O UR 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.

TRANSITION Magazine is published twice a year by the Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc., 2702 12th Ave., Regina, SK S4T 1J2.

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Readers’ views are welcome and may be published in TRANSITION. Comments and views should be forwarded to the Division office c/o TRANSITION Magazine, at the above address, or: Call 306 525-5601 or toll-free 1-800-461-5483 (in SK) Fax 306 569-3788
E-mail: contactus@cmhask.com Website: www.cmhask.com
Printed in Canada ISSN 1913-5408

Cover art: Transport by Henry Peters

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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 Send original, unpublished articles, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual art that represent current mental health issues and reflect on their impact on individuals.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 $25.00 per printed page; $20.00 per published page.
7. Electronic submissions are preferred (with full contact information and a brief bio). Submit manuscripts in Word or WordPerfect format (10-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 2.5 cm margins) as e-mail attachment to: contactus@cmhask.com or directly to the Editor at libby@cmhask.net.
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   TRANSITION
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   Regina, SK S4T 1J2

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   MEGAN SHORTLAND

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    DOT SETTEE

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**The W F Y L conference on communicality**

BY TED DYCK

defn: communicability noun a community defined by a decisive common interest, e.g., writing for therapy
goal: to determine how to develop and maintain a communicability of writing groups in a CMHASK context
rationale: to meet the primary need identified by the six writing groups in the W F Y L Project 2011-2012

sponsor: CMHASK, SAB, SWG
participants: all members, facilitators, and venue directors/programmers of these groups
1st guests: all clients of all branches of CMHASK
2nd guests: all persons interested in writing for therapy
restrictions: registration and max. 30 in two workshops; max. 50 in panel; max 50 at reading / launch of Transition (Summer 2013)

New program will provide direct support to violent offenders

DAV I E N D I L O N S O N, RN, RSW

Executive Director’s report

This has indeed been an outstanding year both for our association and potential changes for the mental health system in general.

Our Association continues to be a major player in the ongoing development of the Saskatchewan Assurred Income Program for Disabilities (SAP).

We also participate as a founding member of the Provincial Interagency Network on Disability (PINd) which works with Government on a broad range of disability policies.

Our sponsorship and support of the Mental Health Coalition of Saskatchewan has brought together a dramatically growing number of stakeholders thanks to the efforts of Jeff James, Coalition Coordinator and Tanya Condor, our Systems Navigator Development staff.

There has been recognition and growth in our Problem Gambling Community program with an additional staff person funded to provide expertise in communication and media strategies.

Our new Community Justice Support program, headed by Kim Hoffman as Director, will very soon be up and running. It will provide direct support to persons with violent offender and mental health issues in Regina, Saskatoon and North Battleford.

This is a much needed program for those with these service support needs.

We are pleased the Minister of Health has announced a Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, in particular as it is multi-ministerial in nature and, with proper input from state- holders, should result in a better developed and client centered mental health and addictions system.

Overall, even though this has been an incredibly busy year for all, many new and important initiatives are coming to fruition. We thank all who have worked so hard to make it happen.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

**The Secret Life of Pronouns**

**THE LIVING LIFE**

Writing and healing: Research, a model, and practice

BY REINEKKE LENGELLE

“What is therapeutic writing? How can the act of writing be helpful to people?”

Gwyneth Lewis, Welsh poet

When Linus Pauling was doing his research on vitamin C, it’s rumoured he used himself as a guinea pig and took copious amounts of it himself, keeping notes on the results. This is how I too did my first anecdotal research on writing and from an early age it seemed, I knew whether I needed a dose of pre- ventative poetry, truth-detecting fiction, or an urgent letter in the face of anger or despair. At twenty-five, I rescued myself in the aftermath of a break-up by writing a book which I would have bought had I seen it on a bookstore shelf and since then I’ve used writing to work through a myriad of life challenges, including miscarriage and divorce. I have also seen my stu- dents ‘restore’ their lives in the face of things like unemployment, trauma, depression, and domestic violence – it seems unearthing the shame and offering ourselves a new story about ‘what is,’ provides the balm of acceptance and healing.

It’s noteworthy too that even non-writers grab their pens in times of crisis. My neighbour, who spends his spare time in the garage rebuilding jeep engines and watches sports on a flat screen TV big enough to light the front street – not the type we expect to be journaling in the wee hours – told me he wrote himself through his divorce. My friend Jim, a former bush pilot, started writing in the aftermath of horrific workplace murders. He needed to write because, “I have to get my life message out, in my writings. Maybe then, freedom will be mine, because every worker in our country, union leaders, my fam- ily, and myself, I will have completed my difficult life task.”

Writing works. We know because we remember what hap- pened when we finally dared to say the unsayable and the world didn’t collapse. We know this from having read our story aloud to a group of trusted writer colleagues who understood what we were trying to do. Sometimes it was a matter of finally ad- mitting to something that allowed us to burst open and grieve. Sometimes it was discovering that the story we were telling ourselves all those years, wasn’t even true. In other moments we just needed to write our story and we are and give ourselves permission to express that without apology or justification. Often writing allows us to be with whatever life is offering in the moment, whether that is loss, illness, or a nig- gling discomfort we can only just name.

In the field of writing and healing there are many hopeful stories of putting pen to paper, from some centuries ago, but in the last three decades research is backing up what many poets and artists have known for eons: writing is therapeutic. Perhaps...
Model of Transformation Through Writing

**Boundary Experience**
Situation, Event, Attitude causing stress or crisis

**Second Story**
Shift perspective
Acceptance
Mearing (restructured)

A story of how and possibility

**First Story**
Our speak or suffering story about the boundary experience (VEBR)

Dialogue with the inner critic
Engagement that arises

**Dialogue with others**
Healthy detachment from (and the ability to call) the drama

**Transformational Space**


**Sensing has been likened to 'making a map' and admitting to all the feelings and responses in perspective to a particular situation.**

One of the exercises that best suited to the sensing stage is a journal method called Proprioceptive Writing™ which asks that one listens for what needs to be written while also paying attention to the body’s physical response to the question. The proprioceptive question is, “What do I mean by . . .?” (e.g., “What do I mean by feeling hurt? What do I mean by never again?”) and is written out in full. The 20-24 minute writing session is accompanied by Baroque music which corresponds with the human heart rate and a candle to anchor the writer at the desk or table — as to remind us to be present to the process. The exercise ends with several concluding questions that allows for further explorations. Those questions, (e.g. “What was heard and not written,” “How do I feel now?”) also focus on both cognitive and affective aspects. Writing proprioceptively helps a person to tease out potential alternative perspectives while getting room to express “anything and everything.” It can help the writer access more subtle levels of feeling, helping a person to move past the human tendency to repeat our stories and stay mired in VEBR.

If we spend time sensing, we often move quite naturally towards writing, though we may also move back and forth between the four-stages before we arrive at our second stage with confidence. Sifting means we start to determine what is more and less important in the material that appeared during the sensing phase. Writing is the stage at which important fragments and insights start to emerge, but aren’t ordered or integrated.

Poetry or list-making exercises are good at this stage and metaphors and analogies might start to take shape as well. As we write, however, it’s important to be aware that we don’t (and frequently shouldn’t) work in isolation. A supportive word, feedback on aspects of our writing, and/or a conversation can provide new energy, hope, or insights, enriching the writing we do. A dialogue is actually a key part of what propels us through the stages of the transformational space. This is why the presence of a writing facilitator or writer is important in the writing and healing process. He or she can serve as both guide and witness and can remind us that it’s quite normal to feel like we’re making no progress. The conversations we have in the midst of our turmoil and growth can also be with friends, family, books, dead philosophers, and being with other writers as part of a peer group that shares work can be powerful.

