

# TRANSITION

WINTER 2013



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Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
**Saskatchewan**  
*Mental health for all*

# TRANSITION

## PUBLISHER:

David Nelson, Executive Director  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
(Saskatchewan Division) Inc.

EDITOR: Ted Dyck

MANAGING EDITOR: Lynn Hill

## Our Mission:

*Founded in 1950, The Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. is a volunteer-based organization which supports and promotes the rights of persons with mental illness to maximize their full potential; and promotes and enhances the mental health and well-being of all members of the community.*

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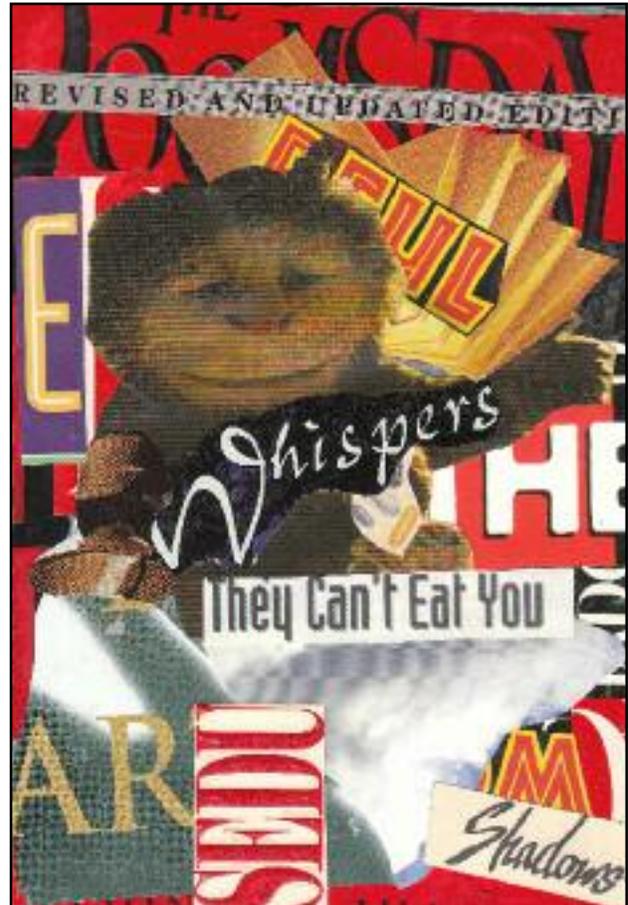
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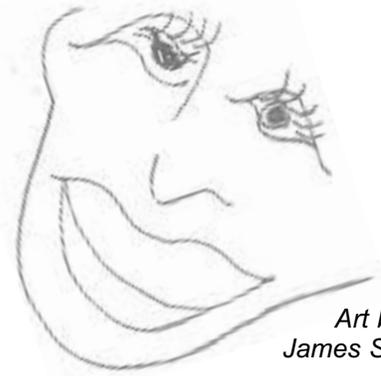
1. TRANSITION is published twice a year by The Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. Subscription by joining CMHA (SK) at \$15 / year.
2. Send original, unpublished articles, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual art that represent current mental health issues and reflect on their impact on individuals.
3. Maximum manuscript lengths: articles – 15 pages; all other prose – 10 pages; poetry – 10 poems or 10 pages, whichever is less; visual art – 10 pieces.
4. Reprints and simultaneous submissions (to several magazines) are not considered.
5. Turnaround time is normally one issue or 6 months: do not send a second submission before the first has been reviewed.
6. Payment is \$50.00 per printed page; \$50.00 per published visual art work; and \$200.00 for cover art.
7. Electronic submissions are preferred (with full contact information and a brief bio). Submit manuscripts in Word or WordPerfect format (12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 2.5 cm margins) as e-mail attachment to: [contactus@cmhask.com](mailto:contactus@cmhask.com) or directly to the Editor at [tdyck@sasktel.net](mailto:tdyck@sasktel.net).
8. Or send hardcopy manuscripts (typed, one-sided, 12- point, double-spaced, 2.5 cm margins), together with full contact information, a brief bio, and self-addressed, stamped return envelope with sufficient postage, to:

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Shadows can't eat you - a collage by Henry Peters

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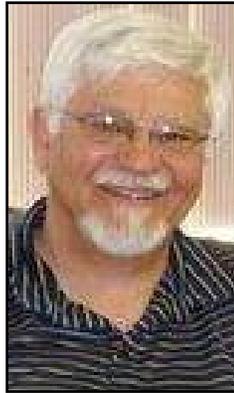
# A productive year at Division

DAVID NELSON, RPN, RSW  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Once again another year is near its end and it has been an incredibly busy and productive time here at CMHA.

A tremendous amount of work has resulted in our Justice Community Support Program (JCSP) being fully staffed. Training is ongoing, and we are building up our caseloads in Regina, Saskatchewan and the Battlefords. This program is greatly needed in the mental health/justice area to support repeat offenders with significant and enduring mental health issues.

Work continues to move ahead with our involvement with the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) on the Program Implementation Advisory Team. This program has



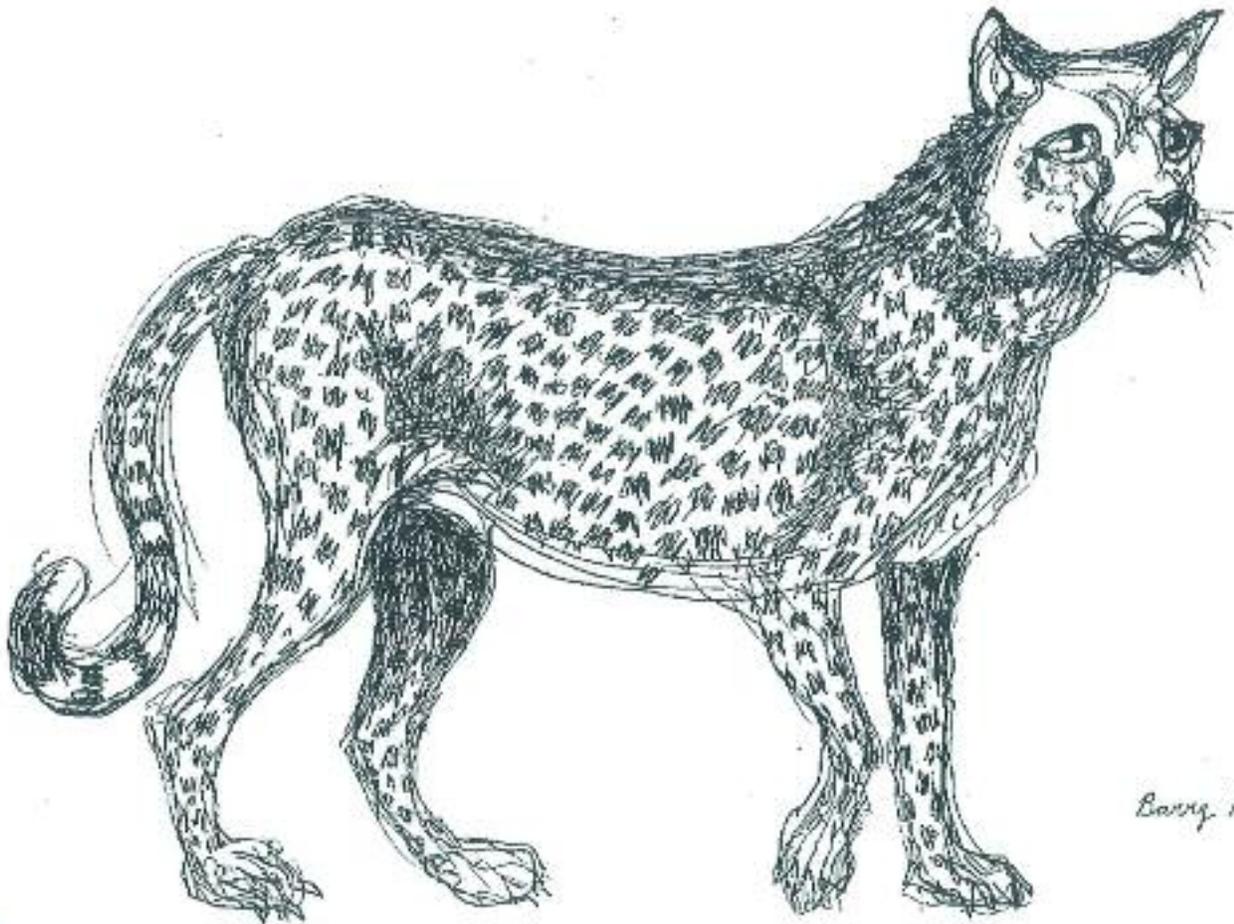
DAVE NELSON

provided more income support for thousands of persons with mental health issues out of the over 12,000 persons on a cross-disability basis. Work is continuing on asset exemptions and a more user friendly service delivery system.

We continue to provide support for the Mental Health Coalition of Saskatchewan with a half-time Program Coordinator as well as support for a Regina area Systems Navigator. Tanya Condo has taken on both these tasks and we have seen Coalition memberships swell in the last year.

Among the many other smaller but important projects we deal with, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the almost 30 years that TRANSITION Magazine has been profiling and supporting consumers in the Province, and in particular the 20 years that Byrna Barclay was the Editor of TRANSITION. Ted Dyck has carried on the grand tradition over the last decade and is to be congratulated on his excellent work as well.

Many thanks to the Board, volunteers and staff who make the Division work. Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays to all.



Cheetah by Barry Styre



# Byrna Barclay Special

## Introduction

BY TED DYCK

I met Byrna Barclay a long time ago at a party at her house in Regina after a reading Robert Kroetsch had given earlier that evening in Moose Jaw. At that time I was teaching mathematics at the Saskatchewan Technical Institute, the Moose Jaw Movement [MJM] was just beginning, and Robert Kroetsch was about to get yet another writing apprentice.

Byrna, also a founding member of MJM, was a study in paradox: as a critic, she was as airheaded as any of us, but as a writer she was head and shoulders above us all. The reason, which I understood many years later, was that Byrna was a natural storyteller – that is, without caring about the term or that it denoted the core of the storytelling art, Byrna naturally wrote in a *free indirect style*, which just happens to be the most powerful and elegant of all narrative techniques. See her *bio/biography* for proof.

It was many more years later that I discovered that Byrna was actively – very actively – involved in what I call writing-for-therapy. Specifically, she was the original editor of *TRANSITION* magazine, a position she held for twenty years, during which time she ran writing workshops, brought the poetry of at least one writer to book publication, and became a prominent mental health advocate. I leave this story for her to tell, below; here I want simply to note that during this same period she continued to write – see her bibliography – and in addition became a mentor to the writing community of Regina and a leader in the arts community of Saskatchewan.

Which pretty much explains why we at *TRANSITION* wanted to recognize Byrna's significant and continuing contribution to our collective mental health. She embodies the rallying cry of the writing-for-therapy movement – and of all writers – To write *is* to write for your life.

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Art by James Skelton



# A brief literary biography of Byrna Barclay

(Adapted from several sources by the Editor)

**B**yrna Barclay was born and raised in Saskatoon. She began writing at age five and was reading her father's books by the fifth grade. She still remembers vividly her first lesson in grammar, her excitement when she learned how to parse a sentence.

At university, Byrna was told she was a “cockeyed romantic” who needed to temper her worldview with prairie realism. But she developed her own world view in *The Livelong Quartet of Novels – Summer of the Hungry Pup* (1982), which won the Sask. Culture & Youth First Novel Award; *The Last Echo* (1983), which explores the reasons why our ancestors left Europe for the new world; *Winter of the White Wolf* (1988), a revelation of the reversal of the immigrant experience through the retelling of Nordic myths; and *The Forest Horses* (2010), an epic that sweeps from Regina to Sweden to Leningrad in an exposé of what it means to be Canadian.

A young mother, a reformed social worker and a children's librarian who wrote and performed puppet plays, Byrna served a twelve-year apprenticeship as a novelist, researching the aftermath of the Riel Rebellion and studying Cree during the winter, while attending the now defunct Saskatchewan School of the Arts for two weeks each summer. Her mentors were Robert Kroetsch and Rudy Wiebe. In 1984, Byrna returned to SSA to study the short story with Leon Rooke. Her first collection, *From the Belly of a Flying Whale* (1988), evokes the dark side of humanity and the passions of people living on the edge of madness (one story, “Speak Under Covers” was also published in *Best American Short Stories*). Her second collection, *Crosswinds*, (1995), won the Best Fiction category of the Saskatchewan Book Awards [SBA]. *searching for the nude in the landscape* (1997), which contains layers of stories and poetry, is her first hybrid departure from parkland realism. *Girl at the Window* (2004) won The Readers' Choice Award of the SBA. Through the years, her short fiction has appeared in many anthologies and magazines, including *GRAIN*, *event*, *Prism International*, *Descant*, *Fiddlehead*. “Where My Mother Goes”, a story in *Crosswinds*, won the 1995 Geography of Gender Fiction Contest sponsored by *Room of One's Own*. “To the Nth Degree” won *Prairie Fire's* Long Short Story Contest in 1999.

Byrna's interest in dramatic performance began with *Tabloid Love*, with the Poets Combine who performed at SWG International Writing Conference in 1993; a Benefit for Persephone Theatre in 1994; Teachers and Librarians

Conferences; League of Canadian Poets (1994), and so on. With the turn of the century, her work took an artistic double-leap with *ROOM WITH FIVE WALLS: The Trials of Victor Hoffman*, a poetic drama performed at the Saskatchewan Playwrights Center Festival of New Plays (2002), produced by Curtain Raisers in partnership with the University of Regina in (2004) and winner of City of Regina Award, SBA (2004).

Byrna's first stint as an editor occurred in 1977 when she was Editor of *Freelance*. As well as editing books of poetry for ThistleDown Press in the '70s, she was Fiction Editor of *GRAIN* (1988-90); Editor-in-chief of *TRANSITION* (1983- 2002); founding-editor of *spring* magazine for emerging writers in 2000. In addition to teaching creative writing classes and workshops and acting as a mentor for SWG, she has been a guest lecturer at the universities of Wisconsin, Idaho, Calgary, and at the Government of the Northwest Territories. Through the years, Byrna worked as hard for the arts as she did at her craft. She served as Vice-chairman of the Saskatchewan Arts Board for seven years, at which time she was Chairman of the Saskatchewan School of the Arts Committee and Literary Arts Committee. She has been President of SWG twice, served for another seven years on the SaskArts School Board, and was a president of the Saskatchewan Book Awards Board.



Byrna Barclay

A fierce advocate for those suffering from mental illnesses, Byrna was the President of the Canadian Mental Health Association (1990-92), the founding Chair of the first Family Advisory Committee in Canada, the Founding-chair of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Mental Health, the Director/Co-ordinator of submissions to the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care in 1989-90, the Co-ordinator of Hands-Across-Saskatchewan Rally in 1993. These volunteer positions won her many community awards, including Woman of the Year YMCA Humanitarian Service Award (1989); CMHA National Distinguished Service Award (1992); SWG Member Achievement Award (1992); the Commemorative Medal for 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada; the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations Volunteer Award (1997); and the Saskatchewan Order of Merit (2005).

Byrna has lived in Regina since 1962, but has travelled widely in Europe where stories always chase her down, culminating in her collection of short stories, *Girl at the Window*, and most recent novel, *Forest Horses*. She has raised an actor daughter, Julianna, a musician/artist son Bruce, and husband Justice Ronald Barclay.

# Art is for everyone

BYRNA BARCLAY

17-OCT-12

Art is for the pig-tailed girl who hides poems under her bed  
until the nozzle of her mother's vacuum hits the shoe box  
& whooshes out in the open the beauty of being human

for the stooped garbage collector who smooths creases  
in a gallery poster he means to hang over his cot  
that horse aflame & running his dream of peace

for the little redhead witness to a hundred kilted pipers  
flying over Calling Hills, who breaks into a sweat, breath lost  
in an ancestral awakening, that legacy in the pibroch's skirl

for the street kid with face pulled deep into his red hoodie  
& sleeves stretched long over his hands, who sings of night  
fires & bullies & the artist-in-residence who shows him the light

for the inmates who wait Sundays to hear again in concert  
the grandmotherly piano teacher & their roar heard  
on CBC Radio for P.A. Penn Blues she wrote for them.

From La Ronge to Radville, Lloydminster to Redvers  
the Saskatchewan Story, clear and bright as the long line of the horizon



The Fall 1989 issue of TRANSITION,  
edited by Byrna Barclay

## Making the TRANSITION

BYRNA BARCLAY

1984. It was a dismal day, the kind of day when, if one listens carefully, one may hear the sounds the earth makes when it receives the rain: the rustling conversation of poplar leaves, resistance of spruce boughs swaying, the small explosions of dirt among parched pansies, and the heavy fall of drooping peony heads. After five years of being flushed through the mental health sewer system, with as many diagnoses and medicines that didn't return him home, my son was once again in hospital, and I sought refuge in my daughter's blue room, understanding for the first time – and feeling it strongly – the frustration my son must have felt at eighteen months when he crawled to the hall wall, hoisted himself up, and banged his forehead on that wall. I didn't know it, but I was about to make the transition from helpless parent to determined advocate.

When the telephone rang fear lashed me like the wind snapping at cotoneaster along the back fence. I almost didn't answer, but it wasn't the hospital alerting me that once again my son had taken flight rather than suffer the side effects of Haladol that curled his upper lip back, turned his feet blue, shortened his breath, and felt like electricity zapping up and down his spine. It was someone named Paul Grocott, the executive director of an organization called Canadian Mental

Health Association. Someone – he wasn't at liberty to say who – had told him that I might be interested in their work, and would I attend a meeting of the Professional Advisory Committee? Professionals. The voices of many who had turned away my family's calls for help rang in my memory like the crash and bang of ice breaking up in the swift-running Saskatchewan river system:

- *I'm sorry. Your son is too old for children's programs, too young for adult. There is nothing I can offer you.*
- *My staff is divided between the doves and the hawks. Those who want to help are defeated by those who want to throw him out of school.*
- *I really don't know what we're talking about when I meet with your son.*
- *You can't drive up here in your big Cadillac and dump him on us. Take him to the YMCA.*
- *He's having a wild, high time in hospital. Call me when he wants help, when he's willing to take his medicine.*
- *If there's the smallest crack in the system, you seem to find it and fall through it.*
- *Sorry, I don't have any putty, much less cement.*
- *Your son has come to us for Christian counselling. Here is our fee for service.*
- *No, you cannot make an appointment to see me. Yes, I*



## LIVING THE LIFE - BYRNA BARCLAY SPECIAL

*will see your son, but the earliest appointment I have is in two weeks. There are no beds available in any hospital in the city.*

The Saskatchewan Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association was then housed in a falling-down, two-storey building on Albert Street. To get to the meeting room, I had to park behind the building, then take a rickety, wooden fire escape to an upper side door as heavy as one found in a penal institution. At age five I had been told that if I was late for school – the turret(ed) castle across the street – I would be sent to detention, and that word equated to: dungeon. A fear of being late has never left me, and there I was late for the meeting of professionals. And there he was, "Uncle" Donald MacRae, our first psychiatrist, who had come to our home every Wednesday during the year our head-banger discovered the bagpipes to help us understand why he picked at lint on the bathroom rug, was afraid of robbers outside his shuttered window, worried about universes within universes when studying the planets, and was terrified he might not be able to Ace every subject in school. Looking back now, I realize that we had the best possible primary prevention, but that when electricity misfires, when chemicals in the brain mix like water and oil, and when schizophrenia hits a young person and cuts him off at the knees, nothing in the environment – no amount of love from parent or caregiver can deter it. But that day I projected my feelings of rejection by the system onto Uncle Donald. I wanted to yell at him. *Why did you terminate us? Why did you break my heart?* Perhaps he knew that the obsessive compulsive personality of the smallest redhead at Luther College, who was the mascot carried on the shoulders of the football team, pulled down 98% in History, and was the youngest piper to ever receive the Teaching Certificate in music at the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts, that boy could only end up with an illness for which there is no cure. That day of the professionals, it seemed that Uncle Donald, rushing ahead of me up the stairs and down the hall, was running away – from me.

