer 2007] has him as Jessie. Then claims that he was notorious. I don’t remember hearing anything bad about him.

George Harvey Bowering
Vancouver

Let’s celebrate 20 years of publishing BC BookWorld
I was raised the seventh child of thirteen. Our mother taught us to respect our racial heritage and indeed the heritage of others without exception. So I had no problem in conversing with George, who at the start was shy and a bit uncomfortable in the presence of this kid who he didn’t know from Adam’s pet goat.

After I married a young lady from Port Alberni, I soon found work on the boom at the Old Somas Sawmill Division of Bloedel Stewart and Welsh. The Somas Division was reputed to be the largest and most modern sawmill on Vancouver Island. George was also working the boom, feeding logs with a pike pole onto the log slip, on their way to the head rig where they were cut into lumber. He must have been around age 43 around that time.

George and I soon hit it off. He began to confide in me his great need to paint. He often asked me to visit his home and workshop, which I did. This is when George began to tell me of the circumstances surrounding his people’s reluctance to encourage him to record the history of his people on canvas. Tribal elders often ostracized him, accusing him of giving away their tribal customs and culture.

Fortunately, George’s compulsive need to paint their history and write their sacred stories won the day, but in the end, it must be noted, that in his overpowering need to paint, George was often taken advantage of by a number of people who managed the various industrial divisions of the empire of the late Macmillan and Bloedel families. These people paid little more for George’s art works than the costs of his paints and canvasses. And George always felt badly about that.

The fact that George Clutesi wasn’t paid fairly for his work by people who could have afforded to do so remains a great tragedy and travesty.

Hugh M. Hamilton
Victoria

Madame Ethel

Thank you for always sending along BC BookWorld. I have a son who now lives in Nelson, BC, and a daughter-in-law working at the library there. They always pass along books from local writers they think I would enjoy. I re-discovered Ethel Wilson after you did a story on her. So thank you for your publication.

Margaret Goldik
Association of English-language Publishers of Quebec

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.
Geography is not destiny

Contemplating Prosecco & Gord Downie vs. blizzards & road kill

by Donna Kane

Some say the internet is a third culture. Whether you live in the “boonies” or in the city, where you eat breakfast dissolves the instant you log on.

A writer in Rolly, up here in the Peace River country, can be in the same space as a writer on Queen Street—both equally “there”—just like that.

Sometimes I do catch myself thinking about what it might be like to be a writer living in Toronto, perhaps drinking Prosecco with Griffin poetry prize winners in someone’s backyard or reading at the Art Bar where Gord Downie might show up and invite me to a party.

But the boonies is where I’ve always lived, a place where, offline, a good cappuccino is at least one gravel road and several hours away, and Saturday’s Globe and Mail might not arrive until Monday. With 70% of Canadians living in urban areas, when I look out my window and see more land than houses, I know I’m in the minority. The imagery around me mostly passes for natural, so it can’t help but give my writing a rural flair. Driving where I do, road kill is certain to pop up as a subject far more often than it would, say, in the work of a city poet. And if a city poet comes for a reading, it’s entirely possible that a fierce blizzard will prevent me from reaching the airport to pick them up, which might then inspire a poem about blizzards and road kill.

Last winter, Liz Bachinsky came to read and I didn’t make it to the airport. In less than an hour the temperature dropped 20 degrees causing the wind to pick up so ferociously that the suddenly falling snow drifted my road until it disappeared. That Liz’s plane landed in the midst of that storm seems less miraculous than just plain stupid.

So there’s the northern weather, the northern roads, the northern imagery. At the same time, there’s the reading series I’ve held in the Peace for the past 10 years where many of Canada’s best poets have come to read. And the after-reading events, at places like the Rolla Pub (where Ken Babstock was shot at with a BB gun and Lorna Crozier learned to tie her logging boots) have, in my opinion at least, given our venues the kind of literary fame that would turn Toronto’s Drake green with envy.

My reading series has, in fact, reached such a level of chic that a recent reader, upon arriving in Dawson Creek, undaunted by the number of pickup trucks with moose antlers in the back, asked the first person he saw where the nearest vegetarian restaurant might be. That may have taken things a bit far, but it does suggest that just because you live in the boonies, doesn’t mean you can’t acquire at least the essence of literary hip.

Here artists working in various disciplines band together because there aren’t enough writers or visual artists to make up their own separate clans. Having such a diversity of artists chat and drink wine together has resulted in some groundbreaking events. A prime example is the launch of my new book inside a granary at the Sweetwater Festival in Rolla. My reading from Erratic was conducted next to a two-headed calf, an art installation by Karl Mattson entitled Industrial Evolution.

In the end, I’m grateful for email and bookninja.com, but as a writer, I’m interested in who we are as human beings, how we view the world where we are. I don’t think those concerns would be different if I was in a Toronto backyard or standing next to a two-headed calf.

[Donna Kane lives a few miles northwest of Dawson Creek in Bessborough. She has just completed a reading tour that included Rolla, Regina, Saskatoon, Bonner’s Ferry (Idaho), Antigonish, Halifax and Vancouver. Now she’s back in the boonies—where she belongs. You can visit her world at www.donnakane.com]
I’m speaking not only about the obscure, paranoid conspiracies of our public security agencies, which allow government officials to aid, abet, and acquiesce in the abduction and torture of Canadian citizens in Syrian prisons.

I’m thinking also about the many ways that a climate of fear and self-censorship has gathered around us, and has begun to infect many aspects of public life. One of the more recent and unedifying examples is provided by India Books. The larger bookshop in Canada, India Books decided to ban an article by Harpy’s Magazine because it featured an article discussing the Danish cartoons of Mohammad.

Echoing the facile justifications of the Cable & Mail and numerous other members of the “free” press, an inert corporate memo sent to all India stores—as well as the Gables and Chappell branches—explained that the article might offend some Muslims. We then went on to note that the cartoons have been known to inspire deplorable demonstrations around the world, making it clear that India’s real motivation for pulling the magazine was fear. The feeling of fear is understandable, of course. It’s not just bad to be openly acknowledged and honestly addressed. It is important to mention that the article in question, “Drawing Blood,” was written by the most prominent political cartoonist in America, and that it presents a scholarly discussion of the role of editorial cartoons during the past 200 years. As a subscriber to Harper’s, I had read the article before the ban was put in place, and had recommended it to a number of people as the most insightful analysis of the cartoon controversy I’d yet seen. Really, such reflection and critical thought is not deemed to be too offensive—or dangerous—to be permissible. I’m not sure what should be considered the greater scandal: the blatant hypocrisy and cynicism of India Books, or the fact that their suppression of the magazine generated so little public concern. Try to imagine what any bookstores or library would look like if we were removed all materials that might be offensive to some individuals or group. The shelves would be empty, and a dark silence would soon gather around us. Having thwarted the honest effort for respect for dialogues or for understanding, we would soon become prisoners of our own fears and prejudices, unable even to imagine alternatives, and become prone to acting aggressively to perceived threats.