In the second stage we begin to articulate actual viewpoint. This is also the stage where we often see that pieces of the puzzle of our lives we thought we’d be able to put back don’t “fit anymore.” More amazingly, what we thought we couldn’t afford to lose might now be relegated to called “who I thought I was and what I thought I believed.” There are hints of hope and closure.

An exercise that is particularly helpful to move us beyond stories or versions of ourselves that hurt or no longer fit is Byron Katie’s “Four-question inquiry process. We write down a thought that is particularly stressful and then ask, (1) Is it...
true? (2) Can I absolutely know it’s true? (3) How do I react to when I believe the thought? (4) Who would I be without the thought? We write out all of our answers and find out what is at the core of our belief would you be without your story? The 4 questions are followed by a turnaround, a veritable trying on of a perspective that might be as true or truer than any other. To use the example of unemployment from above, a person writing might start with “No one wants me (to do work for them),” go through the four questions with this statement, and then try on a turnaround like “Someone wants me (to do work for them).” Finding bits of evidence to support that statement.

One of the most poignant jibes I’ve heard about our human tendency to want to ‘be right’ at great cost to our freedom is the one where the gravestone reads, “I had the right of human tendency to want to ‘be right’ at great cost to our freedom.” In the same way, I often allow us to move into a phase of new understanding. It is the one where the gravestone reads, “I had the right of human tendency to want to ‘be right’ at great cost to our freedom.” In the same way, I often allow us to move into a phase of new understanding.

It turns out the thoughts that keep us stuck in a first story, are rarely as solid and convincing when we write them out and inquire. Our story starts to feel less suffocating and that space often allows us to move into a phase of new understanding. It doesn’t mean we’re going to be employed right away or that we can bring back the dead or be forgiven our trespasses, but we come to see that other perspectives are possible and hopeful. Surprisingly a perspective like “that loss should have happened, because it did” can feel empowering at this stage, and no longer be lined with the flavor of VEDO.

As our second story takes shape in a way that is felt and makes sense to us cognitively, we look back and notice that our story has changed. In a way I wondered what exactly could this elder really contribute to the meeting? I shut her to the meeting none the less. The meeting went well, but the longest occurrence during the meeting was an elderly lady coming in, aided by a walker, and sitting down at one of the tables. She appeared frail, as you would expect from a woman of advanced age, but otherwise in good health. In a naïve way I wondered exactly what could this elder really contribute to the meeting? I shut her to the meeting none the less.

The meeting went well as we had a good turn out and positive discussion. The idea was floated around that I should research the elderly lady's career to compile a historical brief about mental health services in Saskatchewan at the time. Community-centred funding – the 1960s. Ruth approached me after the meeting, eager to talk. She told me of her chronic illness in a close but strong voice. I found it odd that she was well enough to travel around the city, but still in need of personal care, but that was before I learned of her medical condition among other things. It was a beautiful day in early June before I finally got around to seeing Ruth again. Having just finished university, I didn’t expect to be doing anything like this! One social worker to another sitting down and talking history, the only separation were the generations between us. I was excited to hear about how things used to be since I’ve always had a tremendous respect and curiosity for history, especially hearing oral history from a primary source. I didn’t know what to expect from the first meeting. I imagined a cancer patient would grow weary rather quickly, but she didn’t. Ruth seemed to have added life and excitement from just being able to re-tell her experiences. I knew coming in that she had been a part of the first community mental health program in Saskatchewan out of Yorkton in the early 1960s, but little else.

Ruth was born in 1929, making her the same age as my grandfather, being in the early stages of Alzheimer’s Disease can’t remember who I am and yet a lady of the same age recalled minute details about her life and career from well over 60 years ago! Ruth was clearly a very strong, sharp lady whom I could learn a great deal from.

Ruth went to the University of Saskatchewan from 1947-1951 and received a BA in Medical Sciences. During the summer months she worked as a Psychiatric Aide at Saskatchewan Hospital in Weyburn. From 1951-1952 Ruth worked as a Lab Technician at Weyburn while also completing the first year of her psychiatric nursing diploma. From 1952 to 1954 Ruth worked as a Lab Technician at Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford. By the age of 25, Ruth had already moved around a great deal.

For those that don’t know, Sask. Hospital Weyburn was one of our province’s two long-term care facilities or institutions for mental health patients. The hospital operated in some form continually from 1921 to 1991. The Weyburn hospital was torn down in 2009 and the one hospital still remaining in North Battleford continues to serve itself as it is slated for replacement in the near future. The institution is one of the few remaining remnants of a mental health system that was what many would consider oppressive today. The facilities did serve their place in a time that should not be viewed in a negative way; Treatment, diagnosis and understanding have all improved a great deal over the last 100 years. At the time the facility held over 2000 people, currently it is equipped for no more than 300 people. The facility has gone through many changes and a great change dealt since Ruth Dafoe started her career in 1947.

Ruth worked at North Battleford for a few years and then with the newly developed Cancer Clinic until 1956 as the very first Isotope Technician in the province before she was driven toward an entirely different career path. While working at both hospitals, Ruth worked with the patients and their families. Often families ceased contact with their loved ones after admission to the hospital. When the Government began the de-institutionalization process in the 1950s, many patients and their families were left in complete shock. Social and community ties were largely non-existent for patients being discharged from the hospitals. Dafoe saw the role of the social worker at the hospital and she knew changes were required. She thus enrolled at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in September 1957 after a brief stint with the Department of Social Welfare. That was the start of her brave
new career as a social worker.

On an interesting historical note, Ruth spent her summers honing her skills as a social worker. When working at the Saskatchewan Hospital in Yorkton, she was in charge. She couldn’t believe the changes at the hospital every summer she went back to working at Saskatchew an Hospital Weyburn back when Dr. Humphrey Osmond was in charge. She believed the changes at the hospital every summer she went back to work. In the midst of the creation of the training facility in Moose Jaw, otherwise known as Valley View Centre, the Weyburn Hospital was changing rapidly. The Government was working to reduce the over 4000 people it had in care between the two provincial hospitals by admitting a great deal of patients back out into the community or into training programs for the intellectually disabled. From these changes, smaller in-patient units or psych wards sprung up in communities across the province. Most often, in-patient units were simply an additional ward at the local hospital.

Dafoe completed her Bachelor of Social Work in 1958 and by the early 60’s she had completed her Master of Social Work degree from UBC. The first community mental health program, established to meet the needs of the many patients being discharged into the community was established at Yorkton. Ruth was the first social worker hired in 1960 to work in tandem with a psychiatrist at Yorkton. In total, six social work- psychiatrist teams would be established by 1964 to provide service to the growing city and surrounding community.

Dafoe recalled having a caseload of over 2000 clients at one time, but she was able to meet the demand largely by working in and with the communities she was assigned to and by constantly moving around. Looking over 100,000 miles a year in travel around her area, she obseously kept busy. It was certainly a different time and different atmosphere where she had a person, almost always another discharged client themselves, in almost every community keeping her updated on other discharged patients. Ruth had a schedule that her clients knew and followed. She told me that she never ate lunch alone. A large part of her job also involved working with the general practitioners in their district, many of whom would ask her for advice before making a referral.