That afternoon, there was no sign of spring outside the dirty windows of the old brick building. The sky was grey, branches bare, yearning for sunlight. I looked at the agenda and noted the last item: *Meet the author.* Around the table, winter-weary faces of bearded men in rumpled tweed jackets, shirts open at the throat. Not a metaphor or simile among them. The Chair of the Professionals was a large, soft-hearted psychologist, Dr. David Randall, who would later bemoan at length the overly long waiting lists for children needing treatment, programs. Love.

I listened and learned that the Association had a major task force on mental health, and for the first time I heard the phrase: *unmet needs.* There was a chart to be studied, compiled by some fifteen branches around the province. I was stunned to discover that I was the "author" they wanted to meet. At the time, I had written three novels in the Livelong Quartet, belonged to a poetry group called The Moose Jaw Movement, was the past-president of the Saskatchewan Writers Guild and

current vice-chair of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. A creative writer, I didn't have the language of the *science of the mind* required to write the follow-up brief to Dr. MacDonald's *Forgotten Constituents.* At the end of the meeting, Paul Grocott stacked my arms with books and briefs the way I used to carry firewood for my grandmother's stove.

In the following weeks, I learned that the Association had sent a major brief to the government-of-the day predicting a crisis due to overcrowding conditions in the asylums, that it was too difficult for a patient to gain admittance and too many were given overly early discharges. After the Shell Lake Massacre, the government hired a psychiatrist from Texas to study the mental health system. The Frazier Report contained 43 recommendations that became the basis for The Saskatchewan Plan that made our province famous, a model jurisdiction. The first phase had been the closing -- sort of -- of the asylums in Weyburn and North Battleford. The second phase, community-based care, had never been acted upon by any government. I learned about the volunteers in Weyburn who visited the patients in the hospital, then formed the first branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. And then I went to Weyburn to see for myself what "closing" really meant.

The ceilings had been lowered on the main floor and the walls painted kindergarten colours. This was for the seniors then living in rooms where once people the locals like W.O Mitchell called The Mentals and the mentally challenged had been put in holding. At the centre of the building was the Golden Stairway, so named for the brass fittings, bright newels that were polished every day by two workers hired solely for that purpose. The grand stairway had been given the name by those who attempted to make their way from the basement where people literally climbed the walls to the first floor, then up the Golden Stairway, to the top floor called the Halfway Ward because once you reached it you had hope of release. Most simply tumbled back down and started all over again in the basement.

I was shown a ward the size of half a football field where some ninety (90) male octogenarians wrapped in sheets slept in geri-chairs. Around the walls their attendants watched, waited. I assumed there was a similar ward for women. And then I was shown the ward for men who had been deemed too ill to be released into the community or sent to the home in Moose Jaw for people with mental challenges. Most, I was told, were born in the hospital. They lay in giant, metal cribs, and stared at me through the bars. Men in pyjamas shuffled aimlessly about the room, some ranting, others calling out, most silent, with vacant stares. Again, all around the walls stood attendants in white jackets, watching. I wanted to gather bright balloons and coloured beach balls and a troop of nursing students to bring Play to these forgotten constituents.

At home, my reading was interrupted by nights waiting until visiting hours at the hospital so I could race to the underground parking lot and stalk the Chief of Staff when he arrived

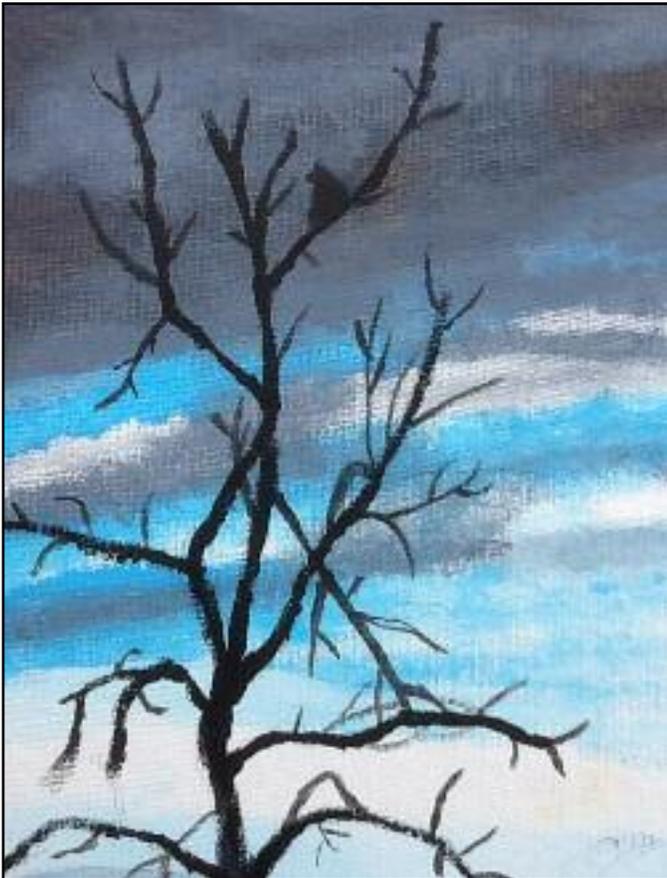
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*I needed anger to make me strong, to enable me to take action and fight for all the sons and daughters.*

and tell him that there was epilepsy in my family and if he wanted to interfere with the electricity in my son's brain by administering shock treatments he'd have to tie me down and shock me first. My name in Swedish translates into Female Bear.

And then I learned about the Carleton model of job training, the case management model in Wisconsin, the housing model in British Columbia. The phrase *comprehensive, co-ordinated system* was a gift from my neighbour, a lawyer who had been instrumental in creating a model jurisdiction for the mentally challenged in Saskatchewan. At the time, while writing a new novel, I thought of the process as a movement of the elements of fiction (character, plot, theme, central imagery) through a spectrum (my imagination) to long lines (of light) on the page. So the phrase *spectrum of care* took on new meaning for me, and it was wondrously so simple, so easy to image stages in a mental health system that began with crisis intervention and access to treatment, moved to social and recreational programs, and ended with job training opportunities. It was *A Dream of Something Better*, the title of the first issue of TRANSITION I was to edit. But in 1984, I also had the title for the brief CMHA-Sask. had asked for: *The Golden Stairway*.

Now that I think of it, we never did receive a response to it. I had joined the association of those who remain forgotten,



Art by Cecile George

though I don't remember ever plunking down my membership fee of \$5.00.

Memories never chase one in any chronological order. They come unbidden or through association, so I'm not sure which came next, my first conference or being elected to the Division Board of Directors. The strongest of these memories is the conference in Regina where I watched a dignified business man step up to the podium and speak of his humiliation, his fear for his child, and his feeling of defeat when he walked down a lonely street, following two policemen escorting his daughter to a psych ward. There was no comfort in knowing that I was not alone, that so many others experienced the antagonism of professionals when faced with the agony and demands of frustrated parents. I barely made it home to my daughter's blue room, that refuge. I needed anger to make me strong, to enable me to take action and fight for all the sons and daughters.

It was my first board meeting, my first reading of the budget, that gave me the vehicle of expression so needed by those with unmet needs.

In the budget there was a line item of \$6,000 for a two-page newsletter called TRANSITION. Two pages? "Make me the editor," I said. "Give me that money and I'll give you a little magazine, published four times each year, full of stories and poems and essays by and about the people we are here to serve." Having been the editor of *FreeLance* and fiction editor of *GRAIN* for the Saskatchewan Writers Guild, I knew that the budget would cover only the cost of printing for one issue, and that I'd have to scramble for funds for the other three issues.

The first thing I did was talk sculptor Marigold Sherstobitoff into accepting the position of Art Editor. During her tenure, Marigold took the bus to every branch in the province, collecting art for the magazine – and for CMHA's cash calendar. Many of her photographs of Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford appeared in early issues. Pat Krause, a producer and radio announcer for CBC, author of *Freshie* and *Best Kept Secrets*, was the Fiction Editor. Joel Scott was the Managing Editor, who developed a plan for distribution and the raising of subscriptions through memberships in the Association. The first policy of this team was to provide a positive and encouraging critique to all who submitted work to the little mag, whether or not it was accepted for publication. We agreed to work with anyone whose work required nudging to bring it up to publication standards. The second unwritten policy was to provide payment at standard rates offered by literary magazines in Canada for all contributors, except government and non-government agency employees.

The first issue, *A Dream of Something Better*, was hand-delivered to every MLA. Far more than an advocacy document, it was the voice of the everyday heroes, those who lived and survived and even remained dedicated enough to work in a failing mental health system. Their stories, real or imagined, their personas shining through their imagistic poetry, and their letters were the foundation for what became an advocacy



## LIVING THE LIFE - BYRNA BARCLAY SPECIAL

movement paralleled by the National Framework for Support. Thousands of citizens – including all the MLAs -- signed petitions for reform and joined CMHA-Saskatchewan after the 1968 Shell Lake Massacre, the first mass murder in Canada.

Where else but in TRANSITION would you find letters and messages and articles from a Premier, ministers of the Crown, deputy ministers, mayors, even the Lieutenant Governor, Dr. Lynda Haverstock? And best of all, their words were in tandem, parallel to, alongside those written by families and our consumers. If nothing else, ours was an egalitarian society.

As the new Chair of the Professional Advisory Committee, Dr. David Keegan said, “The stars are aligned.” Partnerships with other organizations such as Friends of Schizophrenics and non-government agencies such as the Crisis Management projects in Saskatoon and Regina, The Housing Coalition in Saskatoon, and mini-conferences of one day proceedings sprang up almost every month. The Mental Health Coalition was formed.

The government of the day created the Saskatchewan Commission for Directions in Health Care, with Deputy Minister Walter Podiluk leading the charge to communities all across the land. As co-ordinator of submissions from all our branches, I travelled with Dr. Keegan to every meeting place, and listened to the incredible poignant stories from professionals, families, friends, and consumers of mental health services. The Commission was so impressed by the voices raised in support of a reformed system it created a special Task Force and named Dr. Keegan the author of its Report. Although Dave suffered a stroke, he was able to complete the report with the help of Jim Beech, who was then on our board of directors. When honoured at a conference in North Battleford, David said, “What I learned from all of this is never to be angry alone.”

By now, Barbara Evans from Moose Jaw was the Chair of the Consumer Advisory Committee, and we created the first ever Family Advisory Committee in CMHA’s family of divisions and branches, with Jennie Dickson as its first Chair. With families now unafraid to speak up, people like Lorne Broten and the Eagles not only told their stories in TRANSITION, they also spoke at conferences all across Canada and met with ministers of Health and Social Services, sometimes begging for change.

It was then that the first Minister’s Advisory Council on Mental Health was created, bringing together the best minds in the province – including our own Dave Keegan, David Nelson – with the mandate to make recommendations to the Minister. Following a change in government, the Council presented its findings, a document that someone someday will pull out of the archives and exclaim: *Look what those people dreamed of!*

Oh, how much fun we had, families and consumers and professionals, dreaming and strategizing and talking talking the good talk. After conferences, we’d all convene at the nearest bar or disco that had a band. My fondest memory is of Nancy Redekopp, Marilyn Legebokoff, Dale Gillis, John Hylton, all the Davids with their slingshots, at the Royal Hotel

in Moose Jaw dancing to the music of the Alabama Boys.

There are people in the Association I will never forget, who were key to those halcyon days. There were presidents of Saskatchewan Division before me who were more than leaders, they were mentors for all of us. David Millar, a compassionate and caring champion who rode out to the branches in all directions, then charged on to National involvement in the creation of the Framework of Support, who ran a board meeting like a train schedule; Bob Burrage, steadfast and solid as a masthead in a rough sea, whose support of consumers and families was as far-reaching as the horizon; Betty Pepper whose style of leadership may be described in one word – nurturing— because she nurtured the cause, the programs, the people -- and her husband Tom who ran marathons for mental health.

How well I remember the day the Board of Directors, quaking with fear over frozen budgets and outstanding short falls, stole Joan Kilbride from MacDonald’s and told her the first thing she had to do was raise money for her own salary. Joan created the Teddy Bear Affair, golf tournaments, The



Art by Donald Bird

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*For me, the heart of the movement was TRANSITION,  
which now contains a record of the history  
of mental health in our province.*

Cash Calendar, and changed the profile of CMHA-Saskatchewan forever by combating stigma.

And then there was our gal Lynn who still holds the fort for TRANSITION in Division office. I could write a book about the late John Hylton, the sharpest intellect I ever encountered, a creative soul who could drum up a program or monies like a wizard pulling flowers from a silk hat, an incredible advocate and strategist and the best ED I ever worked with, who crossed a province and a nation, leaving his signature to be remembered.

For me, the heart of the movement was TRANSITION, which now contains a record of the history of mental health in our province. The stories that move us and give us hope never change. As Linda Biasotto said to me recently: *We write to give voice to those who cannot always speak for themselves.* The art reflects the state of the health of a nation. No one invited to contribute ever turned me down, and the professionals donated their articles without pay. From the first issue, the Letters to TRANSITION filled my mailbox. Marion Butler, John Hylton's secretary, took TRANSITION home nights and on weekends to type the copy and format the issue. It was a labour of love, and everyone was involved, including the team of col-lators and stamp-lickers and envelope-stuffers from Regina Branch. No issue was ever late.

Here, a memory interjects itself into my narrative. I don't remember the year, but I remember the place: A national conference in Toronto. I may have been the only family member from all across Canada although there was a prison warden or administrator who professed to share my feelings of rejection. I had just presented several scenarios regarding the creation of our Consumer, Family, and Professional Advisory Committees; that Saskatchewan triumvirate of bodies devoted to reform. The discussion, led by professionals, turned to *dysfunctional* families. I then discovered what it was like to be a *consumer*, to lower my head as if in shame, while being talked *about* instead of *to* or even engaged *with*; to be depersonalized and generalized into a heap called *they*. I was rendered speechless, without a voice – but not for long. I now know, of course, that the care-givers present were referring to situations where abuse is rampant and intervention must be taken, but at the time all I could think of was how my family acted in a crisis. There is, perhaps, nothing so highly *functional* as a person who must remain calm, take immediate action in ending the crisis by seeking outside help, and when there is no one who answers that call relying on the family's resources, whatever they may be. Ah, but those stories are in TRANSITION, the magazine named for that state of movement of people from institutions into the community. Home. For some that word still has no meaning. We see them on the streets, lying in bundles on air vents, in shop doorways, where there is light for warmth and safety. Comfort.

Here I must pay a tribute to the past leaders and executives of

the Association. Remember Dr. David Millar? He was the first President I served with, a man devoted to the Framework of Support, who has since received the Saskatchewan Order of Merit for his community work. I've never seen anyone conduct a meeting like David did. When his passion rose for an issue, especially for the Branches, he would move the chair to the Vice-chair, whip off his glasses, toss them on the table, then rise to provide information and direction to the Board. Bob Burrage also preceded me, a lovely man whose calm approach and reliance on reason and wisdom was so often a driving force in deliberations, and a comfort to people like me. Loren Broten followed me, a whippersnapper of an accountant and brave family member whose leadership and diligence moved us forward in our advocacy. Many others before and since, all who gave their time and talents to those who remain at the bottom of the funding totem pole, but are the most deserving of due care and attention. To all: my applause, my gratitude.

There is a story behind every contributor of every issue of TRANSITION, their own of course, but also the story of how I was so very fortunate to have met each one through their honest and often bravely personal tales, no matter the form. Of course there were my writer friends who answered my call for the first few issues: Gary Hyland, Bruce Rice, Mick Burrs, Alison Lohans, Scott Simmie. There were emerging writers I have since met and loved for their work: Arthur Slade; artist Elyse St. George; Judith Krause; Lorne Kulak; Shelly A. Leedah; Brenda Niskala; Britt Holmstrom; Beverly Brenna; Linda Biasotto. There were writers and artists from the branches: George Merle and Steve Stapleton from Regina; Jayne Whyte from Fort Qu'Appelle by way of Kindersley Branch; Jacek Grabowski and Kay Parley and Eric Braun and Mary Froese; from Saskatoon; Barry Styre from Weyburn. And too many more to mention, including dozens from all across Canada and in latter issues from the United States and parts of Europe. I wish I had the space to praise all their individual talents.

Let it be known to all that the longest contributors to TRANSITION, artist Henry Peters and poet Gregg Button are exemplary of the standard of excellence and artistry that is still found between the pages of our little mag. The stories of how I found them represent the many, rather than the few.

Among the very first submissions of art I received was a bundle of drawings, some done in pastel or watercolour, but most black and white ink sketches. The subject matter, both mythic and modern, held echoes of the Manitoba School of First Nations Artists. Since I had no money for full colour separation in printing, they were a gift. The package was from one Henry Peters, and the return address was the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon. I couldn't know if he was an administrator, a guard, or a guest of that new institution. I immediately wrote him a letter telling him how wonderful his work was, I had accepted some pieces, and payment would arrive upon publication. Please send me more. There began the strangest correspondence of my editorial or writing life, with



someone in the institution acting as a censor and go-between. I refused to comply and kept sending my letters and cheques directly to Henry until the person in authority realized no cake with files was enclosed in my envelopes, gave up, and let Henry write to me himself. There began a friendship that has stayed with me for the past twenty plus years. When he was released Henry moved to Calgary for awhile, and much later told me that although the payment was meagre his first acceptance of his art and its publication in *TRANSITION* “kept him going.” He moved to Winnipeg and began showing his work in exhibitions and other installations. He is still a faithful contributor to the magazine. We have never met in person.

Yet I know him by his art.

At the same time, I received a group of five poems from a fellow in Moose Jaw. His name is Greg Button. They were real and raw, straight from the streets, from the heart, from the dream-maker. I accepted them all and asked him if he had any more poems. *About a thousand*, he wrote back. I asked him to put them together thematically in any order and I’d see if I could help him find a publisher. What arrived left me gasping: poems from the *Other Side of Midnight*, poems from the psych ward, poems that take us back to the streets, and one long lovely narrative that brings us back from Midnight. Thistledown Press accepted them as written, with no editing or changes in format. Greg’s voice is unique, powerful, and personal, yet it represents the voice of all who are *never forgotten between the pages of TRANSITION*.

And yes, we did meet finally. In the library at Moose Jaw when we were taped telling our stories. He is now a member of the Moose Jaw Muse, still writing poetry to make you sit up and listen.

What happened to my redhead? He now lives in a care home, composes music, and draws with pastels the face of his benevolent angel shut out but looking in through the same window. He has not been in hospital for eleven years. This is thanks to Dr. David Keegan who not only found the right diagnosis and medicine tolerable for Bruce but also created a team of support for our son; to Hirsh Greenberg and Denise Losie of Crisis Management in Regina and Cleeve Briere of Crisis Management in Saskatoon whose philosophy of care for the “hard-to-manage” should be extended to the entire mental health system; and what a success story that would be! Still under-funded today, these frontline heroes, together with the folks at the housing coalitions in both cities, are the best of the best and will forever have my gratitude and applause. And finally, to Sandi Coronett, who manages the best care home in the country and has kept our son from hospital – especially from Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford – for eleven (11) years, hugs from one mother to another.

The kindest, most thoughtful and considerate member of my family, to my son I dedicate these words. I think we all, consumers and families, would do well to heed his advice. “If you want to reach people,” he once said to me, “tell my story.” And that is how we continue to MAKE THE TRANSITION.

## The poem itself as muse

BYRNA BARCLAY

Does it lead with its left  
or swing you out to the right  
counting the beats  
till you collapse with a sigh  
into a-maze of words  
you didn’t know lived in the hut of your head?

How does it move you? Like a letter lost  
in a rolltop desk that reveals your birthright  
or a singing telegram. After all. You. So well

Where does it take you? Story or song  
the journey the same, perhaps, to Temple Gardens  
Surprise. A burst pinata spilling sweets.  
Or a tramway circling and swinging dangerously  
high, so close to a mirage of mountain  
it must take you back to the beginning  
of prairie. Singing.

How does it end? Be careful.  
You may wake up and discover  
you slept with a poem

# A Perrier chocolate treasure

LINDA BIASOTTO

Byrna was the first editor to choose one of my short stories for publication in *Transition Magazine*. Her written remarks regarding my work encouraged me to keep writing and I was fortunate enough to meet her at a *Transition* launch. Over time, we became friends.