Perhaps most Canadians have little sense of what it is to risk, if we abandon our fundamental freedoms, even just a bit, in the interests of good name or of a quiet life. The most extreme example, I suppose, is North Korea. North Korea is usually described as “totalitarian,” “paranoid,” and “ultrasonic,” and even as part of the “axis of evil.” It regularly threatens its neighbors with missiles and nuclear horror. I’ve been to North Korea twice, once as an assignment for the World Council of Churches, and once as a special guest of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Whatever words may be used to describe it, North Korea is fundamentally about complete control. I think the most chilling image I have of this comes from a visit I made to a kobong in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-old on my mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city. The four-year-olds on our mind, my eyes again on the bends in the curve, my hands holding the little boy, I was told that the nursery was not only cleaned every day, but that it was also thoroughly searched. In fact, only every second room was cleaned every day while I was out, and it is impossible to imagine what might have happened if I had ever taken my kindergarten in Pyongyang, the capital city.
TEN YEARS AGO, Ian McAllister and his wife Karen published one of the most influential Canadian books ever.

The Great Bear Rainforest (Harbour) generated legislation to protect one of the northern hemisphere’s richest unprotected wildlife habitats—the main B.C. habitat for grizzlies.

After provincial and federal governments pledged $60 million to preserve 1.2 million hectares of the largest intact temperate rainforest left on earth, Time magazine heralded the young couple as “Environmental Leaders for the 21st Century.”

But as founding members of the Raincoast Conservation Society, Ian and Karen McAllister believed mainstream environmental organizations—such as Greenpeace, the Sierra Club and Forest Ethics—had struck a compromise with industry and government that was unacceptable.

Keeping an arms-length from the negotiations, the McAllisters settled in the tiny west coast outport of Shearwater on Denny Island where they have raised their first child.

And their conservation crusade continues.

Over a five-year period, Ian McAllister has repeatedly returned to the rainforest to track wolves for his new book. The Last Wild (Greystone $45).

In June, freelancer Andrew Findlay joined McAllister aboard his trimaran Habitat to sail up the serpentine Roscoe Inlet in search of hard-to-find wolves in the lush estuaries near the head of the fjord.

He sends this report.

BY ANDREW FINDLAY

Now somewhat of a loner in the B.C. conservation movement, it’s not surprising that Ian McAllister is drawn to wolves as subject matter for his new book.

Growing up in Victoria, while other kids flocked to the shopping mall, Ian McAllister boated Vancouver Island’s west coast exploring tidal pools, surge channels and inlets with his father.

“Over the years I’ve spent three, perhaps four months alone, at a time, in these inlets looking for wolves,” says McAllister, as we motor through a narrow passage near the entrance of Roscoe Inlet which the Heiltsuk people call the Gateway. “It’s been at times very frustrating but also very rewarding.”

Anyone who has tried to track and photograph wolves soon realizes they would have almost as much success capturing a shooting star or a bolt of lightning.

But McAllister has maintained a soft spot for these animals, recording the elusive carnivores on film with a Zen-like commitment. It’s the same sort of tenacity that enabled him to fight so effectively for the preservation of the Great Bear Rainforest.

Wolves occupy a curious, and one might say unenviable, position in the animal kingdom, at least as far as humans perceive them. Hunters malign them for killing “their” game. Ranchers ostracize them for preying on livestock. And popular literature often casts them as bloodthirsty creatures. They are intelligent and fascinating animals, highly attuned to their environment and able to use cunning, skill and strength to hunt and kill prey.

For McAllister, wolves are anything but cold, bloodthirsty creatures. They are intelligent and fascinating animals, highly attuned to their environment and able to use cunning, skill and strength to hunt and kill prey. To gather material for the book, McAllister spent weeks and months following wolf packs, allowing time for the canines to become accustomed to his scent and presence. He has enough anecdotes from his trips to fill a stack of notebooks.

“‘There’s incredible variability in wolves on the coast. In a span of just 20 nautical miles you can go from wolves that prey on deer and bear to wolves that have a totally marine-based diet,’” McAllister says.

Sometimes you needn’t use wolves to sense their presence. During springtime in the rich tidal estuaries of the central coast, unlike bears that meander in seemingly chaotic patterns in search of chocolate lilies and cow pasture, wolves leave purposeful straight paths through the lush sedges as they move stealthily between the timber and tide lines. Such ecological subtleties are revealed only to the patient observer.

McAllister describes seeing a black-tailed deer grazing contentedly within 50 yards of a wolf pack that lay concealed in the tall grass. Though the wolves had gone days without a fresh kill, they neither lifted their muzzles nor made any suggestion of a chase. Evidently the predators calculated the cost of giving pursuit and decided that there would be other, more rewarding opportunities.

McAllister has also observed a symbiotic relationship between wolves and ravens. Just as the noisy squawking of ravens alert wolves to the presence of carrion, ravens often descend to pick over the remains of a carcass left behind by wolves.

After three days in Roscoe Inlet, we had almost given up hope of finding wolves. The estuaries we explored were full of signs—fresh scat, a palm-sized print in the mud, and coarse hair on a salmonberry bush next to a forest game trail. Then as we motored back down the inlet, McAllister spotted a lone black wolf with white paws standing on a shoreline granite bluff, casually watching our passage.

As quickly as it appeared, the wolf vanished like a ghost into the rainforest. And Ian McAllister vanished from the wolf’s sight—a brief meeting of the minds.
PEAKS & CHALETS

Forget Y2K. Conservationists have formed Y2Y to stop Purcell ski resort.

With more than 50 peaks above 3400 metres, the Purcells give rise to the largest protected area in southern B.C. encompassed by Glacier National Park and Bugaboo Provincial Park.