In the year 1964 to 1965 alone social workers and doctors combined for nearly 2000 home visits per team in a region with a population of 9400. The Yorkton Psychiatric Centre, in its first year of use, accommodated 492 people or roughly 41 people per month. Dafoe recalls her psychiatric ward having never been full during her tenure in Yorkton. Mental health services had already come a far way from the days of mass institutionalization a mere 10 years before. The issue that continues to linger to this day though is that the community-centred, open-ended, tailed model was never completed. With the change of government in 1964, a new philosophy for mental health care came with.

Ruth left Yorkton in 1964 and briefly returned to the Weyburn Hospital for a year doing research based work. The institution was in the midst of a massive overhaul in its form and much of the original beautiful and notable architecture was removed. One interesting note from the overhaul was the moving of the marble walls from the hospital to the Saskatchewan Legislature, clearly the focus of the government was not on services for the mentally ill.

Dafoe moved on to medical social work in March 1966, working as a consultant for Saskatchew an Health Commission for over 10 years. In this consulting role, Ruth was involved in a number of health innovations such as organ transplant programs, Home Care, prosthesis programs and many more. She again went back to school in 1976 to work on a degree in Health Care Planning and Epidemiology. The remainder of Ruth’s career was split between a number of different areas in the government such as Home Care consulting, Senators Bureau Research and consulting the government on seniors issues.

Looking back, it is amazing to consider the number of revolutionary changes in mental health care that came about during Ruth’s career. She first worked on a program to recruit social workers into hospital settings, putting the number of workers in the health field in Saskatchewan into the hundreds. Moreover, she worked with the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation, with early organ transplant programs, with early prosthesis programs, and setting up long-term care centres and programs. As her career wound down she worked toward seniors rights and resources in Regina. Since retiring for good she has been working for or volunteering for a number of different agencies such as the Council on Ageing and the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan.

Ruth Dafoe’s time spent working with the early community mental health program is the most intriguing to me because I believe it was an innovative, community-based system that worked well. They of course had better funding and were working in the midst of dynamic and drastic changes. Saskatchew an was the mecca for innovative healthcare in Ruth’s time, not only for physical ailments, but also for mental wellness. Over the past 10 years Saskatchew an has sat at or near the bottom of all Canadian provinces in spending on mental health services. Priorities have changed, but the fact remains that mental illness and addictions affect a high percentage of people in Canada every year. Our funding per capita as a country lags behind almost all developed countries. In a country where we take such civic pride in our healthcare system, it is discouraging to witness the current state of mental health care.

I believe much can be learned from the long social work career of Ruth Dafoe. She believed in the social aspect of social work. Ruth believed in working with the family. Even today, for the sake of client confidentiality, families are often left in the dark. If we are to commit to changing the state of mental health care in our country and province to a community-based system of care, we must work toward seniors rights and resources in Regina. Since retiring for good she has been working for or volunteering for a number of different agencies such as the Council on Ageing and the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan.

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**The night of the triangle**

**1971**

We were at home on our ranch in southeastern Saskatchewan. Orvin, my brother, was lying on the couch watching our black-and-white television after supper, his "70s-long red hair in disarray on the cushion, the lenses of his glasses reflecting flattened faces on the television. I was spying on him from the hallway. He would have been about 16, 12 years older than my four years. He never paid any attention to me, but that didn't dissuade me from hoping he might start. LaVonne, my 18-year-old sister, did pay attention to me. Loneliness filled my days as I waited for Orvin and LaVonne to come home from school. My dad drove the school bus, and they would arrive every day about 4:30 p.m. I would run up the gravel lane leading into our yard so I could catch a ride on the big yellow bus. When was I going to be able to go to school? Soon, I hoped... But, in the meantime, I was stealthily in the shadows at the end of the hall, and I prepared my attack. My toes made no sound as I crept down the hall toward my brother on the couch. Nobody was quieter than I, My legs pushed me into four quick steps, and I launched myself into the air, laughing with success when I landed on his chest.

**1975**

Orvin's 21st birthday party was an outside party, and there were people everywhere. I wondered why we were at my aunt and uncle's farm across the lake from our place—maybe because their yard was bigger. I was stuffed full of the roasted pig they had cooked in the ground, and now some sort of contest was starting. A man rode a bike, a rider of a big Harley-Davidson planted his foot on the ground, twisted the hand throttle of the bike until I could feel the thumping of the engine in my chest, and spun the rear tire, the bike carved a lazy circle as the rider hopped on his flexed leg to keep the bike off the rear-end rollers. Sometimes, little boys want to be a fireman or a policeman when they grow up. Not me, I wanted to be just like Orvin. Although I was blond, and not red-haired I hoped I'd be as big as him when he was older. He was cool; he rode a Harley-Davidson chopper he had built, he worked in the oil patch on the back bale by the first ring as you went by it, and then dropped your front bale in the second ring ahead of you. Then you could have backed up past the first bale, picked it up with the front-end loader, dropped it in its ring, and then backed out."

**1980**

Orvin watched me as I hauled two round bales into the heifers' pen with the tractor, one bale gripped with the front-end loader, and the other piggy-backing along on the two-pronged bale lift at the hind end of the tractor. Space was tight in the pen, but after much jockeying around to and fro, back and forth, this way and that way, I dumped the first, then the second, bale into its respective feeding ring. There was a triumphant feeling in my chest as I backed out of the pen. I was skilled in the trade of close-quarter tractor tactics; I had shown him I was someone worthy of his fraternity. Orvin signaled to me to shut, the gate, and walked toward me where I sat on the idling tractor.

"What was all that back and forth business?" he said.

"Didn't you see how tough it was to move around in the pen? My triumph sank to embarrassment. "It's too tight to turn around in there," I said.

"You should have dropped the back bale by the first ring as you went by it, and then dropped your front bale in the second ring ahead of you. Then you could have backed up past the first bale, picked it up with the front-end loader, dropped it in its ring, and then backed out."

He was right. His solution was simple and quick. I felt stupid. Maybe he noticed the look on my face, because he moved up the step of the tractor to get closer.

"Use your head and think: before you do anything, look at what you're getting into, think about what you want to get done, and then visualize how you're going to do it," he said.

I've never forgotten that advice, though I don't delude myself that I've always followed it. And I've also learned having a plan doesn't guarantee success. Some things you have to learn on your own.

**1990**

Moving to Vancouver in the fall of 1989 was a last minute decision, like many of the decisions I made at that age. No more prairie winters: no more snow, no more scraping windshield shields; and no more -40 degree temperatures. I ended up working in a warehouse at a job that, while monotonous, kept me dry and solvent.

My mother got a call from me every Sunday. Near the end of March, 1990, I made my regular Sunday call to home from my cramped, one-room apartment in East Vancouver. Soon after answering the phone, Mom told me Orvin wanted me to call him, and she thought he wanted my help during the spring calving season—Orvin had taken over my parents' ranch, and in 1989 he and his wife, Tami, had moved into the three-bedroom bungalow on the ranch when Mom and Dad moved to Okov. Mom and I said our goodbyes, and I punched Orvin and Tami's number into the keypad right away because I was eager to help him.

Orvin and I never talked on the phone, much, so I felt self-conscious when he answered. Should I wait for him to ask me to come home, or should I just volunteer? I shouldn't have worried. The conversation was short.

"Hi, Orv, it's Trev," I said.

"Can you come home?" he said, without even saying "How are you?" "I need help, here. I need someone I trust," I said. "Yeah, I can come home. I have to give my notice, and pack up my stuff, so I can't get there for at least a couple of weeks.