One of Byrna's striking attributes is her unfailing generosity in making herself available to read the work of beginning and emerging writers. She's resolved to help writers improve in their craft and have their work published. As long as I've known her, she's been lobbying for the betterment of Saskatchewan writers and artists.

## Dutch treat

ANNETTE BOWER

*I dedicate this story to Byrna Barclay. She has been instrumental in my writing career. She encouraged me to learn the craft of writing because she always believed that a woman could do what she needed to do no matter her age. Byrna and I have been members of the writing group Bees for at least a decade. She calls me her romance writer and recommended 'A Prairie Romance' tag for my first electronic published novel, Moving On, A Prairie Romance. I want to thank you, Byrna, for your faith in the ever-changing romance of life.*

If this was to be her last chance, it was time for the top quality lure. Ali selected her scarlet blouse, matching it with a polyester skirt that shimmered over her hips. When she moved the material swished just above the curve of her well-toned calf muscles. With a small brush, Ali layered a light colour with deeper-toned shadows, creating her smoky-eyed allure. Glow blush accentuated her high cheek bones. The final touch of red velvet coloured lips revealed the vital woman with the grandmother face. Subtle sparkling rhinestones on her eyeglasses frame winked back at her in the makeup light. Her open-toed shoes emphasized her ankles while providing a glimpse of her painted toenails. If there was a glint in just one man's eye, she'd draw him in with her come hither.

She watched for her son Tyson out the living room window. Her goal to find a special someone was etched in the lines around her practiced smile reflected in the glass.

After Tyson pulled into the driveway, she met him at the door.

"Mom, isn't your outfit rather risqué for the afternoon?"

"Tyson, afternoon is all I got."

"Well then, knock their socks off."

"Thank you honey, but in my group, diabetic socks pull off easily, gartered socks can't be blown off without the aid of nimble fingers." Ali patted Tyson's arm. "You know that some

Byrna's exuberance for good literature is unfailing, her delight in words is remarkable, and her willingness to share what she knows has been an inspiration to me.

I wrote a poem for her that incorporates some of her characteristics as well as her tastes:

Her passions surge large, saturate  
senses like a prairie landscape

painted in visionary colours:  
cobalt blue, mustard yellow, scarlet.

Like Perrier, her emotions bubble  
into words sweet as chocolate poetry.

of the guys haven't bought new socks because their wives have passed on. These men's socks dangle around their ankles. I'll give you a lesson on hosiery when you're older."

Tyson chuckled. Swooping one of his long arms, he pulled her to his side. "Mom, you make me laugh until I think about what you're really saying."

When Tyson pulled into the loading zone outside of the Sooke Recreation Center, Ali said, "Don't wait dinner for me. I feel lucky." Fluttering her curled, mascara-darkened lashes, she waved her crossed fingers.

He helped her out of the van to the walk. "Knock 'em dead."

"Don't even think that." Ali blew him a kiss then breathed in the kind of deep breath that straightened her shoulders and forced her breasts forward. She pushed open the door to the Senior Center.

She recognized some of the women from other functions but she'd learned long ago to always join a table with a couple of men. If they didn't ask her first, she would ask one of them to dance. Soon the other guests knew that she was capable of moving around the floor.

She whirled around with a tall slim Jack Sprat type. Ali smiled during the cha-cha with pink-faced Oliver Friesen. She jived to "Louie Louie" with keep-his-baseball-cap-on-no-matter-what Elmer Hill; but none of these mobile men asked her to dinner. She thought about the stew she had set to simmer in the slow cooker before she dressed for this last-chance occasion. She thought about all the evenings she ate standing at her counter rather than setting a table for one. After swallowing her disappointment, she straightened her hem. Her horoscope had said she could meet a man to share her life with, but she had experienced wrong interpretations of the stars before. Guess today was just one of those days.

The lights dimmed, the piano player tucked his sheet music in his briefcase, the drummer dropped his sticks into his bag and the saxophone player lugged his black case off the stage. Ali waved good bye to her new acquaintances as well as



her hope for a future home shared with someone she could hold onto because he would be holding her.

Some seagulls cried overhead while others dove for French fries scattered on the ground next to the bus shelter. She didn't want to answer Tyson's questions yet. She didn't want to admit that she'd have to book her return ticket to the Saskatchewan winter. She had come to Vancouver Island to visit her son's family, but mostly she came to find a man with whom she could share an apartment, meals, and intimate moments. Not necessarily in that order.

After boarding the bus, she bid farewell to the flowers still in bloom, the green lawns, and glimpses of the ocean. At a main transfer point, he stepped on, all bronzed and hook-nosed. *He* sat opposite her. Crow's feet wrinkles appeared around his eyes when he smiled. His glance detected her sandals, her slim legs but seemed to linger at the hem of her red skirt where it skimmed her knees. His eyebrows rose as if to question her shawl as a shield hugged across her chest. Then his eyes sparkled when he saw her rhinestone glasses frames.

Ali conducted inventory, too. Highly polished black loafers with tassels, beige trousers, black Microsuede jacket zippered half way to expose a crisp white golf shirt. She almost squealed with delight at his broad shoulders that lead up to a clean shaven jaw, his big smile reaching his deep brown eyes. But the *pièce de résistance* - a full head of white hair.

"Hello, my name is Richard." He extended his hand across the empty aisle. "May I join you?"

"Hello Richard. I'm Ali." When she leaned toward his outstretched hand she loosened her grip on the shawl just a little. "By all means," she slid her hand into his. His handshake was firm. This wasn't a dream.

The bus continued on its route. Other passengers boarded at one stop, disembarked at another. All the while, though, Ali felt as if she and Richard were in a bubble, chatting about the unusual warm weather, the congested traffic, the lack of rain; his experiences as a sailor, her experiences on the Prairies with its big sky. "We're back at the Empress Hotel. Would you like to walk along the harbor?" He suggested, familiar with the city. "Delighted."

They strolled past the green lawns that led up to the grand hotel. "I wonder if the maid is still here cleaning the floors," Ali said as she stopped to gaze at the sixth floor windows.

"Or the thin man with his walking stick strolling the hallways," Richard said.

"Guess we've both heard the stories of the haunting over the years. But the one that I identify with the most is the old woman looking for her room that was replaced by elevators." Ali gripped Richard's elbow.

He patted her hand. "That's what happens, doesn't it. Our hair turns white, our joints are replaced with titanium, and the places we used to call home, along with those who made it special, are gone."

He told her that since retiring some days were very long for a widower especially as his grown kids lived in Toronto.

She told him about her son Tyson, who lived here in Victoria, so very far from his childhood home and her. But he had his lovely wife Olivia; and Betty – the beam in her grandma's eye. Ali said that it was too bad they had just met because she had to return to Regina.

"I'll drive you home."

"Meet my son first."

"Okay. Care to have dinner with me tonight? I'm starved."

"Absolutely."

They arrived at a little spaghetti café where the serving staff called him by name. They toasted with a nice merlot. When the bill came, she said, "I'll pay my share."

"I'd prefer if you didn't," he replied.

"I insist. Dutch treat. It's an old habit I picked up from too many years of being on my own. I don't want to assume a man can pay." She tightened the folds of her shawl around her arms, providing a fortress for her chest. "I don't want a man assuming he bought something other than dinner."

"Okay." He seemed puzzled but didn't argue. He extended his hand across the table. As she unwound her arms, the tassels of her shawl floated free. She reached toward his warm rough palm. She noticed his trimmed fingernails when he cradled her hand between both of his. The evening was cool. She shivered. He pulled her to his side while they sat on the bench in the shelter until the bus arrived. He slid two tickets into the slot before she had time to protest. "I insist."

"Thank you."

At her stop, he pushed through the bus doors while holding her hand as she stepped to the sidewalk. Leaves crunched under their feet as they strolled past cedar hedges and stone walkways to her son's house.

"The lights are out. They must be in bed. You'll have to come back tomorrow for dinner if you still want to meet my son."

"Of course I want to meet the man who leaves a front porch light on for his mother."

She gazed into his brown eyes. "He is a thoughtful man."

"You must have raised him well." He leaned in and kissed her. Her glasses steamed up.

"Can you find your way back here tomorrow at 5 pm?"

"Of course. Remember, I'm an old Navy man. We navigate by the stars." He leaned back, shielding his eyes against the bright bulb. "But if not the stars then the address helps."

She pointed to the numbers that ran along the white pillar.

"Until tomorrow. Wait. Why Ali? It suits you. But you're Ali while your granddaughter is Betty."

"I know. My mother's mother was an Alice. My mother wanted me to be named after her but not be like her." She curtseyed. "Ta-da. Ali."

"Ah. There always is a story. I'll tell you mine tomorrow."

He turned toward the street. When he reached the main sidewalk he tipped his head, appearing to be studying the constellations.

"See you then, Richard." She held onto the doorknob to keep from swooning.

The next morning while Tyson and Olivia chomped on

their toast followed by gulps of their coffee, Ali announced, "I've asked a man for dinner tonight. I hope you don't mind."

"So the blouse worked," Tyson said as he wriggled his eyebrows.

"No, not at the dance. I met this man on the bus." Ali felt the heat rise along her neck when she recalled his kisses on the stairs.

"Mom, what do you know about this man?" Tyson glared at her.

"I know that he offered to drive me back to Regina."

"I thought the idea was to make a home here." Olivia said as she buttoned her coat, ready to head out into the morning mist.

"He offered. I didn't say I accepted." Ali reached for Tyson. "You have your lives, here. I need to figure out what to do with my life."

He gripped her hands. "Mother, I want you to tell Olivia everything you know about this man. She'll do an Internet search to at least find out if there are any warrants for his arrest or any allegations about him scamming older women."

Tyson dropped her hands. He fumbled at Betty's colourful pad of craft paper on the table before poisoning a yellow wax crayon to list the required information.

"Tyson, Mom knows what she's doing. Besides, we'll meet him tonight. If we feel that she has the wrong end of the screwdriver, we'll do what you suggest." Olivia put her hand over Tyson's. She withdrew the crayon.

"I appreciate your concern, but I've been around the block a few times since your dad died. I know the routine." Ali put her arms around both of them. "Now, you two get out of here." She moved toward the front door. "I'll get Betty to school before making a fantastic meal."

Ali stood at the open door, waving. Hmmm, what should she make for supper? She needed a recipe that could take care of itself while she soaked in a hot bath.

"Betty sweetie, Grandma's poured your favourite stars and marshmallows cereal into your bowl. Come on down."

"I'm right here, Granny." The voice piped up from the corner of a large cushioned chair.

"How long have you been there?"

"Just a little while. The Webkinz website wasn't working."

"That's too bad." Ali smoothed Betty's blond ponytail.

"What does scamming mean?" Betty's blue eyes squinted in concentration.

"It means telling fibs so someone will give you something

that they wouldn't if they knew the truth." With her arm around Betty's shoulders she guided her to the table.

"Remember to put your bowl, spoon and glass in the dishwasher when you're done."

"I'll put Daddy's mug in the dishwasher too."

"You're Granny's good girl."

After Betty finished her chores she wound her arms around Ali's waist. "I really like having you here. I miss you when you go back to Regina."

"Betty Boo, I miss you too."

Ali tied up her running shoes. "It's time to walk to school. Let's grab your backpack and your lunch."

"Can Kyra walk with us?" Betty asked as the dog lowered her head for more pats.

"I'll get the leash. Come on girl. The females in this house are going for a walk."

The sun broke through the clouds. The children from the local daycare trailed behind the worker while Ali, Betty and Kyra examined a spider making a web in the long grass. Betty jumped over cracks in the sidewalk before they chatted with Mrs. C, the playground supervisor. "Have a good day Betty. Remember, Daddy will pick you up from after-school care."

Betty waved. Ali watched her granddaughter turn, then nudge her friend in line as the bell rang.

"Come on girl, we need to hustle home. I've got work to do. No time for you to smell every tree trunk and fire hydrant for the male species' calling card."

Ali could call her pharmacy; her prescriptions would be forwarded here. Maybe there was a little apartment for rent on the bus line. She could be here for Betty, Tyson, Olivia and yes, even the dog. But she could still have her own life.

"What do you think, Kyra?"

Kyra put her long nose into the air. The dog appeared to snuffle the unique odors that told her what was happening in her neighborhood. She looked up at Ali then gave a distinct woof before putting her nose on Ali's calf to push her up the stairs to the front door where the daily paper lay.

She scratched behind the dog's ear. "You're right girl, perhaps Richard is a special someone who might like me as a woman on my own. I already know I'm a pretty good mom. A super grandma." With the newspaper tucked under her arm, Ali opened the deadbolt. "It's better to find out close to those who I love and who love me. If I can't have it all, I might be content having most of it. Or not. It's my choice."



*Grow by Judy Swallow*



# Editing Barclay style

JEAN F. FAHLMAN

**B**yrna Barclay has instructed workshops to Weyburn Writers Group a number of times over the years. I am the only member left of the original group and I have Byrna's handouts on writing short stories and poetry to refer to. As editor of *Transition* she published my essays, short stories and poetry, after adding the Barclay touch.

At one of the meetings of our Weyburn group I even used her editing style as a teaching tool, showing members the original poem I submitted to *Transition*. Then I showed them the same poem when it was published. After comparing my wordy draft to the final published poem several Weyburn writers declared they "would never let an editor revise their words that way." My response was "then you don't seriously expect to be published. The editor is boss and they are not the enemy."

Working in the editorial department of Weyburn Review Weekly Newspaper I did my share of editing. One rural correspondent was a legend for her amusing, but somewhat annoying, inclusion of minor details of village life, and passing it off as local NEWS. The correspondent did not take kindly to having her news edited and called in a fury accusing me of "taking out all my good stuff."

Byrna was always fair about letting me know her proposed changes to my poem or story, but she was fairly determined to revise to her own satisfaction. When a writer recognizes that the editor is there to improve, not to dismember or mutilate a poem, they are on the path to publication, even if it does smart a little (okay, sometimes a lot). I have been known to mutter in private, when I view a skeleton of a poem, "You took out all my good stuff."

For this Byrna Barclay tribute issue, I considered submitting one of my original poems along side of the one which appeared bearing the unmistakable Barclay Editing Style. However, some of her editing wisdom must have rubbed off because I had to concede that the published poem, although slightly naked to my eye, did stand up well.

The editor's pen is mightier (and sometimes as painful) as the sword. From a fairly lengthy association (we are not spring chicks, Byrna and I) I do appreciate all she taught in workshops and preparing work for publication. She taught me we can never know enough about mastering the delicate art of "taking out all the good stuff."

Byrna, you keep on doing what you are so good at doing. I thank you for your dedication to voyeuristic writers who journey with you on the thorny road to publication.



*Dream sequence by Henry Peters*

## Walls

JEAN F. FAHLMAN

humanity forges en-mass  
along the crowded street  
the meek give way to aggressors  
who stride with callous disregard  
claiming space

the timid cling to walls  
huddle in weathered doorways  
weave through the human throng  
rub shoulders with strangers  
blank eyes give away nothing

# A tale of two gardens

SHELLEY A. LEEDAHL

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . .*<sup>1</sup>

Several years ago my then-husband and I hosted a demolition party. Every able-bodied person on our Saskatoon block – young, and those who could remember when Barbie couldn't bend her legs – was welcomed to take a sledge-hammer whack to our dilapidated garage. There was beer, a soundtrack. Wood excellent home video it made. At the end of the day we were left with an island of concrete – a hefty foot thick – and an expensive, one-day jackhammer rental.

These were the kinds of things we did to ourselves.

After the ton of rubble was cleared (now there was a weight-loss program) and a load of fresh topsoil delivered, we set out to transform our neglected inner city yard into a garden oasis – a refuge, if you will: feast for the eyes, balm for the soul, resort for feathered friends. We shaped and sculpted, planted and pruned. Mother Nature helped with a few exceedingly wet springs, and our labours were well-rewarded.

From the vantage of my second-floor office window, the winding flagstone path resembled a slightly alien woman, running. A natural pond sheathed in lily pads and surrounded by cattails, arrowhead, and spotted water-hemlock culled from prairie sloughs was home to 30 happy goldfish – including Bertha, the matriarch – and a few suckers from the South Saskatchewan River. The trickling waterfall attracted the usual volery of robins, finches, and chickadees, but it also seduced northern juncos, rose-breasted and evening grosbeaks and a shockingly bright (and obviously either loopy or lost) western tanager. In the beginning, I didn't know a sparrow from a wren.

*It was the spring of hope . . .*

We cut an amazing deal on odds-and-ends patio bricks in a variety of hues, which, when wedged into place, looked like Pez candies a child had lined up for fun.

Soon the garden was a conflagration of perennials: lupines, peonies, poppies, lilies, marigolds, ethereal flax. My former husband's grandmother's ferns. (Say *that* three times fast!) There were pink hollyhocks from a friend who farmed an hour west of Saskatoon. Several varieties of *Lamium* from the crop scientist down the street. We'd been encouraging Virginia creeper to wind its tendrilous way over our six foot privacy fence, so that one day we'd be good and truly cloaked in verdancy.

Ah, nature's *otherworld*. The very antithesis of the hustle and tussle of our work-a-day lives. It was spirit-resurrecting to lounge in the Adirondack chairs beneath the lilac's long arms of shade, and dismiss the truth that we were only a few blocks from downtown Saskatoon (though frequent sirens from near-by City Hospital tended to catapult us from Utopian reveries).

The only lawn in our urban yard was a postage stamp in front, and we considered even that too much. We'd quickly

grown to disdain lawn – in anyone's yard – and couldn't imagine why all and sundry didn't plow theirs up in favour of a bush, shade plant, and floral mélange. If a Russian giant sunflower decided to rise up from among our brown-eyed susans, so be it. The woodland anemone felt like creeping toward the Chinese lanterns, no problema. In short, we'd become garden snobs, and those one syllable cousins – lawn, grass, turf – no longer existed in our lexicon.

But something strange occurred.

One year we (well, *I*) plummeted ever further into debt by purchasing a modest house – a go-anytime writing retreat – in a village northeast and not far from Saskatoon.

*It was the winter of despair . . .*

The 60 by 140 foot lot was bordered by privacy-providing lilacs, elms, spruce, aspen, poplar, caraganas, mountain ash, and a Russian olive I was particularly fond of. Here squirrels played tag and birds sang arias in the woods – real, storybook



Art by James Skelton

<sup>1</sup> The italicized quotations in this essay are from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens.



woods – that backstopped the yard. If one meandered along the narrow path between the woodland and a farmer’s barley field, cut through the luminous clearing where a homestead was retracting, then ventured directly through the trees (where raccoons cavorted like kittens, and once a deer leapt over my shoulder), he or she would find him or herself on the sandy lip of a spring-fed lake.

My new yard was perfectly private, and boasted a lawn as plush and green and, dare I say it – as *magnificent* – as any I’d ever seen. I pictured bacci ball parties, badminton games, elegant weddings in this luxurious grass. I cartwheeled, practiced sun salutes, and parked lounge chairs upon it. I tracked hours through the shadows that wheeled across its expanse.

But I also become positively obsessed with keeping the grass weed-free, and lost many an afternoon – all right, I lost entire livelong days – on hands and knees, meticulously combing through the blades and tweezing out junior dandelions, caragana, and creeping Charlie the moment they dared to sprout.

*We had everything before us . . .*

The lawn was nothing less than a 5200 square foot carpet fit for the queen, should she visit, and I was, despite my previ-

ous prejudice, in sweet, herbaceous love.

*We had nothing before us . . .*

Disparate as they were, I was passionate about both gardens. The few who knew each wondered at the irony: my city property was country-style; my country yard manicured to classic, French garden perfection.

Why? Perhaps the overgrown and chameleon inner city garden landscape nourished the part of me that required short-term escape from my rush-hour life, even if it did, in fact, physically emulate it. An off-echo? Some weird psychological parallelism with a horticultural twist?