Located between the Rockies and the Selkirk Range to the west, the Purcell Range is a stunning array of lakes, glaciers and forbidding terrain that includes some of the oldest exposed rock in North America.

A proposed Jumbo Glacier Resort, two decades in the planning, has prompted residents and 280 partner organizations to mount a Jumbo Wild awareness campaign in keeping with the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y).

“The highly contested resort,” according to K. Linda Kivi, “would place a real estate development of 6500 inhabitants in the remote Jumbo Valley on the northern boundary of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy.”

In The Purcell Suite: Upholding the Wind (Maa Press, $25), a collection of essays Kivi has edited to raise money for Jumbo Wild, 25 contributors illuminate the Purcells as a vital corridor in the wilderness that stretches from Yellowstone National Park to the Yukon territory.

One of her contributors, Ktnaxax elder Leo Williams, recalls the process by which indigenous peoples were eradicated or dislodged from the area. “My church is there—outside,” he says.

“For those who don’t know much about Sinixt history,” says Marilyn James, spokesperson for the sinxit nation, “it is very important to note that the sinxit were declared extinct in Canada by the federal government in 1956, just prior to the signing of the Columbia River Treaty between the USA and Canada.

“Since the sinxit were the only Indian people on the Columbia River system in Canada, it is apparent to me, a sinxit, why we were declared extinct. We were in the way.”

Now Kivi and others are the ones in the way of commerce—except this time the media-savvy environmentalists are not likely to be considered extinct in the foreseeable future.

A self-described ‘story vulture,’ Anne DeGrace confesses her second novel Wind Tails (McArthur & Co. $29.95) arose from a pub night in Nelson when a friend described a hitchhiker who would only travel in the direction the wind blew.

A second friend added a true story about a driver who asked hitchhikers to send him postcards from wherever they wound up.

For Wind Tails, DeGrace turned the wind-following hitchhiker into an American draft evader named Pink—named after the group Pink Floyd—who has allowed a beautiful pair of eyes, along with a determination not to go to Vietnam, to bring him to Canada, and the postcard collector gets turned into Evelyn, an intellectually challenged housewife who strays further and further afield to pick up and drop off hitchhikers.

Most of the action occurs in an Alberta mountain pass, at the Roadside Café, circa 1977, on a day when the wind seems to be blowing in circles. Think of the comedy tv-show Corner Gas, transferred to the Purcells.

Cass, the owner of The Roadside Café, still mourns the baby she gave up, and the niece her sister spirited away from her. Archie, a truck driver, keeps coming and going, and you’ve got the makings of a fairly normal family.

What these characters have in common is the road they travel on, the café where they all wind up, if only for a glass of water, and their effect on Jo, so fragile it feels as if a slight breeze will scatter her. As delicate as a dandelion gone to seed, Wind Tails feels as if a slight puff of breath will send all these characters and their stories off with her—a Kootenay-inspired fairy tale for grown-ups.

Born in 1960, DeGrace is a librarian, illustrator, photographer, volunteer and mother who made waves with her first novel, Treading Water (2005), based on the fate of Renata, a community submerged under 35 feet of water by the erection of the Hugh Keenleyside Dam.

So we have had water, and we have had wind. Fire might be next.
The grasslands of the Cariboo Chilcotin cover only 1% of our land mass, yet they support almost a third of the threatened and vulnerable plant and animal species of British Columbia.

Chris Harris is something of a publishing loner. His company at 105 Mile in the Cariboo includes a studio constructed of straw bales.

Over 17 years he’s produced ten photography books in his “British Columbia and Beyond” series; with a focus on his regional landscapes, from the Bowron Lakes to Barkerville and the serpentine BCR line.

Harris is also a skilled outdoor adventure guide with a knack for positioning his camera in interesting places most of us will never get to.

**Spirit in the Grass: The Cariboo Chilcotin’s Forgotten Landscape** (Country Light $39.95) is something else again. After immersing himself in Cariboo-Chilcotin grasslands for three years, Harris has placed himself near the forefront of a movement to preserve one of B.C.’s most endangered ecosystems.

“I’ve walked through the grasslands in snow and ice, thunderstorms, rain, wind and fire.

“I’ve tramped across ancient lichens in heat that turned my skin to leather and have camped on open benchlands to capture the dawn...”

“The sound of the meadowlark is now a part of me, and the grasslands now centre my life.”

For **Spirit in the Grass**, Chris Harris often spent nights camping on the grasslands, camera at the ready as morning light crept into the viewfinder. The first light came quietly, “as if slowly pushing the darkness away.”

In one early morning shot, patches of bunchgrass and sagebrush shimmer like distant galaxies.

Harris also photographed late into the evening where in one shot the setting sun turns Mid-Fraser River Canyon into a molten slab that disappears into black benchlands.

The grasslands were by far the most challenging landscape he has photographed because the land is flatter and the colour palette is muted.

“The grasslands reveal themselves quietly and slowly,” he says. “They’re soft and rolling, the colours pastel, and it’s much more difficult to create images that give a response.”

For this project Harris collaborated with two ecologists from the Grasslands Conservation Council, Ordell Steen, a former research ecologist with the B.C. Forests Service, and Kristi Iverson, a plant ecologist and past chair of the Council.

From these experts we learn the intermountain grasslands are part of the rich tapestry of ecosystems. In the grasslands, only about 30-55 centimetres of precipitation falls each year, less than any other area in the Cariboo-Chilcotin.

“Air temperatures are the highest in the region,” writes Iverson. “Forests cannot thrive in the grasslands; only plants that hold their moisture against the pull of the dry air, or that can avoid the drought by becoming dormant, survive in the grasslands.”

This climate results in abundant bunchgrass, sagebrush, cactus, lichens and diverse wildlife, including the largest breeding population of Barrow’s goldeneyes in B.C., as well as three species of bats that occur only in the grasslands and ancient sandhill cranes.

Threats to this delicate habitat include our habit for dousing fires at every turn. When fire traditionally swept through, once every seven to fifteen years, it renewed life by keeping the forest in check and fertilizing plants with ash.

“Afetr 1860, the frequency of the fires decreased as cattle grazing removed the fuels necessary to carry fire. First Nations people were penalized for starting fires, and fire suppression reduced the size of wildfires. When fires stopped, trees and shrubs invaded many cool, moist sites in the grasslands.”