"Can you come right away? I can't talk about it over the phone, but I need you to come home as soon as you can," he said. "He'd never asked me for help, before.

"OK, I'll tell them it's an emergency, and I'll quit tomorrow. I need to pack, and it will take me a couple days to drive, so I should be at your place Wednesday night."

"Come as quick as you can," he said, and he hung up.

The phone call left me uneasy and disconcerted. What could be going on that he needed me there so quickly? What was this "trust" business? I felt humbled he had asked for my help, but now I was scared that something bad was happening. I started making my little apartment and making a to-do list of things to take care of before I left the west coast. There wasn't much to pack because I could fit everything I owned in my car. Looking back, my instincts were right. Something bad was happening....

My boss at the warehouse was a fair man, and I liked him. He deserved better from me than such short notice of my quitting. Perhaps he sensed my urgency, because when I told him my brother had asked for help and I was very sorry, but I couldn't give him a proper two-week notice and that I had to leave, today, he just nodded. He was unhappy to be short a worker, and my face burned red with shame when he told me he hoped everything would work out OK. Shaking his outstretched hand, I thanked him and left.

The packing had gone quickly on Monday, and Tuesday I drove as far as my brother Wayne's house in Calgary. Wayne was 20 years older than me, and we had never lived in the same house, Sharryn, Wayne's wife, had always been kind to me. Wayne and Sharryn would come home to the ranch for visits, and Sharryn used to make tea and toast for me when I was a child.

The report of the strange telephone call baffled Wayne. He hadn't heard anything strange or out of the ordinary, but he agreed Orvin wasn't acting normally. Wayne wanted to call him, but I asked him until I get down there and get some sense about what was happening, and he agreed. Wednesday dawned clear and bright as I drove the last 1000 kilometres to the tracts of prairie where I had grown up—on which sat a white house with a cottage roof, a barn and its barnyard, numerous outbuildings in various states of repair, all surrounded by a shelter-belt of tall poplar trees.

I was staying in the guestroom at Orvin and Tami's (the white house with the cottage roof is their house, now) Do you know the feeling when you're not quite asleep, and you're not quite awake, and suddenly you're free-falling, your body weightless? Then you remember you can't be free-falling, your body spasm to a halt, your senses come back to you in a heart-exploding instant? For a microsecond you still think you're falling but you're not, really, and the sensation of the jerking stop reminds you that you have mass. The adrenalin surges as the memory of the falling sensation fades, you m ourn the loss of weightlessness? That's how I felt as I came to my sens es on a night about a week after my arrival. And to startle my heart back into rhythm, there, at the foot of my bed, stood Orvin.

He was wearing his barnyard coat, and his red hair was covered with a toupee. His eyes weren't his, but they hadn't been his since I'd come home from Vancouver. They belonged to someone else, now. This New Orvin was different because...
he had all the power of logic and persuasion of the Old Orvin, yet, unlike the Orvin I had loved for all my 23 years, this one was unpredictable, paranoid, delusional, and saw portent in every detail. His cognitive filtering was broken, and his mind interpreted things in bizarre and novel ways.

“Mom and Dad are in danger, and I have to protect them,” Orvin said menacingly, checking his gun.

Oh, what now, I thought. His ideas had been getting more and more bizarre over the last few days. Either Tammy or Mom had made some inquiries, and there was nothing we could do unless we considered him a danger to himself, or a danger to someone else. Pushing that thought aside, I swelled my head to peer at the clock: 2:00 a.m. It was calving season, and the cows needed checking every couple of hours to see if any were in labour. Hopefully, there would be no calves to pull, tonight.

Dreading Orvin’s answer, but compelled to ask the question, I said, “Why are Mom and Dad in danger?” It was probably something to do with the Devil, a favourite theme of his. Religion had never been important in his life, yet now it was all Tammy and I had heard about when he wasn’t ranting about being watched by the CIA and the RCMP. He replied as if we were having a rational conversation.

“The Devil is coming for them. I have to go to the shop, first, and then I need your car.”

Was he asking, or telling, I wondered. This was a new development; he’d never asked to borrow my car before. My chest tightened and a ball of anxiety constricted my breathing.

Prior to the New Orvin, I would have enthusiastically let him take my car and felt proud that he was interested in something of mine. His approval used to mean everything to me. New Orvin was doing the asking, though, and I was scared he might push the car as it lit the interior of the shop. His truck was parked in front of the shop, and the big sliding door was open. You have to go to the doctor!”

As he waved the car key, I noted he was welding some lengths of metal. From the blinding light of the welding arc’s relentless blue-white light, though I was reluctant to talk to him—he likely had new enemies to watch out for and a list of new instructions, I thought. I resolved to come out and have another look at him in an hour. My watch showed the time to be about 2:20 a.m.

The New Orvin was doing the asking, though, and I was scared he might see an apparition of evil in the ditch and decide to attack the poor, unsuspecting deer using my car as his weapon of Truth and Light. I’d rode, and my automatic reaction was to let him take the car, even though I had misgivings. There wasn’t a need to worry, though, because he changed his mind.

“No, I better not take your car. It’s a Hot Rod, the Devil’s instrument.”

The Devil’s instrument, in this case, to his mind, was my Camaro Z28. A temptation to ask how he’d arrived at that deduction was quickly quelled in my mind. Adjusting to the New Orvin was taking some time, but I was learning. Asking him to justify his protestations was proving simpler than expected. His answers simply led to more questions. This was the first time, in my experience, he had come up with one of his ideas during the night. To me, he seemed to calm down a bit when Tami was home from work, and I was always relieved to see her Toyota pull into its parking spot in the evenings. Swinging my legs out of the bed, I reached for some pants as he hurried out of the house. He’d just flicked the blade out. “No! No! I’m not going to do it!” Then, I saw the thought form. He’d just flicked the blade out.

“Hey! You have to cut the Devil out!”

“No! No! I’m not going to do it!” Then, I saw the thought behind his eyes, and I knew exactly what he was going to do—next, he started throwing the blade towards his exposed back. “What? What? That’s what you want me to do.” I said. The blade stopped. “It’s the Devil. He wants you to hurt yourself.”

“Your right! You’re right! It’s the Devil!”

“No, Orvin, it was an accident.”

“Get the Devil out!” I said.

“Yes, Orvin, you have to cut the Devil out!”

“Get the Devil out!”

“Your right! You’re right! It’s the Devil!”

“Get the Devil out!”

“Your right! You’re right! It’s the Devil!”

“I’ll never forget the intensity in his blue eyes. He’d just flicked the blade out.

“Your right! You’re right!”

“Get the Devil out!”

“I can’t drive my truck—his truck was a standard—‘I’ll take your car.”

“The keys are in it,” I said. And then he was gone. I watched the rear end of my car fishtail down the lane, then I ran into the house to call Tami at work: Orvin had crossed the line—he had been about to harm himself.

Orvin spent three days in the psychiatric ward at Weyburn. He slept almost the whole time he was there, and when he awoke the Old Orvin, my Orvin, was back. Weeks later he told me he had been trapped inside himself, watching a stranger do strange things, unable to act.

Early in the morning of October 24, 1990, six months after these events, Orvin took his own life.

Stream by Henry Peters

Hoping to talk him out of it, I tried another tactic. “It’s only a couple hours ‘til dawn. Why don’t you take them the triangle in the morning, when they’re up? Besides, we have a little black heifer that looks like she’s going to calve.”

“I’ve got to go now. I have to get there before dawn, that’s the whole point.”