*We were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way ...*

My manicured country yard and encompassing woods acted as an exhalation, feeding me with both simpler and wilder fruits, so that I might have the fortitude to return to that other world (of round-the-clock cacophonies, responsibilities, and draining demands). Or at least that’s about as much sense as I can muster from it. All I really know is that it was a fine balance indeed . . . *In short, the period was so far like the present period . . .* and critical, and my heart amid the variegated greens and multifarious blossoms was ever a happier bird.

## Into the fields

HELEN MOURE

*The fields are high and summer days are few;  
Green fields have turned to gold.  
The time is here for the harvesting,  
For gathering home into barns.*

From song Come with Me Into the Fields.  
(c) 1971,1974,Daniel Schutte.

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All rights reserved. Used with permission.

It’s September 10 today, six weeks since Dad passed away. We are in the middle of harvest, the long days and early mornings, the excitement and stress of getting the crop in the bin. Dad loved harvest; he took his final combine ride one day last year when my sister Vivian and I brought supper to the field. As we sat around in lawn chairs enjoying a robust stew and corn-on-the-cob, my son Dan asked his Grandpa if he’d like to go for a combine ride. We exchanged worried glances. How could a frail 91-year-old manage the steep ladder into the combine?

“Never mind, Mom,” said Dan. “If Grandpa wants to go,

I’ll take him.”

“Well, if it isn’t too much trouble, I’d sure like that,” Dad said. All three of us pushed and pulled until we managed to get him up in the cab. He enjoyed it so much, he made two laps around the field, telling Dan his own war stories of harvests gone by. Somehow, he knew this would be *his* last harvest.

My husband Paul and I moved off the farm into Dad’s house in Rosetown this spring. We had worked all winter renovating the interior, but the backyard had been neglected the last few years. Two sprawling apple trees, overgrown and infringing on the sidewalk were a major eyesore. “Those trees have to go,” I said to Paul.

“Well, I sure don’t have time to cut them down; I’ve got seeding to do,” he answered. Then Paul tried another tactic. “Look how beautiful the blossoms are. Wouldn’t your Dad be upset if you cut down his precious trees?”

By mid-April Dad began his final decline. He’d been in and out of hospital since February, and now had to have a permanent catheter. We were trying to manage with home-care nurses and Meals on Wheels at McNab Place where Dad had a little apartment, but it was not going well. At the beginning of May, Dad had a small stroke. He also had prostate cancer that had been

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*I had a dandy little saw I'd used at the farm to  
prune trees, and I thought it would work just fine.  
An apple tree is not that big. Right?*

dormant for years, but was acting up again. He was so weak, he could hardly get out of his chair and walk to the bedroom. It was during this time, though, that we had the most surprising visits with our father. Dad was an intellectual and tried to figure out a way to deal with the loneliness after Mom had passed away three years ago. "Your emotions can make you sick," he told us, "but your mind can heal you." He engaged his intellect by reading books of history, theology, and critical thinking and keeping up with current events. He also had an innate wisdom. "Sometimes reading can confuse you," he said. "You're better off going with what you know."

The last few weeks he lived at McNab Place, he was so grateful for everything we did for him: making him a special meal, tucking him in at night or, most importantly, just sitting and listening to his stories.

One morning, my sister and I decided we could no longer care for him at McNab Place and we had him admitted to hospital. Apparently, to get Dad into long-term care, this was the avenue we had to take. From the hospital, they would place him in a nursing home somewhere in the health district.

Meanwhile, I began looking for someone to cut down the apple trees. When I couldn't find anyone, I decided I would do it myself. I had a dandy little saw I'd used at the farm to prune trees, and I thought it would work just fine. An apple tree is not that big. Right? I retrieved the saw from the garage and sized up the tree. I could start by cutting off branches and leave the main trunk until later. As I placed the saw on the first branch, something stopped me. An image of Dad the last year he lived at the house, climbing a rickety step-ladder and picking every single apple he could reach, filling several shopping bags, then driving all over town delivering his harvest to group homes, senior residences and neighbours. To Dad, it was a moral issue: anyone who had lived through the depression could not throw out good food. I put down the saw and took a second look. What if I pruned this branch, and that one there, and maybe that one on the bottom? That might look better. Maybe I wouldn't have to commit murder

I set to work, pruning the apple trees and hauling the branches to the back alley. After much sweat and strain, I stood back and appraised my work. What an improvement! The whole yard opened up.

Dad was placed in the Nursing Wing on June 17. I gathered up a few pieces of his life, some shirts and pants and pyjamas, several books, even though he didn't read anymore, some photographs of the grand-children. Dad's appetite fell off again, even though the doctor had prescribed a pill to increase his hunger. It was obvious to us he'd decided to let go. I kept up my twice daily visits to the Nursing Wing, arriving at meal times so I could help feed him. He began to look like a holocaust victim: Nothing left but bone and sinew.

I prayed that God would come and take him, but my daughter Denise told me to stop wishing for the end. "It will take as long it takes," she said wisely. I realized that his soul would follow its own journey, and that it really had nothing to

do with us, or our timetable. As Dad spiralled downward, I decided to call the parish priest to give him the last rites. Dad was still aware of what was going on; perhaps he would be comforted and strengthened by the grace that would flow from this sacramental rite.

My two brothers, Harvey and Laurie, and sisters Vivian and Cheryl came and went. Said their good-byes and came again. We walked back and forth to the Nursing Wing through the quiet streets of early evening, past the swimming pool where children had played earlier in the hot July afternoon, their indifferent cries fuelled by youthful energy, past St. Theresa's where Dad had worshipped his entire life. We began all-night vigils, taking three hour shifts. Dad's lungs had started filling up, but his vitals were strong. We began to wonder what was keeping him here, having heard stories of other deaths where the family had to leave in order for the loved one to let go. Dad had said, though, that he wanted his entire family around him.

On Saturday, August 1, Vivian and I decided to stop at the Nursing Wing to see Dad for a bit before heading downtown to buy groceries. As we walked into the room, our sister-in-law Linda, who is a nurse, was looking at Dad's feet. "They're starting to mottle," she said. I walked over and looked at his feet and then turned to the head of the bed and bent over to look at Dad's face. "Linda," I said. "I don't think he's breathing."

Dad, you left us so quietly, no one even heard or saw you go.

The next few days were busy making funeral arrangements, finding places for people to stay, cooking meals. I felt nothing, even though the funeral was beautiful with sprays of green wheat decorating the church, the readings and music with themes of planting and harvest, the church bell tolling 93 times to mark Dad's years on this earth.

A couple of weeks after the funeral, I thought I saw Dad walking up the street from McNab Place to the Co-op in a slow, measured fashion, stooped over his walker, ball cap and king-size sunglasses, and a too-warm overcoat for the sunny day. A tall man, elegant and graceful, even in old-age.

Four weeks later, grief moved in and woke me from my sleep. Not wanting to disturb Paul, I turned and wiped away tears with the corner of the bed sheet.

Today, I picked five baskets of apples. The leaves on the trees have begun to shade into yellow. The sky has deepened into an autumn blue, and the air is scented with sadness as one season makes way for another. I will make an apple pie to bring to the field tonight. I will think of you, Dad, and how you loved the land, loved growing things, loved harvest. I know this season of grief will pass, but for now I want to gather up all the memories of your life, the scattered dreams and lost hopes, the joys and sorrows. I want to rake them into a glorious pile of gold and rust and burgundy and yellow and then scatter them into the four winds.



# How it really is for us

MARIE ELYSE ST. GEORGE

I've laboured in many ways during my eighty-three years, but nothing prepared me for the labour of love required to care for my husband in the safety of our own home as he gradually succumbed to dementia.

There is still denial and tarting up of painful truths, dispensing of well-meant cliché, and sometimes hurtful, offensive ignorance surrounding the diseases of the brain like Alzheimer's. Although much is being done in research and enlightenment around the whole spectrum of this and related illnesses, it's the community of family caregivers, women and men, who can tell the full truth about the pernicious erosion of both parties involved. No matter how well informed or well meaning others are, they just cannot imagine what it's like to see your partner-best friend-lover disintegrate slowly as you try to hang on to your own physical and mental health in order to give essential care.

When you yourself are aging and have no family support, the cooking and cleaning, care-taking, is exhausting. But it's the constant vigilance, broken sleep, despair and frustration that take their toll. Alzheimer's support groups are invaluable. Strong groups sortie out into the community to fight discrimination and attempt to keep a level of normalcy in their interaction with society, but they also circle their wagons when needed to help and protect their members. They laugh a lot, cry in safety, vent, advise, and sustain one another, because they all grapple with the daily downward spiral of miscommunication and deterioration. They understand.

Was it Kafka who wrote about turning into an insect? Shakespeare notwithstanding, as far as I know no one has written about actually turning into a shrew, but, despite all the best of intentions, most of us cannot avoid becoming one sometimes.

I wonder why shrews have such bad press? After all they're simply small creatures living in underground burrows doing what they must do ... crunching hard shell insects, and grubbing up earthworms, obsessed with survival. But when stressed, they turn into furious balls of vicious energy, biting, scratching, every nerve screaming to be left alone because their needs are so desperate. In their case it's metabolic since an extremely high input of food is required to sustain their tiny bodies, but a parallel could be drawn for human needs as well.

The needs for quiet, for peace, for reading, for writing and sleep and for loving just can't be met, because you have to give constant care: anticipate, assist, advise, aid, argue, beg, cajole, clean up, forewarn, feed, guard, guide, implore, insist, and oversee, all the while ignoring the knot in your stomach. No matter how hard you try to keep your temper, there's a point at

which you lose it, even though you're always being told to think positively and concentrate on good thoughts, and to imagine placid, pleasant things. What you really want to do is swing screaming from the chandelier. You're told counseling sometimes helps, but it's not half as satisfying as profane, ear-splitting, wall-shaking, roof-raising screams – because this intelligent, fine person you love is disintegrating, disconnecting from themselves and from you, and disappearing forever.

I did find it helped to briefly write about the day's events late at night, but one night a hard day's events transformed themselves into a half-dream scenario that felt very real.

*We're sitting on the sand in the cold surf staring at the horizon. I'm holding this wraith who is my husband tightly around his waist and clasped between my knees. The tide is pulling him out to sea because his brain has forgotten everything important like "swallow" and "breathe." The water and sky are gun-metal grey like the mud and silt into which he'll descend to join the company of creatures that will probe his body with searching mouths.*

*His spastic hands slap the waves that pull, wait, then pull again at his arched, rigid feet and trailing clothes. He looks around confused as tears roll from his round, red eyes . . . he's broken his glasses again because you can only fold them and fold them and fold them so many times until a screw's loose. He tries to concentrate in order to calculate altitude and longitude because he's lost and everyone's depending on him to find the way home before they're shot down, but the Lancaster's engines are roaring loud and flack is bursting all around. Bullets rattle on the fuselage. Why doesn't his mother stop that rain? It's keeping him awake and he has to be up at 6 in the morning. His newspapers will all be soaked and that Mr. Bulstrode at number 34 will yell at him and refuse to pay and he won't be able to buy the new tyre he needs for his bicycle. The waves pull at him again . . . higher, stronger. His hunched back is a question mark of pain. I hold him tight but he's such a skeleton now, I'm afraid I'll break his bones. He panics. Something dark and smothering is pulling him away. He doesn't know what! He struggles, hands flailing. I try to comfort him but my voice is snatched by the wind and I can no longer stroke him and still hold on tightly against the stubborn tide.*

*I've been holding on for so many months now that I'm exhausted and can no longer fight the water's last strong surge. The wave that takes him away spreads a delicate froth of sea foam over the sand, very like the crocheted white butterfly that nurses now pin on the closed door of his room to signal that he's flown away . . . a fantasy that's curiously moving, almost comforting . . . but only for a moment before grief floods in.*



Gaze by Henry Peters

# Introduction to “A Dose of the Hornet Brigade”

DENISE S. D. STILLING

This work reflects the fast-twitch switching, chaotically-focused state of mind, emotion and being that is the modus operandi of those with “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder” (ADHD). My son who was diagnosed with ADHD as an adolescent entering into adulthood, tries to cope and understand his uniqueness in the society he lives. In the poem below, his real-life phobia towards wasps provided a metaphor with vivid imagery. While having a dart on the deck, his wasp sighting unleashed a fury of irrational and uncontrolled fright, rage and panic with the backdoor frame losing the battle.

According to experts (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10992893>), the condition of ADHD has a strong genetic link. My behaviour shares a blood bond with a creative underpinning and stubbornness that refuses to believe this uniqueness is a disorder but rather views it as a talent. The challenge of acceptance is merely the difference in one’s thinking and being.

The creation spurred by the challenge to integrate several perspectives that could each be standalone poems. The three independent poems are distinguishable by the level of indentation and font style, that reflect on coping and living with ADHD. The perspectives of the standalone poems follow the separated printing of the poems.

## A Dose of the Hornet Brigade

*Waken by thoughts humming, then buzzing, my brain disturbed . . .*

Each uniformed in their striped yellow jacket,  
Armed with venom-filled bayonets,  
Protection imprinted: fury motivated,  
Readied to attack.

*Gently prodded, yet with each new effort, another assault . . .*

The platoon is deployed in clouds.  
I’m disoriented, yet I’ve been identified;  
Swarming and honing in,  
Stinging over and over,  
Welts swelling,  
Aching and throbbing.  
Puffy and hot.

*Surging through my body . . .*

The assault rages in full battle.  
My eyes redden,  
Watering uncontrollably,  
Salty tears.  
Itching.  
My tongue swells, my mouth dries.

I am no longer breathing,  
Just gasping for life-sustaining air.

*The mayhem furies within my head,*

A seizure of events,  
Daytime nightmares,  
Spinning hysterically,

*Hallucinations . . .*

*I’m totally afflicted.*

*I crave a **smoke** . . .*

For this battle, one last conscious act,  
Smoke,  
A swirling, sweet, skunky scent,  
To sedate them,  
To force a temporary retreat.

*As I deeply inhale, instantly, my world’s transformed.*

My mind quiets . . .  
The chaos vanishes,  
They return to their paper-thin nest,

*As the haze embraces me.*



. . . Page 20



# Separating the integrated poems

## My friend: Mary Jane

*Waken by thoughts humming, then buzzing, my brain disturbed . . .  
Gently prodded, yet with each new effort, another assault . . .  
Surging through my body . . .  
The mayhem furies within my head,  
Hallucinations . . .  
I'm totally afflicted.*

*I crave a **smoke** . . .  
As I deeply inhale, instantly, my world's transformed.  
As the haze embraces me.*



## Soldier silencing

Each uniformed in their striped yellow jacket,  
Readied to attack.  
The platoon is deployed in clouds.  
I'm disoriented, yet I've been identified;  
The assault rages in full battle.  
I am no longer breathing,  
Just gasping for life-sustaining air.  
A seizure of events,  
Daytime nightmares.

For this battle, one last conscious act,  
My mind quiets . . .

## Wasp whipped

Armed with venom-filled bayonets,  
Protection imprinted: fury motivated,  
Swarming and honing in,  
Stinging over and over,  
Welts swelling,  
Aching and throbbing.  
Puffy and hot.  
My eyes redden,  
Watering uncontrollably,  
Salty tears.  
Itching.  
My tongue swells, my mouth dries.  
Spinning hysterically,

Smoke,  
A swirling, sweet, skunky scent,  
To sedate them,  
To force a temporary retreat.  
The chaos vanishes,  
They return to their paper-thin nest.



## Possible titles for each of the embedded poems

The italicized or first poem:  
relates to the "Dose" in the title of the original poem, the medicinal aspect of the condition; discusses the medication of using Mary Jane or darts to quell the hyperactive mind; a possible title: My Friend: Mary Jane.

Poem from the second level of indentation:  
discusses the ending (death) from a soldier's attack of a civilian or another soldier; perhaps, a metaphor of the battle in con-

forming and being accepted by society: a wounded soul;  
a possible title: Soldier Silencing.

Third level of indentation:  
filled with imagery as the hornets or wasps leave their nest to attack; the victim's allergic reaction nearing anaphylactic, with the hysterical crazed craziness of swatting at the insects, is followed by the smoke causing the hornets/wasps to return to their nest; a possible title: Wasp Whipped.



# The Writing for Your Life Project

January 01 - June 30, 2013

(Adapted by the Editor from the official report by CMHA(SK) to the Saskatchewan Arts Board)

## 1. Introduction

The project was to plan and deliver a conference to answer the specific question about how *communality* might be achieved. A communality (not to be confused with commonality) is a *communality defined by a decisive common interest, such as writing-for therapy.*

## 2. Research question

How can a communality of writing-for-therapy groups best be developed and maintained in a Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA] context?

## 3. Answer to research question

The best ways of achieving communality among writing groups are by (in order of preference):

- 1) the groups taking responsibility for developing face-to-face communication among groups;
- 2) a combination of various approaches;
- 3) the CMHA branches supporting the groups' development of such communication;
- 4) the groups participating in partnerships with, first CMHA, and then as offered by the Saskatchewan Writers Guild [SWG] and the Saskatchewan Festival of Words [FOW];
- 5) the expansion and launches of TRANSITION (published by CMHASK) from 2 to 4 issues;
- 6) the use of the computer to facilitate all of the above.

## 4. Remarks on the answer[s] (by project director with input from the conference committee):

This answer is based on an exit survey taken after the conference panel's presentation and the discussion following it (see Appendices c) and d), below). Of some 30 persons present for the panel/discussions, most of them involved in operant writing-for-therapy groups, eight persons turned in survey sheets.

- 1) That the groups' and branches' assumption of responsibility and support rated highest shows that these are the essential bases of the writing and the therapeutic experience, and that face-to-face communication is quite simply the best for both.
- 2) That some combination of approaches rated high indicates a willingness to extend the bases of communality beyond the givens of group and branch.
- 3) On branches, see 1).
- 4) That external organizations offered specific opportunities for partnership measures the value they place on the writing-for-therapy project and presents an opportunity to reach out to the larger community.
- 5) That expanding TRANSITION and using the computer rated lowest is somewhat ironic: both the launch and the computer-based planning were central to the success of this conference.
- 6) On computers, see 5).

## 7) Other remarks:

- a) That facilitation, the heart of any successful writing group in the director's experience, was mentioned only in passing is a surprise.
- b) The results of the exit survey are best understood as a recommendation, which is to say that plans for future WFYL projects must take them into serious consideration, but need not be rigidly constrained by them.
- c) The conference itself is a powerful example of how communality can be built through a combination of approaches: it depended on writing groups and CMHA branches and CMHA(SK) division taking responsibility and giving support; technology enabled the detailed, continuous planning needed to create the event; the event consisted of face-to-face meetings in workshops, at lunch, and before a panel; it involved partnerships among CMHA, SWG and FOW; and it built solidarity as it engaged a wider public through a reading / launch of TRANSITION.

## 5. A narrative summary of the project

During January and February 2013, the project director consulted face-to-face with facilitators and branch directors / programmers of each of the six operant writing-for-therapy groups to determine the content and form of the conference. The facilitators / directors / programmers insisted that the conference include workshops for writer-registrants. Their suggestions were sorted into five aspects of communality (writer-based, branch--, partner--, magazine--, and computer--) which were to be discussed by a panel and ranked by conference participants.

A conference [sub]committee of three emerged naturally from among the facilitators and branch directors / programmers who were most active on the WFYL Google Group in March and April. This committee developed a program and recommended workshop facilitators and panelists; the director secured the consent of these facilitators and SWG provided funds to pay them.

Throughout May and June, the committee "met" continuously (online) with workshop facilitators and panelists to develop suitable workshop formats and informed panelist positions on communality. Venue and accommodations were arranged in conjunction with and through the support of CMHA(SK) at their annual conference in Regina. Publicity and registration were handled by the director and CMHA(SK) staff.

The conference took place as planned on 28 June 2013, demonstrating, among other things, the viability of the "conference" as a vehicle for developing communality. The committee continued to "meet" to formulate the answer to the research question in this report. More importantly, the committee remains "in session" to carry out the conference recommendations.

## 2. Methods used to document the project's progress

A WFYL Google Group recorded the committee's continuous "meetings" from January to June and beyond. This method



## LIVING THE LIFE

provided a continuous record of the project's progress; without it, the planning for the conference would have been laboriously cumbersome and prohibitively expensive. Representative pages of these "meetings" are attached, as indicated below. The portal itself may be accessed on request to the project director.