Many areas are now choked with forest. The grasslands are also being seriously eroded by urban development. We need look no further than the Thompson and Okanagan to see what can happen if human habitation isn’t adequately curtailed.

Aiken plants introduced by humans, can displace native species and animals; over grazing by cattle can “hammer” the grasslands, and no one knows for certain what global warming will bring.

Poet Harold Rhenisch contributes a brief cultural history of the grasslands, tracing the first nomadic people from almost 10,000 years ago, to more permanent Secwepemc and Tsilhqot’in in pit house villages beside the rivers.

White settlement and ranching followed with the gold rush of 1858, and legendary ranches like the Gang Ranch, Alkali Lake Ranch and Empire Valley Ranch sprang from the superb bluebunch wheatgrasses.

Wild horses still run free in the Eskeremic, and the Eskeremic people migrate each year to “bring the horses and their spirit home, and then to return them again, in this culture that has never been broken.”

Harold Rhenisch concludes: “Because of the continued hon-our that the Secwepemc and Tsilhqot’in people and ranchers have maintained for the land, the spirit remains in the grass.”

A portion of the profits from the sale of this book will be donated to the Grasslands Conservation Council of British Columbia.

Mark Forsythe is the host of CBC Radio’s BC Almanac.

His new book is **The Trail of 1858** (Harbour, 2007), co-authored with Greg Dickinson.
I n his old age, Tolstoy dis- 
missed War & Peace and 
Anna Karenina as bour- 
gougeous entertainment and de- 
cided it was better to write 
ables for children. Some authors, on 
the other hand, such as Ann Walsh of 
Williams Lake, chose to write for young 
readers from the outset. 

After completing a 10-day summer 
course with Robin Skelton in 1981 
in Wells, B.C., she first wrote a time-trav- 
eelling tale set in Barkerville, Your Time, 
My Time, and returned to the gold rush 
era for Mau, Me and Murder, The Doc- 
tor’s Apprentice and By the Skin of His 
Teeth. 

Ann Walsh has recently edited a col- 
lection of short stories about young people 
coping with loss and grief, Dark Times (Ronsdale, 2005), and written two 
the novels about social issues, Flower 
Power (Orca, 2005) and Horse Power (Orca, 2007). 

Why did you start writing books 
for children? 
I had a manual typewriter with sticky 
keys. Children’s books are shorter. 

No, the real reason. 
I had been a teacher for many years and 
I wanted to share B.C. history with 
young readers. I fell in love with 
Barkerville and I found out that a mur- 
der had been committed there in 1866, 
Barkerville and I found out that a mur- 
der had been committed there in 1866, 
and so I used the words of the era even 
though they made me uncomfortable. I 
know exactly how Louise feels. Angst 
well-done is great, but it’s hard to take 
in large doses. Most teens, however, are 
one huge blob of angst. I know. I raised 
two daughters. 

Do you think most people who 
write for kids lie awake nights and 
secretly feel hard done by 
because they don’t get the at- 
tention they deserve? 
Well, you probably say that about almost 
any writer! But, yes, Kidlit 
writers can and do whine. For most of 
us the money doesn’t pour in, the re- 
view are scanty and we get little respect 
from the rest of the literary world. We 
are ‘just’ children’s writers. Nearly 
everyone is going to write a chil- 
dren’s book someday, when 
they have a free weekend. 

What do you think people who 
write for kids lie awake nights and 
secretly feel hard done by 
because they don’t get the at- 
tention they deserve? 
Well, you probably say that about almost 
any writer! But, yes, Kidlit 
writers can and do whine. For most of 
us the money doesn’t pour in, the re- 
view are scanty and we get little respect 
from the rest of the literary world. We 
are ‘just’ children’s writers. Nearly 
everyone is going to write a chil- 
dren’s book someday, when 
they have a free weekend. 

Do you talk about this sort of 
thing with other Kidlit authors? 
These days, most of ‘my talking’ is done 
on-line. The closest children’s writer is 
Kathleen Cook Wildron. She’s an hour- 
and-a-half drive from my house. We 
have co-authored a book, Forestry A-Z, 
forthcoming in 2008, and we did this 
by driving 65 km to meet at a restau-
rant halfway between our homes. We 
also had a few revision sleep-overs. 

Our children’s book columnist 
Louise Donnelly gets weary of 
all the teenage angst novels and 
the onslaught of political cor- 
correctness. Do you have any gen- 
eral perceptions of the teenage 

Why have you done nearly all 
your books with B.C. publishers? 

My subjects have been deemed too lo- 
cal by many national publishers who still 
reject me regularly. When I started, YA 
[Young Adult] novels were just begin- 
ing to interest publishers. My first pub- 
lisher had never done a YA novel until 
Robin Skelton recommended mine for 
its “strong sense of place.” Small, local 
publishers are great for keeping an 
active backlist and for reprinting titles. 
However their small size can cause finan-
cial problems. One publisher still owes 
me my 2005 royalties—for six titles—and 
is no longer answering my queries about 
when I can expect payment. 

Should we name that publisher? 
We should not. 

We mustn’t end on that note. 
I agree. 

In Flower Power there’s a local 
crusade to save a neighbour- 
hood tree. Was that based on a 
real incident? Like that 
Barkerville murder? 
No, that was a case of life imitating art. Shortly after I finished writ- 
ing it, I heard a news report 
about a woman who had 
chained herself to a neigh- 
bour’s tree, just like in the 
story. 

“My favourite compliment thus far, 
from one of my readers, 
has been, “Do you know 
you’re world famous in 
Kamloops?” 

Sales of children’s books are on the rise 
in British Columbia, and kidlit veteran 
Ann Walsh is one of the best reasons why. 

‘My favourite compliment thus far, 
from one of my readers, 
has been, “Do you know 
you’re world famous in 
Kamloops?”’
But clearly you have a personal agenda in some of your books. Well, it’s not a composite of things. My mother was a dedicated environmentalist. She belonged to SPEC which was the first recycling project in the Lower Mainland. However, Mom was too much a Southern lady to sit in a tree for days. I, on the other hand, have many, many times embarrassed my own children. I can never forget how accomplished they were at the eye-roll, the sigh, and the “Do you have to, Mum?”

So I guess Flower Power came from a blend of both mothers—with my father’s sense of humour thrown in for good measure. As well, I stole the idea of having all the women in the story named after flowers from a British mystery writer. Except I didn’t use any of the same flowers she did.