With that, he flicked the welder’s switch to Off, picked up his newly-made religious totem, threw it in the back of his GMC pick-up truck, and spun his rear wheels as he sped down the gravel road to my parents’ house in Oxbow, 45 kilometres away. Suspecting Tami was already on the phone to Mom, I walked to the house. I sure hoped that little black heifer wasn’t going to have any problems giving birth to her calf.

It was about noon. The wind’s near-constant wail filled my ears and I pushed my head back to get it at face level. He’s a fallen angel, right? The triangle was quite big. It was about three feet to a side.
When the door to the kitchen opened, I saw her with her eyes all red and puffy. She didn’t hug me, but took her suitcase and went straight to her bedroom, crying all the time.

Sissy was far away at school for a while until she had to come home. She went to a hospital by the water and stayed for a very long time. I missed her and wanted her to stay home with me and talk to me about school. You see, I have lots of friends in my class, but teacher says I might not pass Grade Three if my arithmetic and reading don’t get better. That makes me scared.

When Sissy came to our house from the hospital, she slept all the time in her bedroom except at night when she wandered around and flushed the toilet keeping us all awake. Mommy said not to bother her because it was too bad for her and she couldn’t go to the bathroom. When I asked her how she was, she would cry. I wanted to help her get better, but I didn’t know how.

I couldn’t play my drums which were in the basement below Sissy’s bedroom. I thought I made her mad. I loved to play my drums and I played them a lot. I wanted to be in a band some day.

Mommy used to give Sissy grapes and cheese for treats, and then she would go to the phone and tell all her friends what was happening to my sister. Sissy would just put the pillow over her head so she couldn’t hear her. Poor Sissy had nowhere else to go.

One day in the basement Sissy tried to hit Daddy with a stick, and he almost hit her back. I was in the corridor and I was scared of a fight, but he cried and said, “I should have let you stick, and he almost hit her back. I was in the corner and I was scared. I heard her tell Daddy she couldn’t remember what happened.

I met Harry at her school and he was black. I never met a black man before and I didn’t like it when he ran his hand over my crew-cut. Why didn’t Sissy marry Charlie from Grade Twelve? He was good at arithmetic and taught me my tables.

I wanted to go and visit Sissy in her room, but I was scared. She said she would cry. Maybe I could try too and I wouldn’t want to do that. She told me once that tears were water from the gods and made you feel better, but I didn’t believe that story.

I waited a long time to talk to Sissy. She never wanted to have breakfast with the family so Mommy would pour porridge to her bedroom, and I would peek in the door. Sissy was thin, her face was white and she had black circles under her eyes. Her bedclothes were all wrinkled and there were books everywhere. I heard her tell Daddy she couldn’t remember what she’d read. I’m like that at school and doing my homework. I’m always doing something else or thinking things.

Every week she would take a bath and curl her hair before going to the clinic to see the doctor. Mom said on the phone to Myrtle her neighbor she wished he would come more often because she didn’t know what to do with Sissy. I wished somebody knew how to help my sister. She was so sad and she was cross too. One time she yelled at me for making a noise. She never used to do that. She was always nice to me.

One day I rode my bike to school, and just as I got off it Jeremy from Grade Six pushed me and told me I had a crazy sister. He hit him and made his nose bleed. I thought he would punch me out.

Teacher phoned Daddy and told him what happened and what Jeremy had said to me. My father told me not to bother with him, that Sissy was just taking a little rest from school, but I knew she was not feeling good. She was not my happy, funny Sissy.

At last Sissy left her room and began to dust and cook and help Mommy. I was real happy when she tickled me and hugged me and told me she loved me a lot. I sure loved her too and I gave her the ring I found in my popcorn box, and made her a window stop with her initials SMR carved on it.

A long time later she decided to go away to school again. I hated to see her go. Who would help me with my homework now? I told her I’d get Daddy to take me to see her at school soon, but Daddy couldn’t go often and I was into hockey and getting help with my reading. The tutor told me I was plenty smart, just was “wired” different from other kids. I sure was happy to hear I wasn’t stupid. When Sissy came home at Christmas I played my drums for her and she said I’d be famous some day. She made me feel proud.

I hope Sissy never gets sick again, and she can even marry Harry if she wants.

I hope to see her this summer when she takes me swimming. She’s pretty good looking, you know, and she swims like a fish.

Sissy
I want to spring onto a horse without being told which side to get on and wind my way through a trail ride. No one will ever know I’m terrified.

I want to turn on the radio and hear “King of the Road” and “These Boots Were Made for Walking.”

I want to go golfing with my father and wash the grass-stained golf balls in the soapy ball-washer that goes squish-squash. I’ll rake the sand greens when he’s done putting.

By Lu Rita

1983 Mom had started to get sick. We had taken her to the hospital. She had a cancerous lump in her breast. She was admitted to the hospital and a surgeon told him she would only take the lump itself. He ended up having to remove her entire breast. When Mom found out she cried. Her doctor gave her a sedative to calm her down. They kept her in hospital for two more weeks then let her home.

When I started caring for Mom, cooking, cleaning, shopping for The Mall, bill paying, bankers and looking after two dogs and a cat.

Now we had to make several trips to Saskatoon Cancer Clinic at the Royal University Hospital. Mom didn’t want to take chemotherapy. Because she was scared of losing her hair and throwing up all the time during treatments. The doctor had to think of something else to help her. He gave her a new medication.

After taking this medication for two years Mom went into remission. Mom still needed caring for. I made sure she got to her appointments. I remember the first time I took Mom to the cancer clinic. I was amazed. Children of all ages with their limbs amputated, many children taking chemo. One set of parents with a baby in their arms. It was always a very long trip home from Saskatoon.

Since Mom was in remission we thought maybe it would be okay to go back to Edmonton for a bit. While we were there Mom started getting sick again but this time it was her lungs. The doctor said it was just a chest cold. He gave her some medicine and sent her home. Mom didn’t get better. This time the doctor said she had bronchitis.

I called the Palliative Care Team in Prince Albert. Albert Mom was still bothered with her lungs. I took Mom back to her regular doctor. He sent her for ex-rays. He told us Mom needed her lungs drained. The doctor said it was a half bottle full! He said she would be in hospital for a few weeks. The results of the tests came back and we were told Mom had lung cancer. I tried to hold back the tears but I ended up crying in the hallway. Once I had gotten myself together I went back in the room and sat with Mom.

After four weeks we took Mom back to the cancer clinic. I thought to myself, this is it, I really have to watch her closely now. We had palliative nurses coming in with supplies for me to use for Mom. They brought Mom in a hospital bed. I noticed Mom’s left leg was swollen. Her leg got so huge it broke open and leaked a lot of fluid. Every ten minutes I had to try to change her bandages. I was going day and night. I didn’t get much sleep. After a while Mom was in a wheelchair. I bathed her and carried her to the toilet. I lifted her in and out of the car and took her to her appointments. My brother wanted to help but my Mom would only have me.

I was often too tired to even make my own supper. One time when I took Mom to hospital she couldn’t breathe and my chest was congested. I knew I needed help with Mom but the doctors still wanted me to take care of her. We had no animals any more but it was still so hard. I pleaded with Mom to let me help her but she still refused. One morning I checked on Mom and was shocked to see her pillow and nightgown were soaked in blood. I called the doctor and he said to get Mom to the hospital emergency and he would phone and tell them we were on our way. They gave Mom a blood transfusion. After they were done with Mom she got to go home. I stayed awake all night watching to make sure she didn’t start bleeding again.