Specific documents developed by the committee and posted on the WFYL Google Group are in the appendices:

- a) the conference program ;
- b) summaries of workshop evaluations ;
- c) the panelists' outlines of their presentations ;
- d) exit survey ranking of aspects of communality ;
- e) photographs of the two workshops.

### 3. Plans for future initiatives

All aspects of communality discussed by the panel included practical initiatives (see panelists' outlines):

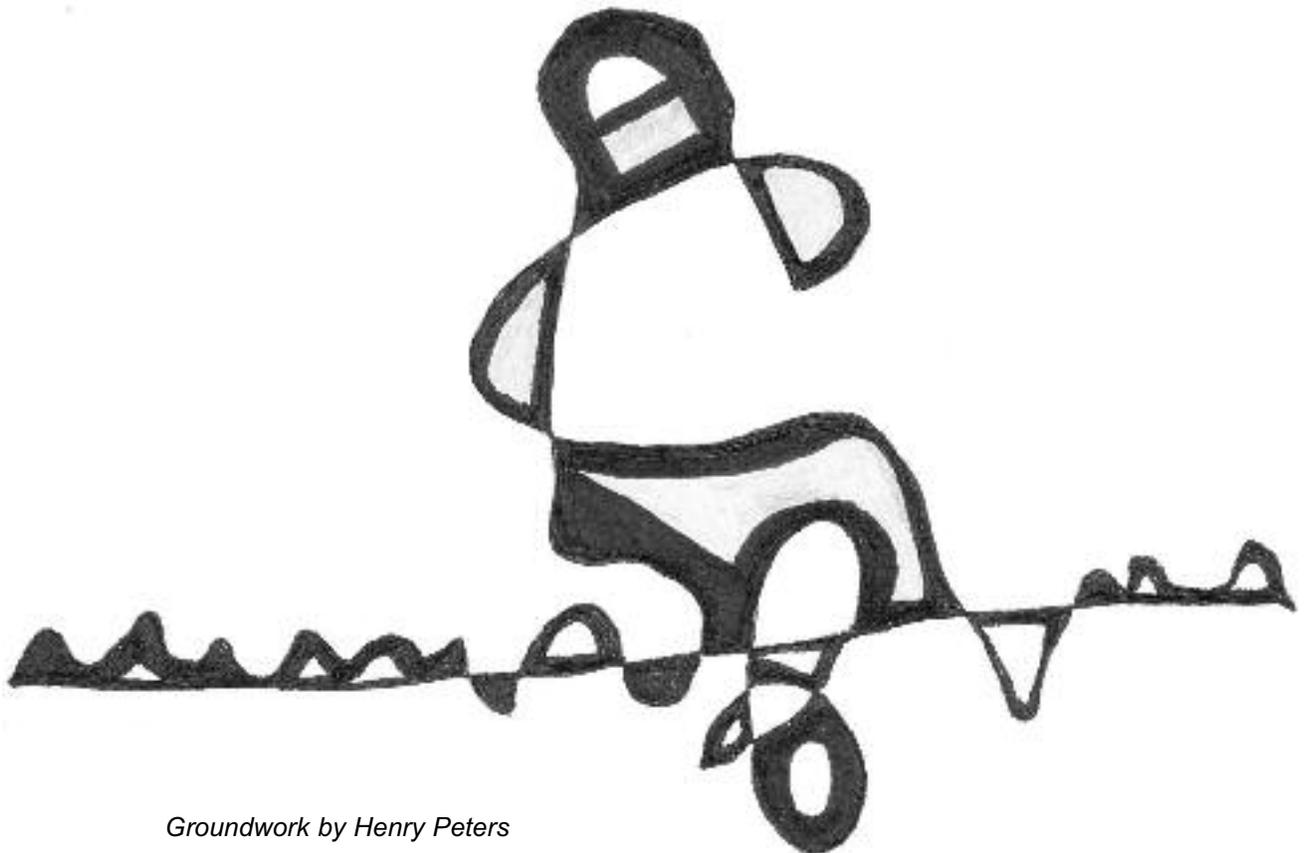
- 1) Group and branch initiatives focused on assuming responsibility for organizing joint workshops, group anthologies, inter-group visits, participation in community events, etc., and for the funding of such activities.
- 2) Partner initiatives included details on participation in specific SWG member programs and in outreach programs already supported by FOW.
- 3) TRANSITION offered a plan to expand the biannual to a

quarterly and to launch each issue with a reading at a different writing group venue.

- 4) A general plan might therefore comprise three steps:
  - a) branch leaders / facilitators report the results of the conference to their groups for additional feedback;
  - b) this feedback be communicated to the conference committee;
  - c) the conference committee, in cooperation with the writing groups, present a proposal to CMHA(SK) and its branches for carrying out such initiatives as are feasible.

### 4. Achievement of project goals [as stated in the application]: rated 4 out of 5 on all

- 1) To plan and host a workshop/conference] on how to develop a communality of writing-for-therapy [wft] groups
- 2) To directly involve facilitators directors of CMHA branches associated with current wft groups in the planning and hosting of this conference
- 3) To develop a plan for developing a communality of WFT groups
- 4) To test the "conference" as a device for establishing such a communality
- 5) To introduce as many clients/directors/others as possible to WFT as such



*Groundwork by Henry Peters*

## APPENDIX A) CONFERENCE PROGRAM



**PROGRAM WFYL CONFERENCE 28.06.13**  
**CAMPANIA ROOM (2ND LEVEL) DELTA REGINA**  
**1919 SASKATCHEWAN DRIVE**  
**COMMUNALITY?**

**AM**                    9:30-9:45    Mixer: Coffee & muffins  
                              9:45-10:45   Small-Group Workshop [REGISTRATION]  
    Writing your Life Story with Lynda Monahan  
    Poet, editor, and facilitator of Prince Albert WFYL Group  
    10:45-11:00 Coffee Break  
    11:00-12:00 Small-Group Workshop [REGISTRATION]  
    From Page to Stage: Performing Your Writing with Shayna Stock  
    Performance poet, facilitator, and community builder

**12:00**    LUNCH in Lombardi Room (CMHASK) [REGISTRATION]

**PM**                    1:30            Panel: Moderator Lynda Monahan  
                                  The What and How of a Commuality of Writing Groups [OPEN]

<u>Aspect to be Explored</u>	<u>Category &amp; Representative</u>
Writer/branch-based commuality – Writers	Gloria Morin, MJM
Branch/writer-based commuality – Branches	Doug Kinar, CMHA (P.A.)
Partner-based commuality – Festival of Words	Donna Lee Howes
Computer-based commuality – SWG	Judith Silverthorne
Magazine-based commuality – Transition	Ted Dyck, Editor
Combinations – Facilitators	Tasha Collins, CMHA (Wey)

2:00    Discussion & Questions [OPEN]  
                                  "But what's it all mean, Alfie?"  
                                  2:45    COFFEE BREAK  
                                  3:00    Reading / Launch *TRANSITION* S13 [OPEN]  
                                  5:00    AFTERWORDS: CC Meeting

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**WFYL REGISTRATION FORM**

Free Registration for members of WFYL Writing Group and/or Branches must be in hand by June 14.  
 Send or email completed form to:    Director WFYL Conference  
    Ted Dyck Box 1661  
    Shaunavon SK S0N 2M0  
    [tdyck@sasktel.net](mailto:tdyck@sasktel.net) 306.630.9347

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 WRITING GROUP / BRANCH: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY / PROV: \_\_\_\_\_ POSTALCODE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_







PROGRAM WFYL CONFERENCE 28.06.13  
CAMPANIA ROOM (2ND LEVEL) DELTA REGINA  
1919 SASKATCHEWAN DRIVE

## FACILITATORS

**LYNDA MONAHAN** is the author of two collections of poetry, *A Slow Dance in the Flames* and *What My Body Knows*, both published by Coteau Books. Her newest poetry collection, *Verge*, is forthcoming with Guernica Editions. Lynda is a consummately experienced writing workshop facilitator, writer-in-residence, mentor, and editor, and has served on the boards of The League of Canadian Poets, The Sage Hill Writing Experience, and The Saskatchewan Writers Guild.

**SHAYNA STOCK** is a performance poet, facilitator, and community builder. Her poetry explores themes like social and environmental justice, her bicycle, creativity, privilege, and heartbreak. Founder and host of Regina's spoken word series, *Word Up Wednesday*, she has participated in spoken word festivals and competitions across Canada. Shayna has worked with adults, youth, and, currently, Grades 3-6 in the Regina Public Schools to develop their writing and performance skills.

## PANELISTS

**JUDITH SILVERTHORNE**: B.U. of Saskatchewan Writers' Guild, author (children's novels, adult non-fiction books), writer (articles, columns), TV producer and scriptwriter

**GLORIA MORIN**: writer (MIM), ex-teacher, mother, consumer, and author (poem and book review on postpartum depression)

**DOUG KINAR**: E.D. of CMHA(P.A.), B.Ed., master trainer (ASIST, MHFA), and presenter (Life Skills, Mental Health)

**DONNA LEE HOWES**: E.D. of Saskatchewan Festival of Words 2007+, certificates in public relations, management, teaching, women's ministries, and restorative justice

**TED DYCK**: writer, editor, teacher, and operator of WorDoctor <[www.worddoctor.ca](http://www.worddoctor.ca)>

**TASHA COLLINS**: Program Director at CMHA(Weyburn), jill-of-all-trades, self-taught writing group facilitator



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## APPENDIX B) SUMMARIES OF WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

### WFYL CONFERENCE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT EVALUATION 28-JUNE-13

#### CHECK ONE: LIFE-STORY: ✓ [Approx. averages, where applicable]

Please take a minute to complete this form. Your responses will help me in planning future Workshops. Brief comments can be made at the bottom of the page. If you wish to make a more detailed response, please do so and forward it to Ted Dyck, Box 1661, Shaunavon SK S0N 2M0 or [tdyck@sasktel.net](mailto:tdyck@sasktel.net). Thank you.

#### A. Was the Workshop what you expected?

not in any way     somewhat     mostly     completely     exceeded them

#### B. Please rate the following aspects of the Workshop:

	very poor	poor	adequate	good	excellent
venue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
learning achieved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
group participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
group compatibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in-class feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
instructor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

#### D. What part of the Workshop was best?

#### F. What part of the Workshop was worst?

#### G. What improvements could be made in the Workshop?

Other Comments:



# LIVING THE LIFE

## WFYL CONFERENCE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT EVALUATION 28-JUNE-13

### CHECK ONE: PERFORMANCE: [Approx averages, where applicable]

Please take a minute to complete this form. Your responses will help me in planning future Workshops. Brief comments can be made at the bottom of the page. If you wish to make a more detailed response, please do so and forward it to Ted Dyck, Box 1661, Shaunavon SK S0N 2M0 or [tdyck@sasktel.net](mailto:tdyck@sasktel.net). Thank you.

C. Was the Workshop what you expected?

not in any way     somewhat     mostly     completely     exceeded them

D. Please rate the following aspects of the Workshop:

	very poor	poor	adequate	good	excellent
venue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
learning achieved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
group participation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
group compatibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in-class feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
instructor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

D. What part of the Workshop was best?

E. What part of the Workshop was worst?

F. What improvements could be made in the Workshop?

Other Comments:

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## APPENDIX C) THE PANELISTS' OUTLINES OF THEIR PRESENTATIONS

### PANEL ON COMMUNALITY

*Transition-based* Community Dyck, Ted 1

#### 1. WHAT IS *TRANSITION*?

*Transition* is a magazine, circulation about 1000, published biannually by CMHASK as a vehicle for group members and others to present their writing to each other and the wider public.

#### 2. HOW MIGHT *TRANSITION*-BASED COMMUNITY WORK?

*Transition* could be expanded to a quarterly:

- a. the current issues would appear at the current dates [June, December] and have the same format and content as they do now;
- b. the two new issues would appear in Spring [March] and Fall [September] in a newsletter format and be dedicated entirely to the writing groups;
- c. each of the four issues would be launched with:
  - i. a different writing group host;
  - ii. featured readings by local members and others;
  - iii. and an invitation to other writing groups to visit and participate.

#### 3. POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES?

*Transition*-based community:

- a. advantages –regular written and direct inter-group communication; seamless expansion/contraction as the number of groups changes
- b. disadvantages – pressure on groups to submit newsletter copy; cost.

#### 4. WHAT MIGHT IT COST WHOM?

- a. Estimated cost of the two additional newsletters is the cost of one regular issue (approx. total cost = \$5000).
- b. Estimated cost of launches at \$250 x 4 = \$1000
- c. Possible source CMHASK, augmented by fundraising activities.

Summary: With 2 additional "newsletter" issues dedicated to writing groups, *Transition* would become a quarterly, each issue launched with a different writing group host.



## Partner-based Communal

Howes, Donna Lee

2

### 1. WHAT IS THE SASKATCHEWAN FESTIVAL OF WORDS?

An organization which celebrates writers and readers.

### 2. HOW MIGHT PARTNER-BASED COMMUNALITY WORK?

The Saskatchewan Festival of Words [FOW] would:

- Act as a reference centre for writers who might use WFYL
- Provide entry level writing workshops to support beginning writers
- Present showcase opportunities for writers to share their work either publicly or to others
- Share publicly, but perhaps anonymously if requested, the success stories of WFYL writers
- Write letters of reference for grants or support from agencies that can benefit WFYL
- Include in its funding applications a line item in support of WFYL programs at arms' length
- Serve as conduit for political leverage in support of writers and mental health if necessary
- Commit to relationship building and mentoring in mutual respect and courtesy

### 3. ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES

**Pluses:** More writers and readers connected to and using WFYL; Potential exposure to more opportunities for funding WFYL programs; Greater public exposure and education with the exp of WFYL writers; Greater public and political support for programs which further WFYL goals

**Minuses:** Limited FOW staff; Diminished or discontinued FOW funding could weaken WFYL ; Ch FOW board or staff at could impact WFYL; Negative publicity for either WFYL or FOW could har other; Legal and confidentiality issues for WFYL in public forums; Variations in success narrativ impact fund-raising

### 4. FINANCIAL COST:

FOW will commit to adding to the next fiscal budget (2014/15) a line item under community programming of at least \$1000 for WFYL. Whenever possible, FOW will include an expense line WFYL programs in any new funding application. In addition, FOW will assist WFYL in applying fo funding independent of FOW to be used for their own programs. FOW will promote WFYL train

### 1. WHAT IS A CMHA BRANCH?

CMHA branches each possess a different capacity to support WFYL.

### 2. HOW MIGHT BRANCH-BASED COMMUNALITY WORK?

- The first step is to be willing to support the group within the branch.
  - This may mean providing a venue, supplies and recognizing the efforts or results of the groups by creating opportunities to present, or publish the writings.
  - The support will validate and honor the process of writing for the participants hopefully engaging new participants into the group.
  - There may be grant funding available to support the group requiring the branch to apply as a partner to the group
- The next step would be to support connecting with other groups.
  - Knowing that we are not alone as we move forward with any endeavor is important.
  - Connecting with other groups breaks the isolation an individual group may experience. We know this as individuals, we must apply this to our groups.
  - Branches can facilitate this by:
    - applying for grants,
    - fundraising specifically for opportunities to travel,
    - providing technology to Skype, conference call,
    - incorporating other technological marvels like vehicles to link the groups together.
    - Our web pages and blogs can provide opportunities to post and disseminate our pieces.

### 3. ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES

### 4. COSTS

Summary:

The role of the branch is to support its writing group, materially and morally, and to facilitate its connections to other groups in a variety of ways.



## Writer-based Communalities

Morin, Gloria

4

### 1. WHAT IS A WRITERS' GROUP?

A group or groups of individuals with an interest in writing as a form of therapy and with commitment to meeting regularly to share their prepared writing in a safe environment, at the same time, having access to other means of support.

### 2. HOW MIGHT WRITER[BRANCH]-BASED COMMUNALITY WORK?

- **Creating and distributing a survey suggesting and soliciting possibilities for shared experience opportunities** with other WFYL writing groups, such as: joint readings at local venues such as Performers Cafe (Moose Jaw); a featured spot on radio/television once or twice a year; writing retreats (each group taking turns hosting the event); an anthology of work from each of the groups; a yearly conference with opportunity to mix and mingle, to do readings and to participate in various workshops; a write-a-thon to promote writing for health, increase awareness of mental health, and raise funds for local WFYL groups or CMHA branches.
- **Compiling the survey results** from each of the groups in which the members have rated their experience opportunities according to level of interest, **and sharing them** with all.
- **Planning** which idea/ideas to implement right away, and which down the road.
- **Identifying the support needed for implementation** by looking within the groups, tapping the strengths and skill-sets of individuals, and by looking without to local branches and the Saskatchewan Branch of CMHA, SWG, and other organizations who can assist in areas of financial support, transportation, or other needs.
- **Contacting the appropriate individuals** in the community who can assist in making the dream a reality.

### 3. ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

#### Pluses

- offers real people contact;
- raises the profile of the WFYL groups;
- motivates, inspires, and focuses both writing and communalities;
- public exposure helps attract new members;
- provides for natural acceptance and a healthy experience.

#### Minuses

- costly in time, money, and administration;
- requires additional support for mental health, transportation, etc. ;
- requires a high level of interest and initiative;
- requires a structure for larger-group decision-making and problem-solving.

### 1. WHAT IS COMPUTER-BASED COMMUNALITY?

When we talk about our computer, we mean we have the ability to maintain databases of members and other contacts, and the ability to communicate electronically, some parts of which are interactive. For instance on the SWG web page, we have Find Saskatchewan Writers and the members only section, with membership pages, which help provide writers with connections and an online community. The general public can find writers on the Find Saskatchewan Writers page to hire for readings, presentations or workshops. This links them directly to the member profiles to find out more information about them. In turn members can add their own information to these profile pages. They also have access to exclusive material provided by SWG that is relevant to them and a benefit of being a member.

The online interaction of a forum provides a space where people can create exchanges that benefit all aspects of writing. The continuous exchange of events, calls, and news creates a vital link with the SWG community on our web site.

### 2. HOW WOULD COMPUTER-BASED COMMUNALITY WORK?

Most of this answer is actually in question#1. The features noted there could be utilized in a computer-based commonality that could be utilized and expanded to suit the needs of those participating.

The membership online forum works to provide an area where questions can be asked and feedback and possibly answers to queries can be not only discovered, but debated.

Find Saskatchewan Writers provides a marketing tool for those seeking SK writers for events, workshops, etc.

A Calendar of events and calls helps writers structure their month, showcase their work and provide support to others by giving them the information needed to attend events.

### 3. POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES?

An advantage is the accessibility to a large local and/or provincial community and to the general public. It is a somewhat limited community if one considers the entire country. (for example, it's only the SWG, one small part of Canada).

Cost to maintain and monitor could be prohibitive. Within this is having to hire someone to do the IT work, but also to monitor online forums and provide up-to-date content on a regular basis.

### 4. WHAT MIGHT IT COST WHOM?

Web page is free to members, but costs to maintain throughout the year—online forums are the cost of a membership to each person. I.e. the use of the online forum is included in the membership fees. The organization running this will have to pay for the domain and server costs, the IT person and also for content and monitoring. This could be somewhat offset through membership fees, but will likely not cover the entire budget, which could be anywhere from several hundred dollars to several thousand each year.

**SUMMARY:** A computer-based commonality – largely focused in SWG's members' forum – would provide 24/7 interactive accessibility, at a reasonable cost.



### 1. WHAT IS COMBINATION-BASED COMMUNALITY?

A Combination of all avenues discussed within the panel would include a biannual Newsletter highlights work done by those who are members of our WFYL Groups. It could also include working together with other partners to strengthen our writers by allowing for workshops, as well as strengthen our opportunities for grants, as many grant applications call for organizations working with other community partners. Writers based communality is essential to all WFYL programming regularly meeting with writers within our branches there would be no need for any of the other communality ideas. Meeting face to face as suggested would be a great way to build confidence among participants along with allowing them the opportunity to visit other groups and see how they operate. This would also allow participants to work with others who may have similar skills or interests in terms of writing. Having computer based communality would be beneficial as it would allow for communication, and interaction with other writers groups on a more regular basis.