In the new book, Horse Power, your heroine Carrie gets herself reluctantly involved in her mother’s crusade to save a neighbour-school. Where does that story come from?

All across North America and even in rural Scotland and Ireland, small schools are being closed. A few years ago there was a sit-in at a school at Forest Grove, near 100 Mile House. Many other schools in the Cariboo have been closed. These things don’t always percolate into the newspaper in Vancouver or Victoria, but they’re important to those of us “out here.”

Does it bother you that sometimes people assume “easy-to-read” books are easy to write?

Often. Nathaniel Hawthorne said, “Easy reading is damned hard writing.” The fact that a book has an adjusted reading level to interest reluctant readers should not be taken, as it often is, as a negative. Not that I’m sensitive about this. [laughter]

When my first book was accepted for publication, I bore all my friends in Williams Lake with my incessant talking about its progress. “Look at what that editor did! Here’s the cover, isn’t it great? The proofs have arrived!”

It wasn’t until the book was in print and thrust into my friends’ reluctant hands that I realized that, except for a kind librarian and a supportive bookstore owner, no one in my town knew or cared a hoot about writing and publishing.

We had a well established Art Society, a flourishing pottery club, The Woman’s Institute and a dozen churches, but there was no group for writers. So I stopped talking about my writing and went back to work at a ‘real’ job where the after-work blithering wasn’t literary, but the companionship was great.

When my second book came out, I joined the Writers’ Union of Canada and registered for the AGM—three days of meetings, workshops, socializing, dancing, listening to other authors and a plane ticket or driving 500 km to go to a meeting or a conference. At least now I can ‘talk’ to other writers on-line. Sometimes I even behave like the senior writer I am and offer advice!

Writing from the boonies, I’ve learned that one must be patient when waiting for editorial response. Editors are busy people, and off-theshelf rejection letters are their daily fare. It may still be in the closet, so you have to make an effort to do the things other writers do, even if it means buying a plane ticket or driving 500 km to go to a meeting or a conference.

Or you can form your own writers’ group. A good writers’ group is a thing of beauty. A group of writers who respect the work of other writers do, even if it means buying a plane ticket or driving 500 km to go to a meeting or a conference.

“Pierre, eh?” I’ve seen him on TV. Say “hit for me, will you?”

Then people started asking me questions (after they’d inquired about Pierre’s state of health), including one of the more pressing: “When is your next book going to be ready?” That was when I stopped talking about my current writing project. People didn’t really want to know about the rejections, the delays, the rewrites, the lengthy process from idea to book. They mostly just wanted to know about Pierre Berton.

Just as I didn’t understand much about ranching or forestry: my neighbours didn’t understand much about my new writing world.

In those days, we had no Internet or e-mail. So at the Writers’ Union AGM it was a relief to find people talking about rejections at breakfast, movie rights at lunch, and swapping stories of editors from hell during dinner. I still try to attend the AGM every year. Those yearly meetings and contacts with friends I met there have kept me going through the lonely cold winters of my early career.

I admit I am sometimes jealous of the busy schedule of the children’s writers in Vancouver who have easy access to meetings, socializing and can participate in literary events such as WOTS and the International Writers’ Festival, but if I can’t get to those meetings and events, at least now I can ‘talk’ to other writers on-line. Sometimes I even behave like the senior writer I am and offer advice!

Writing from the boonies, I’ve learned that there are other writers near you, but they may still be in the closet, so you have to make an effort to do the things other writers do, even if it means buying a plane ticket or driving 500 km to go to a meeting or a conference.

Or you can form your own writers’ group. A good writers’ group is a thing of beauty. A group of writers who respect the work of other writers do, even if it means buying a plane ticket or driving 500 km to go to a meeting or a conference.

“I said the words in the words of my first mentor, Robin Skelton, I should stop whining and ‘get on with it.’” —ANN WALSH

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From the author of Some Girls Do
Dirtbags
a novel by Teresa McWhirter
ISBN: 1-895636-88-4

Fresh fiction. In stores now.
WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT, ELFIE?  

AGES 5 TO 8

Elf the Eagle by Ron Smith & Ruth Campbell (Oolichan, $19.95)

Former Malaspina College English professor Ron Smith— a poet and editor who helped Randy Fred establish Thesys Books, Canada’s first Aboriginal press—is most often described as the founder of his own publishing company, Oolichan Books, based in Lantzville.

His Vancouver Island home is situated on the waterfront, surrounded by nesting eagles, but it wasn’t that idyllic setting that inspired Elf the Eagle, the first in a planned series of picture books about a runty and fearful baby eagle’s adventures. It was Smith’s own fear of heights.

Elf the Eagle opens with Elf as a fuzzy ball of fluff, his egg tooth throbbing, breaking free of his shell into the terrifying world of a sky-high nest. There is nothing but water and daggertipped ferns and “sharp, scary rocks.” What were his parents thinking?

In the days that follow, as dark brown feathers replace the white fluff and his show-off sister Edwina aces her first solo flight, Elf cowes in the nest. Edwina taunts him, his parents bothe him with food held temptingly just out of reach, but it’s a clumsy tumble that sends the eaglet hurtling down towards rocks that “loom as big as a whale.”

At the last moment Elf manages to open his eyes, bravely somersault with an updraft of air and is soon gliding higher and higher, “wheeling and soaring in the blue, blue sky.”

Having taught in Italy and having translated his poetry into a bilingual Italian-English edition, Smith will oversee an Italian version of Elf, also illustrated by Ruth Campbell whose fetching illustrations have captured the majesty of the parent eagles. Edwina’s avian insouciance and Elf’s fearful black marble eyes. As an Emily Carr graduate living on Vancouver Island, Campbell says her portrayal of Elf is a product of her sympathy for all of us who have to leave our comfortable nests.

Having undertaken volunteer work with wildlife rescue, Campbell writes, “Freedom and independence [are] ambitions of the human care givers, not the fledglings themselves, since young birds are quite happy...being fed juicy tidbits...and having all their needs attended to.”