Things started to get very complicated. Mom was getting harder to feed. She couldn’t keep anything down. She started getting severe pains in her right arm. More ex-rays, more treatments. The doctor told me Mom was dying. I said I knew. Things got worse. Mom couldn’t eat at all, her head started to slide off the pillow. I phoned the palliative nurse and she came right over. She called an ambulance. It took the four of us to lift Mom off the couch to put her on the stretcher. We got Mom into her room when suddenly she sat up and said to me “Where did you get that up to date picture of your Dad?” He had been dead since 1979. Then she asked “How did you get all those people here from Ontario so quickly?” All those people were dead many years back. The nurses gave her a morphine, a patch for pain.

I didn’t sleep. At five thirty the doctor phoned and told me Mom wasn’t doing well and he asked if she stopped breathing what did I want them to do? He said it was the humane way to just let her go. So I said just let her go. I phoned my brother and told him I was coming to pick him up. I called Mom’s sister to meet me at the hospital. I wouldn’t leave the hospital now because I had promised Mom she wouldn’t die alone. They gave me a cot but I couldn’t sleep.

For three days and nights I just sat there on the cot watching Mom breathe. I was looking at Mom when she took a deep breath and let it out. I went to get one of the nurses. They checked Mom’s pulse and heart rate and told me she was gone. I stood there for some time just watching. Some of the nurses came and gave me a hug. I called Mom’s sister and told them Mom had died. All I wanted to do was go home and spend a little time with my brother. I went to go and I started to fall to the floor. They laid me down on a couch and in a matter of seconds I fell asleep. My mind and body were totally exhausted. Mom passed away September 1999.

Caring for Mom

I remember the first time I took Mom to the cancer clinic. I was amazed. Children of all ages with their limbs amputated, many children taking chemo. One set of parents with a baby in their arms. It was always a very long trip home from Saskatoon.
I remember when my two girls were young. We had a huge aquarium and it came time to clean it. While I was scrubbing it, I accidentally put a huge crack in the aquarium. I went to the Co-op to buy some rubberized caulk and compound to fix the crack. Once the glue was dry I poured water in and waited until it reached warm room temperature. It was all ready so I put the fish back in the tank. We had a lot of fish.

When my girls came home from school they checked the fish. Oh no! All the fish were belly up! I had used the wrong kind of glue and I had poisoned all the fish.

We had a funeral for them all at the back of the house and we had a feast following the funeral of Oreos cookies and milk. It was a sad day for the fish and for us, too.

The girl behind the smile

BY MEGAN SHORTLAND

Writing was never a passion of mine. I was never the young woman who had a pen and paper attached to her hip, ready to write down inspirational words. I was never the person who was gifted in English and Grammar. Words and phrases never popped into my mind like the images that I could create with a pencil in my hand. So when I did start to write, it was a wonder.

I do not know the exact time I first wrote in my little red-and-black book or even where I got it from. But I must have been somewhere around the age of 14, because that’s when my childhood came crashing to a halt. That’s when the effects of my brother’s negativity on my family pushed me to my breaking point. My parents and I were frustrated with everything and everyone for trying to intrude in our family. My brother was deep into drugs and alcohol and the whole town knew about our family’s problems. I had no one to turn to, so I wrote.

At the time, I dismissed my poems as meaningless outcries of a pissed-off adolescent. But one day this painting will fade and no one will see it anymore. To see a knife and want to hurt myself. To this day, no one except me has read my book in its entirety. I re-read it once in a while and realize that, if I had not had the strength to show it to my parents and if they hadn’t found a way to shelter me, I might not be here today. My writing has been a way for me to heal and climb out of my pit of despair. Writing is a very personal and emotional escape from the highs and lows of the everyday world for me. I admit that I am not the best writer in the world. I do not know how to classify my poems. And I know that they are not the greatest works of art. But I still cherish them. When I hear people say that they did not tell my loved ones or anyone else of my depression and self-destructive thoughts until eventually I wrote out all my problems in my book and came out of my depression, when I was a much stronger individual.

When my parents read my poems, they began to understand how I was feeling about our family that was falling apart. They tried to help me through the tough times by shielding me from their arguments with my brother. I was deeply into drugs and alcohol and the whole town knew about our family’s problems. I had no one to turn to, so I wrote.

My poems were the key to my heart, which I hid from everyone. I was angry with my brother and wished I could say the things I had put down in my notebook, but I didn’t have the strength at the time. My writing got progressively darker and I contemplated killing myself.

He almost did the thing I wished for myself. For the pain and suffering to boil up like a kettle. To think of what I want. How I could think that way. Seeing a stab full of water and think, what would it be like? Would anyone cry for me like I’ve cried for myself? Would they come to me like they are to him? Would anyone care? The battle going inside me. The hatred. The hatred.

I cry to think of what I want. How I could think that way. To see a knife and want to hurt myself. To this day, no one except me has read my book in its entirety. I re-read it once in a while and realize that, if I had not had the strength to show it to my parents and if they hadn’t found a way to shelter me, I might not be here today.

As a closet writer myself, I take this theme very seriously, especially when I hear about kids committing suicide because they don’t get the help they need. Words can have so much power and influence over us all; we tend to forget this in everyday life. So if I can help one individual step out of the shadows and show their words to one or a thousand people, I’ve accomplished my goal.
Friday had gotten married and had a baby girl.

“That’s perfect!” I said.

“It’s not perfect yet,” you replied. “The baby isn’t doing very well. We don’t know if she’s going to make it.”

“Yes, I know. I didn’t think you couldn’t do this without help.”

“I’m fine,” she said, even though I had no idea why she wasn’t doing very well. I insisted on buying you a beer to celebrate. You didn’t want a woman to buy you a beer, but I did.

“Do you have a pair of booties or a little rattle in my purse to give you instead. Obviously, knowing what I know now, I wish I hadn’t bought you a drink.

“We didn’t know anything, though, did we? We clinked our glasses together and toasted the arrival of your daughter. You didn’t have a picture in your wallet, but you told me what she looked like and that you could hold her in your two palms. It didn’t occur to me, as the woman I was then, that even in your big hands the baby would have been very tiny.

The man I had been craving came looking for me. He seemed jealous that I’d been talking to you and I probably thought that was a good sign of interest from him. Like I said, I’d never been interested in anything.

When I saw you again this summer, there was no wife, no daughter. Considering the shape you were in, the shape I’d heard you’d been in for years, it was easy to assume they’d left you to live alone with your addiction. After hearing Paulo’s theory, I knew that things were much, much different than I’d assumed.

She didn’t make it, did she?

Afters

Paulo didn’t have to tell me his story. I told him he didn’t have to put himself through it, but he wanted you to have the benefit of his experience.

Of course, I wasn’t sure I wanted to hear it. I am the mother of two healthy and wonderful children. I worry about them constantly as it is, I didn’t need “to go borrowing trouble” as my mother would say. I have a parent’s healthy terror of tragedies involving children.

Still, it was Paulo’s story to share. I also felt guilty that he always seemed to know me so much better than I knew him. If a sad story could even exist, I would listen.

“You have ever noticed that I am half Amazonian Indian?” Paulo began. I laughed. A little coffee came out my nose. The waitress brought me an extra napkin.

“No,” he said. “I wouldn’t have expected you to notice. Only very old-fashioned Europeans from my homeland can see my indigenous features.”

Like all races, Paulo’s began a generation earlier than you’d think.

Paulo never met his father. He didn’t even see a picture until after his mother’s death when she left him one, sealed in an envelope with her lawyer.