### 2. HOW WOULD SUCH COMBINATIONS WORK?

I think this could work by coordinating when writers group is held, so most if not all writers groups are held at the same time, same day wherever they are located. This allows for consistency within groups, and would also allow for communications via computer. Integrating the computer into groups would allow consumers to learn new skills, as well as allow for another avenue for consumers to do research on authors, and styles of writing.

### 3. POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES?

Some of the **positive** aspects of combining all avenues of communality discussed would include allowing for a much more comprehensive and inclusive writing program for all participants. The combination of these ideas would also help with expanding consumer social networks, and allow for personal growth through developing new social skills. Using these avenues would also allow for communication and networking for our facilitators.

There are potential solutions to the **negatives** of all communality ideas. Some of these would include grant monies, socializing, and adequate staff for consumer support.

### 4. WHAT MIGHT IT COST WHOM?

Some of the issues we will have to consider would include costs involved with publication, transportation purchases allowing for these ideas to come to life. Anxiety or mental illness may hinder consumer participation with other groups.

**SUMMARY:** An organized combination of all types of communality discussed would greatly benefit our participants and facilitators in the WFYL groups and would make it easier to “ask” for consumer support.



# With just One Reach of Hands: Making a book a reality

LYNDA MONAHAN

The Prince Albert Writing For Your Life group has been in existence now for the past year and a half. We meet regularly at The Nest, the local CMHA drop-in center. As facilitator, I encourage participants to write from their own experience. We often speak about the value of creative writing as a positive means to deal with emotional issues and how writing can be a very healing act. Many of the WFYL participants have gone on to have their writing published in the pages of Transition magazine. Seeing their work in print has been an amazingly positive experience for the group, something of which we are very excited and proud.

So excited, in fact, that The Prince Albert Writing For Your Life group decided to put together our own collection of the writing of group members. With funding from Common Weal Community Arts, a Saskatchewan-based non-profit organization that uses art as a tool for social development, we recently published an anthology of the poems and stories of members of our WFYL group titled *With Just One Reach of Hands*. The anthology was launched during Canadian Mental Health Week with members of the WFYL group reading from their published work at the John M. Cuelenaere Library in Prince Albert. We see this anthology as a way to connect with the community at large and as a celebration of the creativity and indomitable spirit of this group of talented writers.

For those interested in putting together a similar collec-

tion, these are the steps I took toward making the book a reality: First, I gathered together five or six pieces from individual writers. I asked for what they considered to be their strongest pieces of writing. Since we had ten contributors, I was looking at about seven pages each – some gave me less. I envisioned a book of about seventy pages in length, 5.5 x 8.5 in size.

Once I had gathered all the writing, I set up a file on my computer and typed in each piece, editing as I went for spelling errors, etc. Any major revisions I checked out with the individual writers, but there weren't many. I wasn't looking for the book to be a literary masterpiece, but to honestly reflect the individuality of each writer. Once the manuscript was typed up, I wrote a brief introduction. Then I had all ten writers give me a two or three line bio which I typed in for the final pages. The work was ready for the printer!

I emailed the file to a printer I had contacted previously. Over the next number of weeks we looked at several possible cover images, to find an appropriate image to go with the title we chose, *With Just One Reach of Hands*. We were able to find a stock photo on-line which was cost free. Some stock photos you must pay a fee to make use of, though it usually isn't very much. The printer sent me back the formatted manuscript and cover image with the title in place for a final look after we had made a few small tweaks. There was a choice of cream colored or white paper, and we went with white because it was less expensive. We also had a choice to laminate the cover but, again, we went for what was most cost efficient.

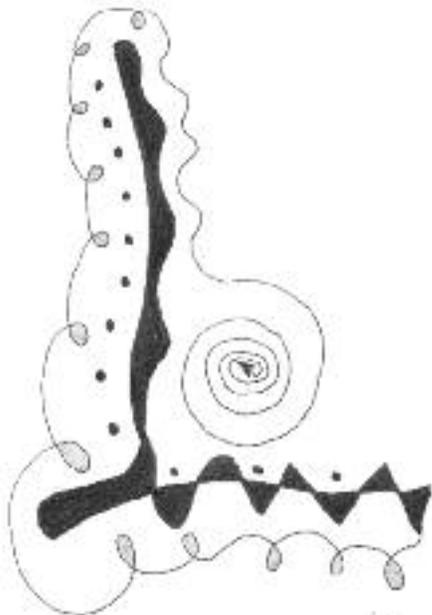
The one thing we did spend extra on was perfect binding which is how soft cover or paperback books are normally bound. There is the option of a less expensive plastic coil binding (cookbooks are often coil bound). We wanted a professional-looking book so we went with the perfect binding.

We decided on a hundred copies to be printed up. (Always a good idea to go with a smaller number of books to start out with.) Our total cost including tax for the hundred books was \$650 or \$6.50 per book. The books arrived by bus in plenty of time for our book launch in early May.

It really isn't a difficult process to put together a collection of your own group's writing. It is a great way to showcase the poems and stories of individual writers, and it's an excellent fundraiser for your group as well. We are charging \$10 a book (contributors received a free copy), and all proceeds go toward future group projects

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of *With Just one Reach of Hands*, or would like to know more about self-publishing your own anthology, please contact Lynda Monahan, at [lmonahan@sasktel.net](mailto:lmonahan@sasktel.net)

For more information about Common Weal Community Arts programs contact [infocommonweal@sasktel.net](mailto:infocommonweal@sasktel.net)



*Winding arrow by Henry Peters*



# Back then

SHIRLEY CALLAGHAN

It was a cloudy, grey day with a chilling mist in the fall air—not an ideal time for a group walk at the hospital. There would be many weeks of these outings for me, my psychiatrist advised in our last interview. I shuffled along with twelve other patients hardly believing that I was one of “them” and would be so named by all who knew of my illness.

There were four of us in that barren bedroom with four single beds and blue curtains, all of us with different diagnoses: depression, schizophrenia, schizo-affective, and me – manic depressive. “A mixed bag” some of us were called if we didn’t quite fit into the Diagnostic Statistics Manual (DSM). We were different containers into which any number of pills were poured to alleviate our symptoms.

The three other women who shared that room with me were Jessie, Carrie and Mary. I didn’t know what to expect from them any more than I did of myself in my condition. We were all sick, but had varying degrees of awareness of our own psychopathology. Strangers, we dressed in front of each other, ate together and tried not to reveal our preoccupations in case staff heard of them and told our doctors who might keep us in hospital longer.

Jessie was the rebel in the ward. Heavy, with raven hair and blood red lipstick she balked at every rule and threatened to get those of us who were more compliant in trouble. She was loud and argued with staff about food, rules, and smoking, especially, since she was addicted to cigarettes. Late one night she got a chair and broke a lightbulb to light her cigarillo. There was hell to pay and we were all called up to matron’s office to determine the guilty one. Another time she ran off to town and had to be brought back by police. Since she was in risk of being put into seclusion, we knew we would be in less trouble with her away from us. We were not sympathetic.

Carrie had a childlike face and lovely complexion, but had gained weight with the medication. I liked her, as she read a lot and liked classical music. We would get her little record player out in the common room and listen to Mozart and Vivaldi. Music was another world for us as we sat and listened without a single word to each other. We also traveled together to our hometown forty miles away. She came from a well known family who cherished her but would not visit her in hospital. For her elderly parents she was just away at school and came home to visit on weekends.

Mary was a lesbian and proud of it. She was tall and robust with short, greying hair and she liked Carrie whose psychiatrist intervened, keeping them apart on the ward and alerting Carrie’s parents when Mary visited her at home on weekends. This situation was awkward for everyone except Mary who seemed oblivious to what all the fuss was about – she had her rights and was not hurting anyone. Her gifts to Carrie were confiscated and eventually she was put in another room with older women.

Outside the ward on the men’s unit, K3, sat Mel. His was

an ambitious drug dealer whom staff watched carefully, considering all the medications on the unit. He had a reputation in the city and been in jail a number of times. He expressed no guilt for his history, and no one knew why he was in hospital rather than in jail. He liked Jessie, and soon they became a couple who headed to the woods on the grounds, up to no good we all presumed. Inseparable, they were to marry when eventually they were both discharged.

The wards were brightly lit as was the tunnel between the old parts of the hospital and the new building where the acute wards were in use. At night the lights in the tunnel dimmed and seemed to swallow occupants visiting there. Pete was always in the shadows watching. Wiry with bad teeth and thinning hair, he instilled fear in everyone. Going to the canteen for a soda was an onerous journey with all the young patients fearing Pete’s probing eyes and base comments.

He was also known for his bad temper and charges for assault and battery.

Carrie was often in the tunnel because she went to Harold’s meat shop to be weighed daily in hopes that she had shed a pound. She would stand on the upright scales and Harold with his keen eye would tell her before she saw it registered that she had gained two pounds. Her ritual was unknown to the staff, but somehow there was never an incident with Pete, and Harold became a consultant. Meanwhile, Mary made her uncomfortable as she stared at Carrie with a glint in her eye whenever they met. In spite of this unsolicited attention, Carrie rather liked Mary. If the situation were different, they could have been friends. She didn’t know what a lesbian did anyway, only that they didn’t like men.

ECT days were the scourge of the hospital. The selected put on johnny shirts over slacks and walked in line before the other patients and staff up the stairs to the shock room where they lay in beds waiting to enter the feared area. The patients lay on white sheeted hospital beds again lined up outside the double doors. One by one the beds were rolled in to where a psychiatrist, nurse, and orderlies stood around the bed. Then came the reassuring words, the tongue depressor, the needle and the 10-9-8- and you awoke lined up by the bright windows like cows in a stall and it was all over – for this time.

OT was fun. Our doctors came weekly to see what we were creating. They didn’t know this even from our long, daily therapeutic sessions with them. In winter we would dress warmly and cross over to the OT building where paints, puzzles, kits, yarn, and knitting needles plus a sewing machine lay in wait for eager patients. I proudly made a tent dress and a picture of a seascape made out of colored stones – which, for fifty years, hung in my parents bedroom – pleasing me.

In an adjoining room to OT was the hair dresser. Effie was petit and wore her hair in a pixie style, She was devoted to the patients and wanted them to look their best for family and friends; however, she gave everyone the shortest cut she could and created havoc with our feminine identity. I grieved for my long, curly locks, my best asset, but was glad that I, at least,

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*Getting me on the right medication was a challenge, and I felt like a zombi with waning social skills and withdrawn behavior.*

was slight. Effie's bubbled on in this capacity, proud of her efforts.

I liked my psychiatrist. He was a no-nonsense therapist, calling the shots and telling me what and whatnot to do. Getting me on the right medication was a challenge, and I felt like a zombi with waning social skills and withdrawn behavior. Despite these problems I made friends with the other patients and liked the student psychologist who tested me and proved warm and complimentary. Little did I know I would be doing her job one day.

When I was nineteen, I came to hospital. While I was there summer, fall, and winter I did adjust, getting in stride with the schedules, therapy and recreation. For some reason I always won at Bingo and won knit slippers – a small reward for my resilience in this foreign milieu. University seemed a thing of the past and I was in a new phase of existence for now, anyway.

I was eventually discharged with ongoing medication and psychotherapy by my psychiatrist. When I left Pete made the pronouncement that I would be back. He was right, but the stays would be brief.

The sun was shining on the day I was finally discharged. The clouds were like the little white Rorschach cards that I was administered at the hospital to detect incipient psychosis or like the ones Shakespearian characters used to forecast ominous events. I saw the huge majestic maples and the sparkling river beside which I used to take my walks with the seagulls circling my head trumpeting that I was a royal living on an estate. I was serene here at first in a majestic home with an ambience befitting a princess.

The seagulls will always be a reminder of my illness and the walks by the shore my rehabilitation. I remember back then, but not for too long because there is another day.

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## Red vase

DESIREE JUNG

I lie down on the couch and the medical books call my attention to the shelves. Among many psychiatry titles is a red vase. The strong color emphasizes the silence. I stare at the concrete walls, hear the murmur of the air conditioner. I don't take off my coat but feel no discomfort. I adjust myself, put my hands in my pockets, and find the money for the end of the session.

The analyst moves in her chair. "I have thoughts, voices that persecute me," I say. The phrase is unexpected. "I'm afraid of losing my words." She wants to know more. I tell her that the doctors also wanted to know more. "They come and go," I say. "When they hospitalized me they were outside my head, giving me orders."

"It must have been frightening," she says. I grunt yes without conviction of what I feel.

"I tried to talk but I couldn't remember how. The handcuffs on the stretcher were hurting me. I fought, and I wanted to know where my mother was. There were other patients in the hallway." I notice I am out of breath when I finish telling the story.

A moment later she tells me, "But you're here now, talking." I think yes, but I don't know if that's enough. I look at the red vase and I have a sudden desire to break it.

I shift my gaze away. Minutes later, the session ends. I am nervous when I get up and pass by the bookshelf, a red shadow near me. My fingers tremble when I give her the money. "See you next week" I say, hastening to leave.

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## The secret

DESIREE JUNG

I am lying down on the couch with hands interlaced. I've been in silence for some minutes. Finally I say, "I have a profound solitude in my chest and I'm afraid of talking about it. It's not because of the loneliness but for fear of losing my subjectivity. My words escape me, everything turning black."

I'm back in my childhood's room. It's the middle of the night and I can hear the television downstairs, some black and white film my father must be watching. He's a later sleeper and spends most of the evening in front of the screen. His presence in the living room comforts me, as though he could protect me from what happens inside of my head. The episodes are unexpected, I lose contact with reality, and I disconnect. Instants later it's as though nothing has happened.

"I trust you," I tell my analyst, fearful of my memories. "I have the sensation that for all these years I've tried to hide my past, erase my memories, as though it was the best way to protect me. Now I am here and I have the same sensation I used to have with my father in the floor below. Is the floor below the unconscious?"

She doesn't answer. Instead, she says, "Was that your secret? Losing your words?" I don't know, I think, but don't say a word. "You must have been very afraid as a child." Silence. "But now you are here." I get up from the couch and take a few seconds to come back to reality. I give her the money. She shakes my hand and I leave the office.



# Secret code

KAY PARLEY

Someone put it very well when she stated that a writer has to “live out loud.” When we consider the damage too much secrecy can do, that’s not a bad idea. I was raised in a Scots community founded by Victorian pioneers, and the code of secrecy was as fundamental to the culture as their rigid Presbyterian morality. It’s rather amusing now, thinking back to all the things that, as an innocent child, I wasn’t told and wasn’t supposed to know.

I’ll have to resort to fictional names in order to relate a couple of example stories because I’m a writer after all, and have to be cautious. Since so many of our pioneers had come from Scotland and Scotland was one of the illegitimacy capitals of the world in the 19th century, it isn’t surprising that a few scandals came with them. Of course “no one knew” and no one was supposed to know. Especially children. So when I remarked that Mr. McNeil looked just like Mr. Douglas my mother merely ordered me not to mention it. It wasn’t until I was nearing 40 working on a community history that she finally told me the truth. Mr. McNeil and Mr. Douglas were really half-brothers, you see, because Mr. McNeil hadn’t been born legitimately. Oh.

There was also the case of the Macleans. They were a delightful little group, warm and hospitable. I loved going there. There was one brother and two sisters, the second sister a widow. A third, much younger sister, was now married to one of the neighbours. Well, that was easy. I’d known them all my life. What I didn’t know, of course, was that the young sister married to a neighbour was not a sister at all, but the daughter of the spinster sister.

“Of course she had her before they came to Canada.”

“Oh.”

“I’m only telling you these things,” Mother explained, “In case you find something in your research that’s puzzling, and I don’t want you to go stumbling on any secrets that maybe shouldn’t be told.”

As a psychiatric nurse, I couldn’t help viewing all this dark underside of my beloved community as a bit sick. My mother wasn’t very enthusiastic about it, either, but she understood the genesis. In a small community you have to get along with the neighbours and it is often politic to turn the blind eye. One of my grandmother’s basic rules was, “If you can’t say anything good about somebody, don’t say anything at all.” Keep the peace.

I didn’t hear a word about scandal in my own family, of course, though I sometimes wondered about the mysterious “Miss Findlay” whose name kept cropping up. I first noticed it on the day my grandfather died, when Grandma came downstairs fussing about arrangements and said, “Miss Findlay must be told.” That really puzzled me. There was a “Miss Finlay” in the community and she was my mother’s best friend. She would no doubt be among the first to know and, in any event, the entire community would hear the news at the first general

ring. *Why* would she have to be told? The name re-surfaced a few year’s later when I was visiting my aunt in Manitoba and happily going through a whole room full of old photos, news clippings, and other precious souvenirs. I was reading through a collection of old letters when I came across several from Miss Findlay. Curious, I asked my aunt who she was and was

I wish I’d remembered the name when I visited Scotland in 1964, but many years had gone by and it didn’t click. I had rented a bicycle and pedalled into the country to see the Mill of Tarty, where my grandmother’s family had lived and where Grandpa had worked as their horseman. Love of history is written in the Scots genetic code, so of course the new owner’s wife knew exactly who my grandmother was. She said there was still a bed stored in the attic where one of Grandma’s sisters used to sleep. As I was leaving, she suggested strongly that I stop at the house on top of the hill and introduce myself to the lady who lived there. She said, “Miss Findlay would be thrilled to meet you. Be sure to tell her who your grandfather was.”

I might have done that but a storm was brewing and I didn’t want to be caught out on strange country roads on a bicycle after dark, so I passed by the house on the hill. At that time the name “Findlay” failed to stir any memories of the early mystery.

It would be another decade before a relative in Britain began serious research into the Parley family and turned up evidence of an illegitimate daughter born to my grandfather before he came to Canada. That girl, Susan Ann Cardno, had married and gone to Australia. I was disbelieving at first. My grandfather? Founding pillar of his community, elder of the kirk . . . *My* grandfather? She had to be wrong.

To be fair, my legitimate Canadian aunt, Milly, had tried to tell me the secret on her deathbed, but her husband failed to make me understand that she was dying and I didn’t go to see her. I wouldn’t have expected her to divulge any earth-shaking information anyway, because I wasn’t raised on that old code of “deathbed secrets.” (My mother wasn’t Scots. What’s more, she had lived only seven years in the Victorian age, not long enough to really ingest its values.

How do I know what my aunt meant to tell me? Because I got a letter from Australia, from a nice lady who wanted to tell me we shared a grandfather. She was youngest of a large family and most of her siblings were dead. Had I known about my grandfather’s romance sooner, I, who had no first cousins on the Parley side, could have visited Australia and met 14 of them, the family of Susan Ann Cardno and James Mitchell. Apparently my grandfather’s liaison with a Miss Cardno was fairly long, as there was an unproven rumor that they also had a son.

I discovered later that Susan’s mother was Mary Ann *Findlay* Cardno, but there the information stopped. The lady I just missed meeting in Scotland couldn’t possibly have been old enough to have been Susan’s mother, but who was she? What was her connection? Was she the “friend of your grandfather’s” named Findlay whose letters I discovered in Milly’s storeroom? Why were there so many clues to her existence

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*I wouldn't have expected her to divulge any earth-shaking information anyway, because I wasn't raised on that old code of "deathbed secrets."*

scattered through my life? Was Susan Cardno her halfsister? Or had she merely been a wee lassie who made friends with the horseman next door and always remembered him? If only it hadn't threatened a storm that afternoon, would I have stopped at the house on the hill and put the mystery to rest? It still saddens me to remember that lady at Mill of Tarty telling me Miss Findlay would be "thrilled" to meet me.

I have told this story to explain why I detest secrets. They

cause misunderstandings, promote distrust, create anxiety . . . there seems to be no end to the harm they do. In my case, they served to cut me off from the chance to have over a dozen relatives I never knew existed. My mother had lots of family so it wasn't that I was bereft, but I do feel cheated, and cheated is not a good way to feel. Still, I understand the motivation. I was a lassie, after all. Their responsibility was to preserve my innocence. They were only doing their duty.