Illustration by Ruth Campbell from Elf the Eagle

COCK-A-DODGEE-SCREWS

AGES 5 TO 7

Mechanicons by Chris Tougas (Orca $18.95)

What if you were a farmer besieged by a tornado that left behind nothing but “a mountain of scrap metal and machine parts” and not a single animal? Well, if you’re the ruddy-nosed, bespectacled farmer in Victoria artist Chris Tougas’ clever book, you may decide to make lemonade when life hands you lemons—or rums sockets, sprockets, funnels, springs and cogs.

The enterprising farmer declares he will make a masterpiece from the disaster, rebuilding with the materials that are strewn in his yard. “When pigs fly,” his neighbours reply. Soon enough, a mechanical rooster emerges from the welding sparks. This new rooster-bot is so good at his job he wakes the people in China. Powerful Her-Culean chick-bot follows and then a cow-bot that makes great chocolate milk.

But nothing compares with the flying pig-bot! It’s a refreshing originally and quirky idea for a children’s picture book.

Stephenie Hill illustration

WIGGLES & GIGGLS

AGES 3 TO 6

Lilly and Lucy’s Shadow by Christopher Aslan Kennedy & Stephanie Hill (Raincoast, $19.95)

Overcoming fear is the theme of Lilly and Lucy’s Shadow, Christopher Aslan Kennedy’s first book from a Bedlington Van-couver-based imprint. Kennedy has partnered “both on and off the page” with newbie publisher Meghan Spong, production editor at Raincoast Books.

Lilly and Lucy are two wild-haired girls who head for the park to escape the disaster, returning “with new sparks. This new rooster-bot is so good at his job he wakes the people in China. Powerful Her-Culean chick-bot follows and then a cow-bot that makes great chocolate milk.”

But nothing compares with the flying pig-bot! It’s a refreshing originally and quirky idea for a children’s picture book.

Stephanie Hill

NOTED

Sue Ann Alderson, Ilos by Millie Ballance. The Eco-Diary of Kiraan Singer (Tradewind $18.95) 978-1-896580-47-0

Heather Kellerhas-Stewart, Extreme Edge (Learning $7.95) 1-50228-967-6

Irene N. Watts, When the Bough Breaks (Tundra Books $12.99) 978-0-88779-621-7

Barry McDivitt, The Youngest Spy (Thistledown Press $17.95) 1-897235-17-8

Kit Pearson, A Peafowl Gentle Knight (Penguin $25.00) 0-708-26662-2

Liam O’Donnell, Ilos by Mike Deas. Wild Ride (Oca $9.95) 978-1-55143-765-9

Joan Buchner, Ilos by Cynthia Nugent. Honey-Cake (Tradewind $16.95) 978-1-896580-37-1

Chris McMahen, Klutz-Hood (Oca $9.95) 978-1-55143-710-1

Frieda Wishinsky, Crazy for Gold (Maple Tree Press $6.95) 1-897236-05-7

Christopher Millimin, The Ring of Beak (Thistledown Press $12.95) 1-897235-21-6

Sarah N. Harvey, Bull’s Eye (Oca Soundings $9.95) 978-1-55143-679-1

Richard Van Camp, Welcome Song for Baby (Oca $9.95) 978-1-55143-661-6

Michelle Mulder, Maggie and the Chocolate War (Second Story Press $14.95) 978-1-897187-27-4

Karen Rivers, X in Flight (Raincoast $11.95) 978-1-55143-662-3

Marion Gonnehove, The Adventures of Kilty Witty (self-published)

John Wilson, The Aichens’s Dream (Key Porter Books $16.95) 1-55029-347-4

Rob Stevenson, Out of Order (Oca $9.95) 978-1-55143-663-0

Lianne Flatt, Ilos by Scott Ritchie. Let’s Go! (Maple Tree Press $19.95) 978-1-897349-02-1

Daniel Wakeman, Ilos by Kirk van Stralen. Bert’s Bunny Trouble (Oca $19.95) 978-1-55143-661-1

Chris Mizzoni, Out of the Flock (Raincoast Books $21.95) 978-1-55143-604-3

James Howiegan, Payback (Groundwood Books $19.95) 0-88989-701-8


Paul Yee, Ilos by Shaohi Wang. Sha-Liand Tamara (Tradewind $7.95) 978-1-896580-63-7
HAPPINESS IS A WARM CARROT

The Footstep Café by Paulette Crosse


Carrot Happiness

2005.


Venom Vancouver who has published
nym for Janine Cross of North

year waiting period, the retail
Pierre imprint. During that two-
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tario to work for Dundurn, ena-
Michael Carroll moved to On-

was still evading creditors and
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Beach Holme Publishing failed to
layed after David Godfrey's
ously announced novel was de-

premely irreverent, this previ-
asburdist, touching and su-

chill and endowing the versatile

microwave the vegetable for 26


MONSTER MACHINATIONS

How a Trinidadian vampire destroys a Canadian family.

BY CHERIE THIESSEN

Soucouyant by David Chariandy


Paulette Crosse


BY CHERIE THIESSEN

Soucouyant by David Chariandy


Soucouyant

is mostly the
34 BC BOOKWORLD WINTER 2007-08

Advertising for this novel has
included an excerpt describing
how the heroine likes to mastur-
bate with a carrot: It should be
organic and it is important to
microwave the vegetable for 26
seconds, thereby taking off the
chill and endowing the versatile
vegetable with a stimulating
heat.

Described as quirky, absurdist, touching and
supremely irrelevant, this previ-
ously announced novel was de-
layed after David Godfrey's

Beach Holme Publishing failed to
honour commitments to its con-
tracted authors. As the press
was still emptying creditors and
authors. Beach Holme editor
Michael Carroll moved to Or-
lando to work for Dundurn, ena-
bling the manuscript to resur-
faced under Dundun's Simon &
Pierre imprint. During that two-
year waiting period, the retail
price went up two bucks.

Paulette Crosse is a pseudonym
for Janine Cross of North
Vancouver who has published
the fantasy novel, Touched by
Fenom, one of Library Journal's

Because Meera avoided
them, the narrator (let's call him
X) doesn't recognize her when
he discovers her in his mother's
home. Initially, he thinks she's
a live-in nurse, caring for his
mother. X seems a little spaced
himself, so it takes a while for
him to figure out that a nurse
would have an income, and
would not have to live rough in
the attic or wear clothes stolen
from his drawer and closet.