These were the ways of old-fashioned Europeans, he sighed. The waitress set Paulo’s cake on the table.

“The extra scoop of ice cream is from me,” she whispered. Eavesdroppers are at their most generous when they are shameless.

Paulo was raised on a huge cattle ranch by his mother and grandparents. The cattle hands treated him like one of their own sons, so he never wanted for a father’s attention. He learned to speak Guarani with a Purepecha quiet when his mother slipped out of their shared room late at night.

You’d think she would have been able to arrange a meet- ing between her son and Paulo. I have no idea how Paulo paused to eat another bite of cake with extra ice cream.

“He may have had a wife and more children than he could count already,” Paulo shrugged. “These things are common in my country.”

“I’ve read about that,” I assured him. “Common” turned out to be the word that caused Paulo so many problems when he met his wife. Her name is Louise. I haven’t told you her name before because hers is a name you may might recognise from TV or the radio or I do to protect her privacy. Louise’s parents were two of the kind of old-fashioned Europeans who noticed Paulo’s indigenous features immediately. They rejected him and made him irresistible to that calculator.

“We were students of literature,” Paulo explained. “Of course we had read Romeo and Juliet. We knew exactly what love demanded of young lovers.”

Louise answered her window? I asked. “Did you steal her away in the night?”

“Of course,” Paulo told the waitress and me.

The waitress brought Paulo another cup of espresso. She
patted his shoulder to let him know that it, too, was from her.

A young Franciscan priest conducted the wedding ceremony at 5 o’clock in the morning. The bride carried flowers that had grown along the vine outside her bedroom windows. Of course Paulo should have been happy when Louisa became pregnant the first night they spent together. It did not feel like luck, Paulo sighed. “I had never thought of having a father. I never thought of becoming one.”

Louisa was already his wife. He had stolen her away in a white nightgown and surrendered before a priest who put the crime of stealing her right again. There would be no going back.

“Literature students,” Paulo repeated. “We knew nothing.”

Louisa was desperately tired with the pregnancy and, perhaps, with homesickness and the shock of married life. Paulo took her back to his grandparent’s ranch and into his boyhood room. His mother had long since moved into another set of rooms in the ranch house.

As his new bride slept, Paulo sneaked out of the room, just as he’d watched his mother do as a child.

“My misbehaviour is not what you think,” Paulo explained. The waitress had looked away from our table when Paulo confessed to sneaking out of the bedroom. “I went to the campfire where the ranch hands spent their evenings telling stories and singing. I went to be among the men I had grown up with. I wasn’t ready to give up my freedom, but I had an instinct that is exactly what fatherhood would mean.”

The waitress stood at her station polishing butter knives. She threw them into the cutlery tray so they would clank and rattle disponível.

As Louisa’s energy recovered, the more time she spent with her new mother-in-law. They often went into town to walk and shop, the younger woman taking the older by the arm. They did not wander into shops and exclaim over little dresses and tiny shoes. There were still superstitions, in those days, they did not wander into shops and exclaim over little dresses.

“ avait been his mother and his pale, bleeding wife. He could not look at his baby daughter.

“It was guilt, you see?” he tried to tell us. “I needed to let it punish me until I deserved to look at my baby.”

Paulo reached out to comfort his wife, but could not extend his arm past the bundle in her lap. He looked at his baby daughter.

“I was saying true, that he had never felt such love in all his life that was due to arrive in two month’s time. “It was guilt, you see?” he tried to tell us. “I needed to let it punish me until I deserved to look at my baby.”

Paulo sat by the incubator and did what he was told. By the fiftieth time, he knew what he was doing.

“Lo, said bitterly. “This is where all the arms-armed parents come to watch their ghost children at play.”

“They were the saddest words we had ever shared,” Paulo told us. “Saddest because they were cynical. I grabbed the chains of their side of the bed and sat down on it myself. ‘How I loved my daughter,’ I moaned to my wife.”

Perhaps because she had uttered the saddest words possible, Louisa’s grief crested and broke.

“Oh, how I still love my daughter,” she said. She took the chains holding the swing in her hands, pulled back and pushed, sending Paulo sailing through the air.”

He laughed out loud in surprise.

“OK, Papa,” Louisa said. “If we can’t play with her, we will play for her.”

And that was how Louisa and Paulo took to living extra...
Dear concerned,

You are incredible. I want to thank you for truly caring about me. I know that you genuinely want what is best for me, but despite your wise words, I have decided to drop pre-calc class. You've told me many times to challenge myself, and I thought that I only wanted to quit math because it was hard for me, and I was lazy. I'm not lazy. It took me a while to figure out, but now I know and it has led me to this decision. The truth is that depression is crippling me. It hides in every nook and cranny of my home, behind every door and beneath every surface. Last semester was hell for me, and I thought that once it was over the darkness would leave with it. It didn't. I don't know if you have ever experienced depression, but if you have, you'll know it's a bitch and it never truly goes away. It doesn't heal like a wound or fade like a cold. I do not mean to mock your authority when I'm late for school; it's just that there are some days when getting out of bed doesn't really seem worth it. I've realized that I am challenging myself. In fact, I've never worked harder in my life. Simple tasks feel like marathons, and even when I do well, I'm so exhausted by the effort that I can't even enjoy my successes. Getting out of bed is a challenge, choosing an outfit is a challenge, opening my math book is a challenge. It has been a tough six months with ups and downs I can't explain. For a long time, I thought I was just weak. I was crumbling under the pressure that everyone else seemed to be able to handle. Often I still feel weak, and like I've let everyone down including you. I've been working really hard to convince myself and others that I'm okay, but I'm not. I don't want everyone to walk on eggshells around me, thinking they'll set me off or something, but I do need people to support me even if they think I'm making the wrong decisions. I'm sorry I didn't let you and others know about this earlier, but I made the mistake of thinking I could fight it on my own. I just need to empty my plate of some activities, because between five classes, two one acts, choir, SLG, work and a social life, I've had little time to deal with my heart. I've tried to continue on like everyone else, but I'm not everyone else, and I have to do what's right for me. Thank you for understanding.

-Chantel

BY CHANTAL MORIN

WRITING THE LIFE - FICTION

for Christianna.

“Notice how the whole world helps me to do it?” Paulo asked. “There is always extra ice cream on my cake. There is always a little bit more to squeeze out of each situation for her to experience through me. Our children do it too. They have always known to take one more turn around the carousel, one more trip down the slide for their sister.”

The waitress poured herself a cup of coffee, added a spoonful of sugar, paused for a moment and stirred in a second spoonful. She lifted the cup to her lips and smiled.

“Tell your friend,” Paulo told me. “Tell him about the happy old man you know. Tell him I said that alcoholism might be a serious disease, but self-pity is just a habit that can be broken.”

CIRCLE OF ANGELS by Judy Swallow

BY CHANTAL MORIN

"Notice how the whole world helps me to do it?" Paulo asked. "There is always extra ice cream on my cake. There is always a little bit more to squeeze out of each situation for her to experience through me. Our children do it too. They have always known to take one more turn around the carousel, one more trip down the slide for their sister."

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The Dead Kid

I'm pretty famous since I killed myself.

I asked the man for a rifle and he handed me this huge thing, looking like a farmer. I actually laughed. I was severely depressed. Eventually he brought me what I'd pictured, a pistol. I agreed with him, but he said no, the price is not negotiable. I handed over the $200. "Oh, there's a waiting period," he said. I became enraged. It was a two hour period. That's too long when you're suffering.