*Clown on Main Street by Arnold Isbister*



PRINCE ALBERT WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE GROUP

## A cold time

RANDY COCHRANE

I used to love winter when I was young. I went tobogganing and did a lot of other winter sports. After a while I stopped playing those winter games any more. I stayed at my sisters' places off and on. Through those years I was growing up.

The years went by and winters seemed to last longer and get colder. I ended up on the streets of Calgary and it was so cold. We had a hard time finding shelter. If we didn't get to the shelter early enough we had to sleep outside. Those were long nights. Other times I had to beg for money it didn't matter how cold it was. Sometimes I would have to break into buildings and sleep under the stairs or in underground parking lots, places with vents blowing hot air. Sometimes we slept in the park with cardboard to cover ourselves for the night. We waited for the restaurants to open so we could buy a coffee and warm up in the morning. Then we'd be back out in the cold and the whole day would start over.



## Mud cookies

DOT SETTEE

It so happened it was winter time. I was outdoors playing in the snow. Wow! Look at that! I found my mud cookies that I had made in the summer. I gathered them up. My tiny hands were full of cookies. I wanted to give them to my dad to go with his tea. I couldn't open the door so I used my mouth to turn the handle on the door. Oh no! Wrong thing to do! My tongue got stuck to the door handle!

My dad heard me calling for him. I couldn't get my tongue loose. Dad poured warm water on the handle. I was free.

My cookies were on the ground, broken. Dad picked them up and put them on the windowsill. We never did get to have cookies and tea.

## Living with depression

LU RITZA

After my dad passed away I started to get depressed. The older I got the worse it became. As a teenager in high school I really had a hard time. Then I started to write in a small note book about what I felt and how I was going to commit suicide. My mom didn't know what I was going through. My teachers decided I needed help. They took me to see a counselor at school. We talked for a very long time. It helped me out for a while.

Later in life, after my mom passed away in 1999, I got worse with my depression. I began abusing prescription drugs. I even started to smoke pot. I turned my depression and anger toward myself. I started slashing my hands and wrists. I tired to commit suicide. One night I got so bad I tried to jump off the viaduct. The police grabbed me and took me to the hospital for treatment. I was put on medication and went through a lot of therapy.

As of today I am doing a lot better but still it's a struggle. Now I have friends and some family support to help me in the coming years.

## Down the toilet

DALE SPRATT

In 1994 I was diagnosed as bipolar. Up until then I had worked at good jobs in auto body repair, hospitals and fiberglass fabrication. I took a mechanics course in 1995 while I was taking meds. I received two mechanics certifications in small motors. I applied for work in the areas I was trained in. Because of my illness, even though I was qualified to fill the positions, I was turned down. I had to find a way past the stigma. For years I gave up looking for work. The only work I know mental health patients can get is cleaning toilets. My hard work studying is gone down the toilet because of stigmas about mental health. I have more understanding for people who are handicapped and have no choice but to work for low wages.





# The cemetery bird

BY ROLLI

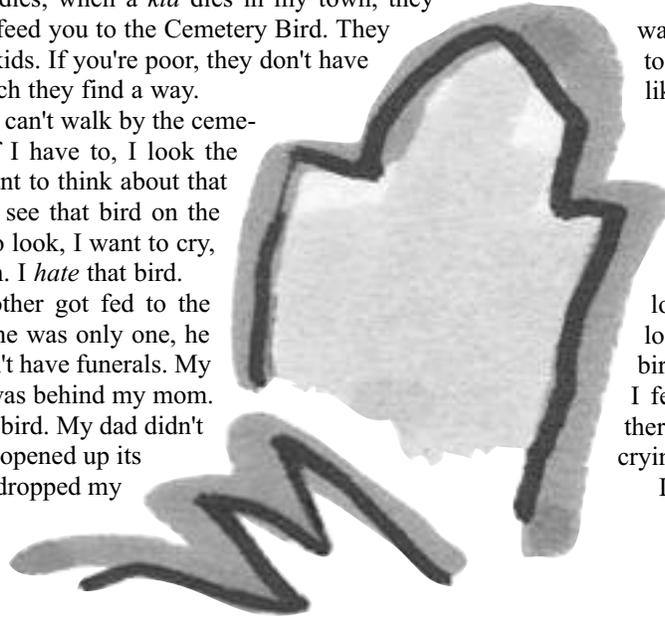
*They won't bury you.*

That's what they whisper. When they really want to hurt you.

When someone dies, when a *kid* dies in my town, they don't bury you, they feed you to the Cemetery Bird. They don't have room for kids. If you're poor, they don't have room, but if you're rich they find a way.

I hate that bird. I can't walk by the cemetery by myself, or if I have to, I look the other way. I don't want to think about that all the time. When I see that bird on the wall, if I forget not to look, I want to cry, or just be home again. I *hate* that bird.

My younger brother got fed to the Cemetery Bird. But he was only one, he was a baby. They don't have funerals. My mom carried him, I was behind my mom. She walked up to the bird. My dad didn't even go up. The bird opened up its mouth and my mom dropped my



brother in. Then it closed its mouth. That was it.

I was sad before that, but I was sad after that. *They didn't bury him. They won't bury you.* Even when they didn't say that, I thought that. I still think that.

I didn't feel so good. I felt cold in a different way. My parents got nervous. The doctor talked to my parents. When they looked at me I felt like I was on fire. Though I was so cold.

Every day I try to feel okay. I walk around with my cane a bit. I try not to think about it.

I went for a longer walk but I forgot. I walked past the cemetery. I looked down at my legs. They were shaking, I was so tired. I grabbed onto the cemetery gate. When I looked up, I shouldn't have, I breathed in, I looked right at the Cemetery Bird. A big, pale bird like a pelican. It breathed out. It *swallowed*. I felt just as cold as the cemetery gate. I cried there for a long time. When I got home I was still crying.

I'm just trying to feel okay.

# The drowned woman

BY ROLLI

She lay there. He came into the room.

"Tea?"

"Yes," she said.

An empty cup sat between them.

He seemed to keep drinking.

"You're staring."

He leaned forward.

"Can you do something for me?"

He was solemn.

"Can you promise me something?"

She laughed.

She stopped laughing.

"You ask me. You always ask."

"I'm asking again."

She laughed again.

"Please?"

She ran her hand, through her damp hair.

"I won't even know it's happening. You won't.

It will happen so slowly again. Again, and again.

It *will* happen."

"Please."

Her green dress.

She stood up. She was unsteady. Feeling her way. Making her way, to the door.

He seemed to keep drinking.

She opened the door.

The waves were breaking.

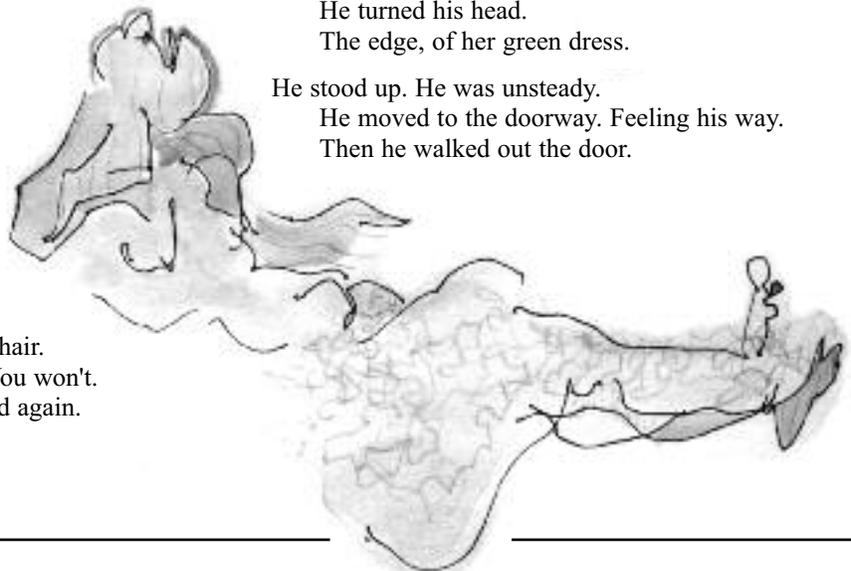
He turned his head.

The edge, of her green dress.

He stood up. He was unsteady.

He moved to the doorway. Feeling his way.

Then he walked out the door.





# The friend

BY ROLLI

My friend lived in a receptacle in the alley adjacent to my company. If people tossed rubbish into it, he tossed it back out. The receptacle was tall, though he was able to exit and enter it via this climbing pile of rubbish.

My friend stepped out of his receptacle, smiling, and down the pile. I smiled, for my friend's smile, though he was so changed, was unchanged from his childhood smile. In those days, we rode our bicycles up and down the street. We rode them in the mud, even, that existed outside the margins of the street. We returned home coated in mud.

"Hey, Bud," said my friend.

"Hey," I said.

"It's a nice day."

"It is a great day, friend."

The entire city is a filament. I ensure that that filament continues to burn. It is simple. Yet ... more challenging than one would imagine. It is a great city - and I am one man. To repair any system, however crippled, requires only an extraordinary method.

When I leave my company, it is always very late in the evening.

"That you, Bud?" said my friend, sticking his head out of the receptacle.

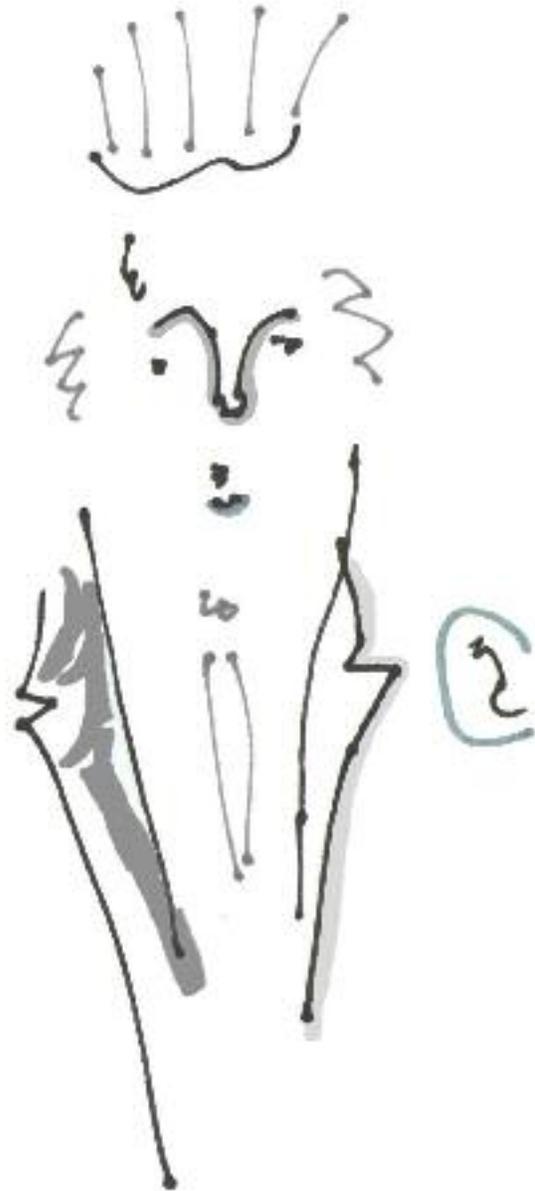
"Yes," I said.

"Heading home?" stepping out.

I ate his face. He cried out. He clambered back into his receptacle, crying why and why.

When I passed my friend the next morning, he whimpered. He did not exit his receptacle, but peered out of it, like a creature. He closed his mouth - yet through the window of his cheek, I observed his teeth. He closed the lid of his receptacle.

My friend is now changed. He is like an angel, now. It has changed the city. Pity is not useful. Those who witness him now, rather than assist him, and leave him to his difficulties, feel that extremity of horror which alone can produce social change. One woman, hearing of my friend, offered him an apartment, free of rent, so that he could quit his receptacle. Another, a man, merely glanced at him, then handed him, instantly, the keys to his Mercedes. My friend rides it proudly, now, as he did the bicycle of his youth. Down the street. And past the margins.



# Hollywood

BY ROLLI

When I got out of the military that was the end of my life I thought. I was so broke up. My skin was broke. It hurt me to even think about my life. My face was broke. When I looked at my face . . . .

I grew up in Tacoma Washington my dad wasn't military I wanted to be a military guy. Lewis-McChord. I dreamed about that base when I'd see the military guys. I wanted that so bad. My class went there.

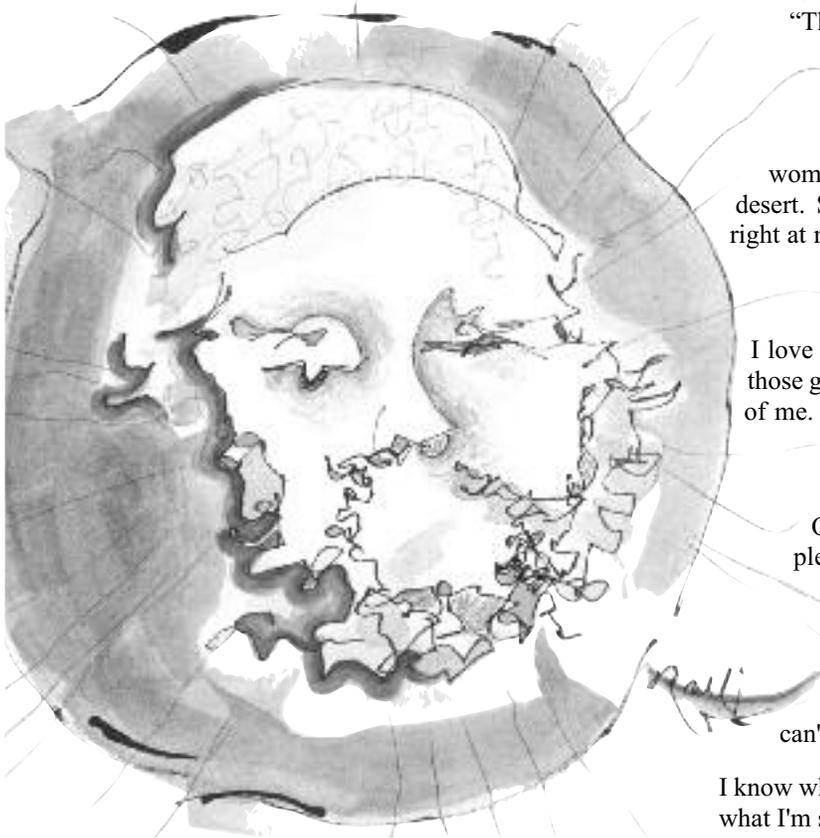
"You'll only get killed."

"You're our only son."

They didn't understand how important it is for your country. I worked at the gas station till I was 18.

The one time we were walking up to a road. There were people coming. The one guy shook his head. I was one person, I stepped and there was a loud pop. When I woke up I was someone else.

There's the bag of birdseed I could sit on in the shed. At first I was eating the birdseed. When the lady from the house opened



Hollywood by Rolli

the door with a baseball bat she started crying.

"I used to play baseball," I said.

It doesn't stop raining in Hollywood. But this isn't even Hollywood. I can't find Hollywood.

When I thought it was Hollywood I walked everywhere I couldn't find the stars. I couldn't ask anyone. I felt like getting sick. I didn't have water in a long time. When it started raining I went in the garden shed.

"Oatmeal?" said the lady one day. This was the day after that. I wasn't expecting that. She brought me juice, too.

I felt almost full after that. When she came back for the bowl, she crouched down beside me. She wasn't as scared of me. I was scared of her but not really.

"I use the bathroom at the gas station," I told her.

"I've seen you go in and out," she said.

She looked at me. She didn't look too much at my face.

"What happened to you?" she said.

"I'm in the military," I said.

"Oh," she said.

She looked into the empty bowl I asked her, "Is this Hollywood?"

She looked at me.

"This is Hawthorne," she said. "Hollywood is about 20 miles north of here."

I didn't know what to do.

"Are you from Hollywood?"

No, I told her about Tacoma Washington. This woman was from Phoenix, Arizona. I told her about the desert. She listened like she was thinking. She didn't look right at me.

"I've got to go to work," she said.

"Okay," I said.

I love Frankenstein I like Dracula, love the Mummy. I like those gory movies. When I was a kid it all scared the shit out of me. I watched under a blanket. If it got too bad I closed the hole a bit. I was too scared of the dark to close my eyes.

One night I broke open the birdseed bag. I heard people talking in the alley so I closed the door. I filled my pockets with birdseed. When it was quiet I opened the door.

I can't find Hollywood. I can't find it. It's out there. It's got to be there. It's *somewhere*. I can't *find* it.

I know what I'm going to say. My face shakes but when I know what I'm saying it's okay. I'm going to go to Universal Studios.

God I hope I can find it.



# I got sad

BY ROLLI

Then I shot my head. There was I could see the hole in my vision in my head. A flashlight.

A black guy came out of my head. He hanged behind me like girls' hair. I am *scared* of him but I can't ever get away from him. *Never*.

My friends don't come home. I don't even care those *fuckers*. Fuck them. All's I need . . . is my dog and my mom. So long as I got those. My dog, and my mom.

I got nice moms.



*I got sad by Rolli*



*In a Graveyard by Rolli*

# In a Graveyard

BY ROLLI

**I**n a graveyard, I'm high on glue. But I am so low. I can't . . . even sit up, on a headstone. I'm not worth that. I sit against . . . my headstone or my tree. Oh, when I'm so low I lay on the ground. I can't sit up. I sniff glue. I stay down.

Every day there's a headache and a pain in my head. My heart beats only slow. My back is so horrible. I sniff glue. I roll over.

I don't want to remember. When I run out of glue, it is so horrible. I am so desperate then. The boy brings me more glue. If he can't . . . I am so desperate then. But if he can . . .

I sniff glue. I roll over.

I don't want to remember.



## Song of the Widow

LILIAN DONAHUE

Who will love me now  
Who will remember my beauty  
Who will remember that I sang  
And danced naked in the wood  
Who will chase me around the living room  
And tumble me onto the bed  
Who will love me  
Who will love me  
Who will love me.

Who will look into my aging eyes  
And upon my tired flesh  
And see the girl, the loving heart, the laughing woman  
And take me into the grassy glade  
To dance, and then to love in the sun.

## Face down in the dirt

CARRIE ANN SCHEMENAUER

At dusk she falls face down in the dirt  
and lies there too tired to get up  
Mosquitoes swarm her like villains  
She is too tired to protect herself  
Easy prey

With her face pressed into the soil  
the ground is strangely comforting  
She can't go any lower  
In the dirt is peace  
and a quirky humor

The dirt becomes a bed  
The contours of the soil a lover  
The ground in her teeth  
enlivens a part of herself  
that had been dormant  
an earthy side that forgot to stop and smell  
that rose bush above her  
Strange that she now has the time

Inhaling the red scent of romance  
she rolls over  
puts her hands under her head  
no longer a victim  
suddenly a girl again.

## Parkinson's

IRENE GROBOWSKY

A cage of flesh that shakes  
With no bars to rattle  
Continual trembling, no breaks –  
Helpless nightmare of temblors  
This is no war, just a losing battle.  
She cannot leave the cage, pick the lock  
Or loose the bars.

But must fly —  
unfettered —  
in imagination or in dreams.