Meera, in fact, has turned
Meera, in fact, has turned
back on her classes and uni-
sity scholarship and her
home. Her distressed mother
has no idea where she is until X
informs her. Compelled to
move in with the abandoned
Adele, Meera feels she must
alone for being one of those
cruel young people who had
earlier harassed the immigrant
family with anonymous phone
calls and worse.

Meera's educated mother
was also from the Caribbean, and
although Meera's father is
Wealth, as far as the neighbour-
hood is concerned, she's a
darling.

At 17, X decides he doesn't
want to be his mother's nurse-
maid anymore. He tells her he's
made provisions for her, but
she can't understand. What sort of
provisions would leave her in a
house alone, where realistically
she could not have survived for
more than a few days?

The abandonment is callous.
It's not clear how long it is be-
fore Meera moves in to care for
her, but maybe Adele's long
time friend, Mrs. Christenson,
has filled in the gap.

Certainly her later "bill for
services rendered" would indi-
cate that, but details in
Soucouyant are often sketchy.

The incredible neglect of
Adele continues until she is
killed by a preventable accident
at home. Previously she has
trashed the kitchen many times,
disappeared outside, and run
baths that have overflowed.

Are Meera and X intention-
ally depicted as monsters speng-
ing off a sick woman, culpable
for her death?

When there is a quarrel,
Meera simply walks out on the
woman who has come to depend
on her, without so much as a
goodbye.

Then, knowing that his
mother has been wandering
down to the basement, X goes
to bed without securing her
safety or locking the door that
leads to her death.

The nightmarish outlandish-
ness of this dysfunctional family
continues. Mrs. Christenson ar-
vives to take care of the funeral
arrangements and presents her
bill for home care for
$345,033.48.

After X has sold the family
home for $53,000, he allows her
to bully him into handing it all
over, even his brother's half.

This story disintegrates into
a rant, and the characterization
is not always credible, but the
exorcism of the soucouyant is
effective and Soucouyant suc-
ceds with its images of the Car-
ibbean.

No doubt it was the original-
ity of this uneven first novel that
enabled Chariandy, who teaches
in the Department of English at
Simon Fraser University, to gain
nominations for two prestigious
fiction prizes.

Cherie Thiessen writes from
the Pender Islands.

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THREE WISE MEN

From Mexico, to Winlaw, to Victoria

High Speed Through Shallow Water: by Tom Wayman (Institute $17.95)

“When the switch trips and I want nothing. What is it with poets when they turn sixty? Tom Wayman of Winlaw investigates what lasts and what doesn’t, body, pain, fate, death, burial, eternity, existence and aging all in the book’s first section titled “60.”

“I will spend a very long time / in the dark / without a face / or word. / Only the light / knows my name.”

These poems, many already published in an impressive list of journals, are plain spoken accounts of rural living, especially about the earth. Wayman revisits the same scene: mountains, aspens, creek, house, repeatedly but the repetition is not dulling, rather it is a deepening experience of awe and attention.

His loving attention to the landscape of SE BC, where he lives, through the cycles of seasons, weather and personal moods, is the strength of the book. Never obscure, he is so plain spoken however that he risksing verging on the prosaic. Is this poetry or chopped-up prose?

Wayman has developed a reputation as a ‘work’ poet who writes about labour but he hardly touches on his job as a teacher at the University of Calgary except in irony or distaste. His real work is the words about snow and wind and silence and recollections of his life as a labourer and, (did I mention it?) aging.

The last section in Shallow Water is about poem-making. “The Garden,” in which older and young poets garden together but not all in harmony, is required reading for all poets manicured. The section ends with a haiku, “Stop poems, / set uninflected. / You and your bars / shall not vanish / nor lose your powers. / You remain forever the beginning / of the story, / the wound dressing in the stone.”

Hannah Main-Van Der Kemp writes from Victoria

HYPOGOGIA

Moving Day by Terence Young (Farran $14.95)

Memories can often take the draping shape of hypnogogia, the state between dreams and awakening where odd clarities and cloudly sensations present themselves without apparent connection. In Moving Day, tender hearted Terence Young tells his life as sunny days with cloudy periods.

“A marvel, really, all these bits that come together like a math equation when it looms into sense: / I live here / These are the people I love.”

Blending threat humour (a lonely kid quotes William of Occam in Latin to a bag lady) with day-to-day domesticity (those garden-darkening plum trees really must come down), Young’s is alternately wistful, funny and hyperbolic. He doesn’t undo the Big Themes of War and Peace, Gain and Loss. He’s a skilful poet who can relate the universals within the world of his own street, heightened by occasional travel and his hesitant familialties as son, friend, lover, husband, father and son again.

A breathless argument with a contractor over a collapsed sundeck, tongue-in-cheek soltions to the exposure of raising children and the burden of excess friends, disposal of family heirlooms in an imagined auction; the over-arching impression is one of challenged strength, the dramatics over. The contentment is tinged here and there with confusion but not with regrets.

If you have lived in the Victoria area most of your life and, in mid-life, enjoy reminiscing, then this blackberry patch is for you.

1-877101-15-3

ALSO NOTED

Gillian Wigmore, soft geography (Catlam Press $15.95) 978-0-894759-22-9

Martha Dacosta, All Things Said & Done (Catlam Press, $15.95) 978-0-894759-22-9

Peter Levitt, Winter Still (Mother Tongue Press)

Susan Stenson, My mother agrees with the dead (Lusakk & Wynn $17) 978-1-894759-22-9

W.H. New, Along a Snake Fence (Catlam $16.95) 978-0-894759-23-4

George McWhirter, The Inconclusion (Catlam $17.95) 978-0-894759-22-9

Diane Tucker, Bright Scars of Hours (Palimpsest $18) 978-0-9735265-2-3

George Whipple, Kittes (Ekstasis $18.95) 978-1-894759-23-4

Harold Rhenisch, Return To Open Water (Ronsonale $16.95) 978-0-9735265-2-3

Kim Goldberg, Ride Backwards on Dragon (Lost Press $16.95) 978-0-9735265-2-3

K. Louise Vincent, The Discipline of Undressing (Leaf Press $17.95) 978-0-9735265-2-3

Bernice Lever, Never a Straight Line (Palms Photo, Series $15) 978-0-87753-438-6


Bernice Lever

Main-Van Der Kemp
At age 87, Rhodea Shandler finally began her work on LongLabour: A Dutch Mother’s Holocaust Memoir. It contains the story she felt unable to talk about with her family for most of her life. She died a year later, soon after it was finished. Simply put, A Long Labour describes Shandler’s life as a fugitive in the Dutch countryside during the five-year German occupation of Holland more than sixty years ago.