## Whisper of sorrow

NEIL HOWARD

Whisper of sorrow in azure sky  
Gently bids the clouds to die  
Billows crashing staunch and cruel  
Imply the sand is just a fool

Sudden squalls of callous clatter  
Vex my mind until it scatters  
Misty drops cascading down  
Revealing but a hapless clown

Rocky granite's erupting fury  
Inflames my mind annealed with worry  
Mutant motions bending ground  
Shift my space and twist my sound

Sweltry ozone fierce as fire  
Condemns my busy bones to tire  
Rush of hail from heaven's vent  
Destroys the calm to where it's sent

Powder gems of average note  
Crack the lips and parch the throat  
Temperate ramblings sad and droll  
Indulge the mind and ease the soul

As Winter's chill subsides for Spring  
The robin greets its cue to sing  
A knot secures my battered rope  
My heart yet anchored deep in hope



# Dear agony

RAYLINCOMA

Sick from crying tired of trying Yes, I may be smiling, inside I'm dying. Satisfied yet empty; an image of the outside, should I even give life another try? Losing all reason tried to leave my death lost behind, though when I close my eyes; dark takes over left beat, bent, broken, as was left when this had started. Have I lost the will to change, or am I just not able to get far? I'm still alive, still shallow as a well I've always been. Tried to light the fuse, but it keeps to burning out. Don't have what it takes yet won't give up as long as lungs breathe me, as many days as I have left, even if I always keep getting to the edge of jumping off. I have people that love me and them that are what will never allow me to par take. There my sign I look forward to as stars shine bright till we drop. Instigator, now parasite has no fingers to grasp you, heart will never cease in loving you. Gave me this, a life; I'm shallow, but not a waste. If I have anything to say, it's "I will not throw my life away!" Sooner or later I'll be dead and lying then, love ya lots. You were in my thoughts, no matter how bad the bleeding was in my brain. You're who I think about fighting to be sober, so it won't destroy us. So I prove that memories haven't shattered. Hate me; it's your right I'll shine once again, the way you always made me. Won't sink to the bottom; I rise when on the edge this a promise: I can't live without you, even when you're dead, still have her will not let her fade even if she neglects facts of me trying many times to let go. If I get somewhere sometime, achieve means to swim away from here,

always call you and her reasons for rising each day. Never give up hope. That's how you trained me. Always call to see if you're OK, even if I'm not. Frown lifes bleak I know we can make it to our feet, don't forget I cherish you, make me feel that I too, am a treasure yet to be found. Never want to hear you say you've given up that gives me thoughts of tying it off, laugh when you're sad it can be fake had worse then this. Don't want to be on your worry list, as much as I can, feel's right when I'm with you even if I can't show it again. You bring out my sun, when it's down may not be here, there, getting anywhere, I know we won't lock each other out. It's good to know walking in the rain nobody knows you're crying. Don't know what's really behind smiles and frowns I'll keep to telling you everything. Tears made us pretty we'd be the best looking in town! Want to hold you without ever having to put arms down. Read loves the slowest form of suicide, I could feel how when remembering the times, I wouldn't have it any other way. May sound disoriented, but who's on a straight line anyways? Staggered in midst of her haven, drank and drugged myself through hell soon I hope to find myself, even for a second mind maybe quiet. Won't put up arms to block stones you want to throw feels shallow; insecure; lived and died; but it hasn't changed. Brought upon a life not worth saying on someone's I care and love so. We'll make it out even if we have no light. Agony you plague me but give to me the ways to speak of missed days.

# Denied luxury

RAYLINCOMA

Poor am I in pockets my wallet suffers from bulimia my soul once rich life I fought to gain I wore my life on my back had all I ever needed in just a little space. I held my heart in two hands before its discussed then it's just one within a firm grip paper was my friend my psychiatrist my medicine to the things you could not my life was everywhere was made from everything. The story started and ended with one man and a red can stole everything from me and his mom handled after by two women grandma and auntie who let and gave me anything no not quite like you think materialism was the least of us. What they gave to me and allowed me to do whatever it was that I did they gave to me a separate life with restricts no restraints what had been left of me. With that I filled a life not fitting for your review but everything fitting for a king like myself but was without a key. Lost my thoughts and creeps passed that got my feet took refuge in a spot I felt was right made it to a place I never viewed as more thn illusions. And I

was bested right in just a few seconds tho it prolonged to him taking all that was his and taking back old guidance with my friends moms life then my ferret my spirit whn I crushed her head she just wanted to sleep by me, did a reading to save it got alot of claps went nowhere. Grew angry lit fire into our homes something Im bound to be common, shortly after my Grandma passes I am not to fear you I always was playing you plagued her body with poison and filth Im now locked in a cage put on your stage once more. 123 the best places to be add em up I get 6 1 away from the seven Ive followed all those in most terms.



Art by James Skelton

# Illusionary disconnection

RAYLINCOMA

Somebody said you have thick words some sick in the head in their hearts others like me stupidity leads us straight. How can we share in a world so cold, I live in Canada where medical is free so thanks for letting me go so close to death then tipped upside down to fall back into life? Thanks for now I feel his presence and he makes me feel like more than you'll ever be. Have you gone there before? It's priceless but never for the weak will you crumble of the astonishment of its power it will give you the reasons not to cry about your little heaven lives it says to me Ur a liar. Don't cross streets unless Ur willing to be hit u smoke light tobacco light or even non-alcohol drinks u can take handfuls of pills n I can't smoke I joint wht game u be playing. Whn all fucked up its this ull be missing you can go choreograph in the hills Im highly explosive so don't fake it for a magic lamp maybe small but ya'll be hitting the ceilings whn u feel wht Im dealing. I allow bruises wounds n scars never will I accept footprints on my back. Ive forged to be saved a life worth fighting for I woke with black page n still I stays tht way. Wht the fuck is this shit to start with duh duh like Im sum sort of fucking genius how u guts by death? Let em rest instead of trying to keep thm afloat with tears n grief nothing can bring thm back or Id of done so already.

# Hand of Fate

RAYLINCOMA

Shuffles what's dealt life more than stares  
Stacked full folded empty  
Hit me apathy call me empathy  
Play me my suit or my pairs

Spades of black Shade the jack!  
Sword n' shield trump in duelling  
Pen n' paper ace in dealing  
Anger Frustration and Fear don't hold back

Time comes pots piled high  
Joker had little heart but then a straight  
Goes out, find n' seek opinions will make people freak  
Making sure Queens n' King get noticed right

Joker's a knight who fought life and death!  
Emerged from the stack a writer with this club



*Clowning around by Judy Swallow*



# Two for George

TED DYCK

Merle, George. *Me and the Hawk*. Self-published. n.d. 88 pp.

----- *Ghosts in My Closet*. Self-published. n.d. 76 pp.

[For more on George Merle visit  
<[www.youtube.com/originaljustgeorge](http://www.youtube.com/originaljustgeorge)>.]

I first heard the name George Merle a couple of years ago when the CBC tried to contact me about a "book in the Regina Public Library that had never been checked out." Lynn Hill alerted me that a call was coming, and forwarded an e-copy of Merle's *Me and the Hawk*. So I wasn't caught *in flagrante delicto*, loosely speaking. That is, I learned that George was a CMHA regular, I had time to skim the book, and I managed the call. Barely.

Hawk is well-named – he looks like one, he's a night hawk, he's a master pawnster – as in *hawk-shop*, and in his own way he soars high. He's also something of a model for our narrator, who is a somewhat fictionalized "George," though it isn't entirely clear why. Or perhaps *alter-ego* is better than model: again and again – at pinball, or baseball, or hockey, or golf, or women, or just outright classiness of a distinctly street-level kind, Hawk manages to take centre stage while his narrator fades into an observing writer. Although there are hints of Hawk's problem and his end in the book, that end is withheld. Hidden away on *The Hawk's* second last page, however, is a gem of a poem:

*Our lips met*

*A kiss that seemed to linger*

*I ran my finger through her hair*

*And a cootie bit my finger."*

Like the protagonist of this "anecdotal novel," I "burst into

a fit of laughter as [I] read [it] aloud." Here was true wit, I felt, in all its deflationary force, and I would find more in Merle's subsequent book.

*Ghosts in My Closet* is a looser text, a miscellany of "poems, vignettes, and short stories," several of the last being reworked versions of chapters from *The Hawk* and published in *TRANSITION*. Here, in "The Final Chapter" (68-69), we see the Hawk, a drug addict with a hole in his arm, finally crashing and dying.

The strength of *Ghosts* lies in its sardonic wit. Some of the poems, the love-poems, especially, tend to the maudlin as love-poems tend to do, but enough escape that sweetness to bite the unwary reader into a tang of awareness. The wit can be as sharp as a single word – *ghosts*, not skeletons, in the closet; *owed*, not ode, to the farmer. Or as broad as "The Medicated Society" (52-53), as allegorical as "Web of Deceit" (48-49).

The point of publications such as these is not their literary value – they are, rather, living examples of *writing for your life*. That the narrator is bipolar is everywhere evident, though never as openly as in the disarmingly simple "Manic Depression" (4):

*I am a yo-yo*

*Going up and down*

*Sometimes I reach the sky*

*Sometimes I hit the ground*

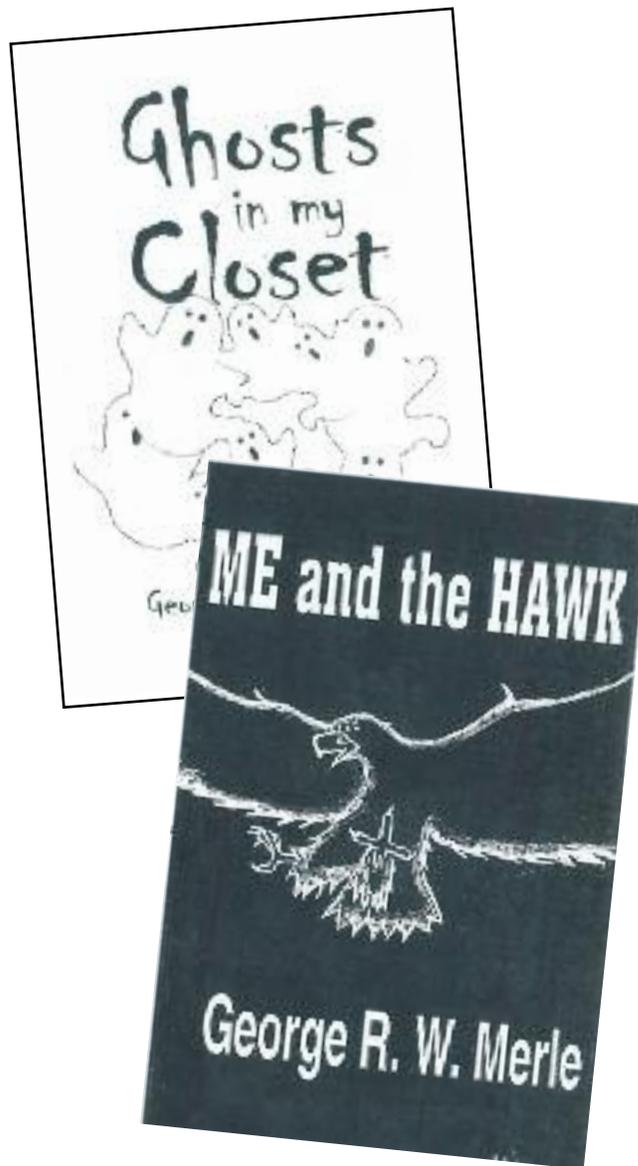
*Then the string breaks!"*

In this instance, the wit turns to a truth that all sufferers of depression, manic and otherwise, know – that it *can* get worse.

Besides illustrating the role of writing in the therapeutic process, these two also point to the significance of desk-top

publishing for every writer. As books go, they are crude, but as examples of what writing is *always* about, they are beautiful.

So – for George and me – don't let the *Hawk* and the *Ghost* languish in libraries any longer.



# Making the days tall

IRENE GROBOWSKY

*With Just One Reach of Hands:  
An Anthology by members of the Prince Albert  
Writing for Your Life Group  
70 pages pb Price \$10*

For a group that has been in existence for a brief time - just over a year - to be comfortable enough to read their work in front of an audience as the facilitator Lynda Monahan mentions in the introduction to the anthology *With Just One Reach of Hands* is a tribute to their self-confidence. Those who write know that presenting one's work to a public, whether large or small, either in audio or in visual format, is to make one's self vulnerable.

Facilitator Lynda Monahan is to be commended for her encouragement of the group and the commitment to publish this anthology. Whether or not hers was the suggestion for a theme one seems to have developed quite naturally and the title *With Just One Reach of Hands* is an exact capture of the *raison d'être* for the group.

It is obvious from this collection that loneliness is alleviated to some extent and that hope, "that thing with feathers," is nurtured by members of the Writing for Your Life Group. Support given is stressed again and again, support given an imagery by the theme of hands in outreach. This reaching out is depicted as a reciprocal act - help accepted and help returned. These pieces provide a sense of the fellowship that has grown within the group and the title is truly apt.

Much pain is revealed in these pieces, but there is also a sense of moving on and now being able to experience the joy of the ordinary, whether it be in nature, in memories or in the duvet-comfort of love. Some have chosen to tell their stories in

poetry; others in prose. The resilience of their spirits is amazing - and these pieces are humbling, for whatever is lacking in technique is more than counter-balanced by sincerity and honesty, which is often deeply moving.

The importance of non-judgmental friendship is stressed over and over as in Dale Spratt's "Friends and Dreams"

"Will I be a friend today/Will I not judge my fellow man come what may/ Will I extend my hand in good will/This is my dream I wish to fulfill." (p.3)

And Ian McIntyre in his poem "Ill" says, "Ill is a word not used enough/I reach out to those who seek better health/I believe good will stick like glue." (p.5)

Other imagery deserves mention as well. There's "The flowers run in the cool green grass" (p.18) in the poem "Spring" by Holly Spratt; there's "even on the bitter/ side of you you're as sweet/as cheap red wine" (p.24) from "Bitter Side" by Holly Larrivee Knife and "For I choose my deep blue keeping" (p.44) from "Blue Infatuation" by Ayami Greenwood. The sentence "I made the day tall" (p. 65) from Basil Ballantyne's poem "Making the Day Tall" perfectly expresses the goal each member strives to achieve.

Dot Settee's piece entitled "Dakota's Snowman" is about an experience with her four-year old granddaughter who did not want to leave behind their snow creation. As she says, "So I bent over and lifted/the snowman in my arms./ I carried it carefully all of the eight long blocks home." (p.36) This a perfect illustration of the importance of family which is also recognized by Mark Teskey, Donna Mae Johnson, and Lu Ritza in several of their pieces.

Every one of these writers deserves more than a moment of appreciation. The only improvement in this collection would have been a more thorough proof-reading as even minor errors can be distracting.



*A good crowd was on hand in May, 2013 when the Prince Albert Writing For Your Life group met at the John M. Cuelenaere Public Library in Prince Albert for the official release of their book *With Just One Reach of Hands**

# Notes on contributors



## ARTISTS

### BIRD, DONALD

Member of CMHA Saskatoon Branch.

### GEORGE, CECILE

Member of CMHA Estevan Branch.

### ISBISTER, ARNOLD

Saskatoon based and widely exhibited artist.  
Teaches visual arts to troubled youth/adults.

### PETERS, HENRY

Winnipeg artist and long-time contributor to TRANSITION.

### ROLLI

See Author notes.

### SKELTON, JAMES

Saskatoon artist and poet. Member of CMHA Saskatoon.

### STYRE, BARRY

Member of CMHA Weyburn Writing Group.  
Long-time contributor to TRANSITION.

### SWALLOW, JUDY

Artist and illustrator from Alameda, SK. Online at  
<<http://www.swallowsartnest.com/>>.

## AUTHORS

### BARCLAY, BYRNA

Former long-time editor of TRANSITION. See "A brief literary biography of Byrna Barclay." (Page 4)

### BIASOTTO, LINDA

Regina-based widely published prizewinning writer and frequent contributor to TRANSITION. Winner John V. Hicks Long Manuscript Award (Fiction 2013) for her first collection of short stories, *Sweet Life*, to be published by Coteau Books (2014).

### BOWER, ANNETTE

Regina writer of women's fiction or romance, whether labeled story or novel, but always influenced by the people she meets and the places she lives.

### CALLAGHAN, SHIRLEY

PEI writer of fictionalized non-fiction, currently collecting a series of family-oriented pieces for in-house (family) publication.

### DONAHUE, LILIAN

Longtime Prince Albert SK resident and walker. Recently retired from teaching, and returned to one of her most enduring loves: writing.

### FAHLMAN, JEAN F

Well-known writer, editor, columnist, public speaker, and member of Weyburn Writers Group. Paints, plays piano, sings in choirs, plays bridge, and grows trees and flowers in her spare time. Working on a proper delivery in curling.

### GROBOWSKY, IRENE

Prominent Moose Jaw bibliophile and regular reviewer for TRANSITION, now also regular contributor.

### HOWARD, NEIL

Lives in Toronto, ON.

### JUNG, DESIREE

Widely published Vancouver writer and translator with a background in film and literature, an M. F. A in Creative Writing, and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature.

### LEEDAHL, SHELLEY A.

Edmonton-based fulltime writer from Saskatchewan. Most recent books: *Listen Honey* (stories, DC Books), *Wretched Beast* (poetry, BuschekBooks), and *The House of the Easily Amused* (poetry, Oolichan Books).

### MONAHAN, LYNDA

Poet, current facilitator of Prince Albert WFYL Group, and editor of anthology of their writings, *With Just One Reach of Hands* (2013). Article on and review of the book in this issue.

### MOURRE, HELEN

Widely published Saskatchewan author steeped in prairie culture and landscape. Author of three collections of short fiction, most recently *To Everything A Season*. Graduate of the University of Saskatchewan.

### PARLEY, KAY

A long-time and regular contributor to TRANSITION: "I am 90. The chance of anyone being left alive to figure out who [the men in my article] were is very unlikely."

### P.A. WFYL GROUP

**Randy Cochrane, Dot Settee, Lu Ritza, Dale Spratt, and Ian MacIntyre** are members of a very active Prince Albert WFYL Group (facilitator Lynda Monahan) and regular contributors to TRANSITION.

### ROLLI

Poems, flash fictions, and whimsical drawings appear regularly in TRANSITION. Recent book of children's stories and drawings to be reviewed in future.

### SCHEMENAUER, CAROL ANN

Member of Sans Nom Poetry group in Paddockwood SK and recipient of a poetry and short story manuscript award from the Saskatchewan Writers Guild. Published stories in *The Best Short Stories on the Shelf Anthology* (2010). "Writing is therapy and helps you cope with life's challenges."

### ST. GEORGE, MARIE ELYSE

Prominent, well-published and visual artist and poet who explores the interaction between word and image. Cover artist for Byrna Barclay's *The Last Echo*. Author of *Once in a Blue Moon: An Artist's Life* (Coteau Books 2006), winner of a Saskatchewan Book Award for non-fiction. Currently working on a collection of short stories and poems.

### STAITE, ADAM

Founding member of Moose Jaw Movement, poet, and frequent contributor to TRANSITION. Writes under the alias of Raylincoma.

### STILLING, DENISE S.D

Saskatchewan born and raised mother, professional engineer, interdisciplinary writer, emerging self-publisher, and member Saskatchewan Writer's Guild. Welcome to TRANSITION.



# FRIENDS FOR LIFE

## PRESENTATIONS and WORKSHOPS

### Suicide

- ◆ **Speaking of Suicide** - an introduction to the topic of suicide awareness
- ◆ **safeTALK** - Suicide Alertness for Everyone  
A half-day (3.5 hour) workshop
- ◆ **ASIST** - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills - 2-day skills-building training to provide suicide first aid interventions
- ◆ **Empowering Teens** to prevent suicide
- ◆ **Tattered Teddies** - a workshop about suicide in children

### Mental Health

Balancing Work and Family  
Seniors and Mental Health  
Mental Illness (General Overview)  
Depression \* Depression and Physical Health  
Depression in the Workplace \* Work Life Conflict  
Schizophrenia \* Bi-polar \* Anxiety  
Borderline Personality Disorders  
Seasonal Affective Disorder \* Grief and Grieving  
Laughter in Healing \* Loneliness and Isolation  
Stress Can be Fun \* and many more . . .



RBC  
Children's Mental  
Health Project

## RESOURCE CENTRE *available on-line*

Hundreds of books, articles, videos, games and programs are available for loan from the Friends for Life Resource Centre. Topics range from Anger Management to Suicide Prevention

All materials can be borrowed directly through our web-site at  
**www.cmhask.com**  
(Click on the Library button)  
visit us in person or call

**1-800-461-5483**



Canadian Mental  
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RURAL COMMITTEES:  
Duck Lake • Nipawin • Shellbrook

The Saskatchewan Division of the Canadian Mental Health Association is excited to announce we will launch a new website coming in January 2014.



The current website address of [www.cmhask.com](http://www.cmhask.com) will automatically route online visitors to the new address [sk.cmha.ca](http://sk.cmha.ca) beginning Monday, January 20, 2014.

We look forward to your feedback and hope you enjoy the new site!