Soon after the Nazi occupation of Holland began, Rhodea and her husband left the city, and, assisted by the underground resistance movement, traveled to the farming country of rural Holland where anti-Nazi feeling was strong. In spite of severe risks—she understands that those whose neighbors to whom she and her husband had entrusted their money and possessions for safe-keeping, were unwilling to return them—her story ends as the couple and their children start a new life in Canada.

In spite of the gruesome circumstances, Rhodea’s tone is surprisingly benign and tolerant, not so much because of the slowly developing effect of old age as the result of an enervatingly optimistic outlook that helped her during her ordeal. She speaks sadly but rarely in anger. Any incipient bitterness is suppressed quickly or tempered with understanding.

Rhodea manages to sympathize with the young German soldiers she saw in the last years of the war. She saw that they were little more than children, drafted unwillingly into the depleted army. When she visited a German town after the war, she was greatly moved by the plight of German mothers who had lost their sons.

Like many survivors, Rhodea remained tormented by guilt over her own choices—for her abandonment of the mental patients it was her job to care for before she became a fugitive, for leaving her older daughter to the protection of others when she fled, and for failing to convince her parents to go into hiding, rather than making the fatal journey to Poland.

Perhaps because Rhodea’s world-view is so generous and forgiving, it was deemed necessary to contextualize her story by prefacing it with a factual account by an expert on the Dutch Holocaust. Dr. Lillian Kremer, professor emerita of the University of Kansas, puts a somewhat different perspective on Rhodea’s narrative and makes a fierce indictment of the Dutch collaboration in the persecution of their Jewish neighbors.

Kremer states that the number of Dutch Jews who perished in the Holocaust was slightly higher than the number in other European countries; that Dutch civil servants cooperated in the disenfranchisement of Jewish citizens; and that the Dutch police actively participated in the deportations. After the war, Jewish survivors found little support from their compatriots, who were interested mainly in re-establishing their own lives. It is alleged they had little sympathy for the greater losses and the atrocities suffered by the Jews.

In the 1960s, the Dutch population that had lived through the war years, like that of other European countries, came in for severe criticism by a younger generation. The myth of a wide-spread heroic response to Nazism was exposed as a lie; numerous publications indicted the wartime generation for the abandonment and betrayal of Dutch Jewry.

The effect of these two juxtaposed female voices—that of Rhodea Shandler summoning up vivid memories from her own distant past, and that of Dr. Lillian Kremer drawing on a wealth of scholarship to give a broader perspective—is to set up a kind of dialogue. It is a dialogue that deserves, even cries out, to be continued in formal and informal settings, in classrooms and in book clubs, appropriate for all ages.

Only a few quibbles: There is no explanation as to how and when Rhodea Shandler’s surname was changed from Bollegraaf and the scholar who wrote the preface repeatedly uses the term “disinterested” when, I think, she means “uninterested.” Also, prior to describing her arrival in Canada, Shandler recalls how she cruelly assumed R.C. was going to be full of Indians—an off-putting reference that might have benefited from some editorial tinkering.

Joan Givner regularly reviews biographies and autobiographies from Mill Bay.
SHOW ME YOUR MUSIC, I’LL SHOW YOU MINE

All was not fear ‘n’ loathing during coastal encounters of the first kind

Myth & Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact edited by John Sutton

With trace-like solemnity, prior to international sporting matches it’s customary for players to stand at attention as national anthems are played. As indicated by John Sutton Lutz’s essay “Myth & Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact,” the ambassadorial power of music has surely arisen from some deep-seated human impulse that is likely prehistoric, and therefore beyond analysis.

According to Lutz, the crews of Captain Juan Perez and James Cook—the first two European explorers known to have reached B.C. waters—were both serenaded by music from Aboriginals upon their arrivals, in 1774 and 1778 respectively. And here is a crew that set their music upon the waters in exchange.

In July of 1774, when the European “discoverers” of British Columbia, Juan Perez, contacted Aboriginals in canoes—presumably Hasá́ha—off Langara Island, at the northern end of Haida Gwaii, it was subsequently recorded:

“The first thing they did when they approached within about musket shot of the ship was to begin singing in unison to their mat and to cast feather’s on the water… They make a particular signal. They open their arms, forming themselves in a cross, and place their arms on their chest in the same fashion, an appropriate sign of their peacefulness.”

The theatrical encounter was placed into a religious context by the Spaniards. As Lutz takes care to note, a motet is a vocal composition in harmony, set usually to words from Scripture, intended for church use. The expedition’s priest, Father Juan Crespi, further wrote, after an-
Above & beyond the sub-boonies

Since 1998, Creekstone Press in Smithers has resolutely not operated as a back-to-the-land press that encourages everyone to make log houses or provide home-birthing techniques for cattle.

Run by Lynn Sherville and Sheila Peters, Creekstone has endured for nine years as the lone, ongoing, situated-in-northern-B.C. imprint within the Association of Book Publishers of B.C. ever since the untimely death in 2005 of Cynthia Wilson, who managed Caitlin Press from Prince George.

Caitlin continues to publish writers from central B.C., but its headquarters have shifted to the Sunshine Coast.

Thus far Creekstone has released nine books of non-fiction, fiction, poetry, photography and printing. Theirs is a modest but realistic mandate: roughly one book per year.

Their newest title, The Weather from the West ($24), is an overtly artsy book of 42 poems by Sheila Peters and 23 paintings by Perry Rath—a sophisticated “synergistic” interplay between landscape, heart and mind.

Creekstone books attempt to do nothing less than reflect life in northwestern B.C. from places such as the Bulkley Valley, Smithers, the Hazeltons, Vanderhoof, the Kispiox Valley, Terrace, the Skeena and Bulkley watersheds, the Spatsizi or Tatlatui Wilderness Parks, Haida Gwaii, the Nechako and Fraser watersheds, the Inside Passage and other traditional Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en territory—almost half the province.

Sometimes, maybe those of us below the 50th parallel should think of ourselves as the sub-boonies.

Call it the Hinter issue.

—Alan Twigg

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in all sincerety, let me say I have never before encountered a book journal as engaging as "BC/BookWorld."

— JACK MCCLELLAND

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