There was an Ismail's Coffee across the street. I drank probably five or six coffees as I stared out the window. One guy in there was wearing a winter coat with no shirt under - or above. He'd take a drink of coffee, then jot something down in his white notebook, sweating and sweating in his winter coat.

I got a headache pretty soon. I hate waiting. I thought I shouldn't have bought a rope. No, I could never suffer like that. When you've suffered a long time you can't stand anything. Even a hangnail makes you crazy. The headache was making me crazy.

At 11:00, I went back and got my gun. I was so jittery, the man stared at me. "Everything okay, chief?"

I just shoved some bullets into the one hole.

At 11:00, I went straight to my apartment. I hate my place, my old place. It was just one room, just barely big enough for my emotions. I suffered so much there. Fuck it, don't think about it.

I went to the closet and got ammo. In the department store, ammo is as close to the stufed bears as it can get.

I didn't actually know how to load the pistol, I'd thought it would be self-explanatory. I got frustrated and cried. It was embarrassing. There was a knock on the door.

Again. A man said, "Police."

I was figuring out the bullets. A little paper came with them. "Police." Knock, knock, knock.

I just shoved some bullets into the one hole.

"Are you alright in there, Mr.------?"

I fired a test shot out the window. The glass vanished in silence, in the eruption. A vanishing ray.

So I'd only published one book. Writing is hard but selling is so good. I really put the sweat of my life into it. If you wring it, it's a brilliant gift but no one was saying that it was my dying. Everyone is dead and crazy. I may not even be good, though I think I'm good, or am I? I needed to know that, and now I can never know.

I'm famous. I'm dead. The Dead Kid. It's what they call me. I may be a part of history. I'll just have to wait and see.

The news and the book selling kept. One place reviewed it, another place, another. Place it won all the prizes. It sold and sold, and still sells, I'm guessing. My old agent does my estate.

But it wasn't me, it wasn't my writing. They say it's this brilliant work but no one was saying that it was my dying. Everyone is dead and crazy. I may not even be good, though I think I'm good, or am I? I needed to know that, and now I can never know.

I'm famous. I'm dead. The Dead Kid. It's what they call me.
I was dizzy and there was blood coming out of my head. A man said, “Don’t move.” A woman said, “Don’t try to move. The ambulance will get here any second. We found your glasses.”

“Where were they?” I asked. They were on top of the train,” she said. I threw up.

I was going to jump off the bridge when a man slipped something into my pocket. He didn’t even stop or talk to me. I looked at him walking away. He was carrying a suitcase. I got your glasses.

The man at the desk told me to have a seat. The couple sitting across from me were well-dressed and looked at me like I was riffraff. Even though I have a degree.

When she called my name – this was the woman at the desk – I followed her into a room and sat down at a desk. A man was sitting behind the desk. The woman left us. I was wondering if this was the man with the suitcase. But no, he was too old and fat.

We talked for a long time. He was a nice guy. I made it plain to him that I had no money. He said that was alright. “It’s not about the money.” For some reason I believed him.

I chose the “C” package, which was the second cheapest. The “D” package doesn’t guarantee immortality. The “A” and “B” packages give you better odds. It’s too bad they cost so much.

I didn’t want to sign anything, but Mr. Tubman – that was the man – required a contract. He wanted to see me on the 15th. I left my name with his secretary.

Mr. Tubman was watching television this time. He had a small TV. “Just a minute,” he said. He smiled. “Watch this,” he said. I looked at the screen.

A reporter was talking about how a man cooked his wife in a slow-cooker. He ate his wife and then climbed into a cement mixer. He was clinging to life.

“That was one of our ‘C’ packages,” said Mr. Tubman, proudly.

By my fourth visit, we had everything planned out. By then I’d upgraded to a ‘B’ package, even though I had to sell my lawn mower.

Our main problem was the skeleton. Mr. Tubman had contacts in several zoos. He knew a good plastic surgeon. “But it will take time,” he said. “We’ll call you.”

Ultimately when it came time to do it, I couldn’t do it. The actor had sad eyes that made it harder. I gave him metacarpals and a glass of water. That was as far as I could get.

I am currently serving 12 years in the Florida State Penitentiary. Though I hope to get out in ten. I have a phone appointment with Mr. Tubman. We’re still working on something. A “D” package isn’t much, I know, but it’s something.

There’s still hope for me.

Live forever by Rolli

I know what will happen because I’ve thought about it a lot. The night will be twinkling and calm and my breath will dance in foggy clouds. I’ll wonder if it is possible to blow misty rings with my breath into the chilly air, but then dismiss the idea as quickly as my breath disappears. I picked Little Red because that’s where we used to go on weekends with the dog. Remember, Mom? That time Dad went golfing and you took me there? You let me play in the sand and didn’t say anything about how dirty I was getting. There was a big hole. How did I get there? It was about ten feet wide and six feet deep, but to my tiny frame it seemed enormous, and it felt like we spent hours, you laughing and taking pictures, me climbing in and out like an explorer, Bruce, just a puppy then, nipping at my heels. Keep a picture of that in your memory. That was a good time before life became hollow. That’s what I’ll be thinking of as I struggle into a snow bank under the stars and swallow the pills like Pez. I looked it up. I’ll slip into a coma. That sounds ok. No pain. Just a transition into something else. Something better than this. Maybe there I’ll feel like more than a shadow. Don’t be mad. You’ve always said you want what is best for me. This is best. It’s time to go.

I love you,

Jan
When I was 22, I lived in Vancouver, on Twelfth Avenue and Hemlock St., one block away from South Granville, a trendy, upscale shopping area. It was just down the hill from Old Shaughnessy, the most prestigious and beautiful area in Vancouver.

I lived with my baby Matt and our baby Dustin in a 1920s era high ceilinged, hardwood floored apartment with a brick wood burning fireplace, which cost us $250 a month. We had no large overhead, no debt, and my husband was earning a healthy salary.

Dustin and I made the rounds of the nearby parks, baby exercise classes, and went for excursions up and down Granville St. We lounged at local trendy eateries, and when he fell asleep in his stroller, I would walk the street leisurely exploring the boutiques, promoting my nose up against the windows of the stores to see what caught my fancy.

The Chinese grocers had their display of flowers outside the shops every day, in long rounded tin containers. I would buy a small arrangement of freesia, which had been my wedding flowers, to take home with the perfume of the delicate blossoms would pervade the air for days.

One spring day when the cherry blossoms were out and the robins chirped early, I walked past Ragnar jewelers. In the window, among theello, three of the pairs of diamond earrings, I saw an array of sizes. The sun shone through the window on the earrings. I found myself having a hard time sleeping, my thoughts raced from one thing to another. The next day and put the balance on my Visa.

I decided to exercise classes with Dustin up the hill in Shaughnessy, with all the ladies that really had it, the money, the homes, and the prestige. But despite my age, my position in life, my husband’s career choice and my appearance, I fit in. I wore classic clothes that suited my features, and the diamond earrings were a touch of elegance. When I told my friends, they thought it was a hoot that I had bought myself diamond earrings.

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Three years later, we were living on Vancouver Island in the town of Parksville, in a renovated heritage home with the smell of the ocean and the scent of the roses, the sand between our toes. I was sitting on the hospital bed, amidst the smell of antiseptic floor cleaner after I had been admitted, Matt still worked away from home.

I had my diamond earrings, but there were more pressing things to think of, such as mortgage payments, and taking care of a two small children. I filled my time with trips to the beach, the tides, the waves, the sun. I blew a kiss to the ocean and let the waves wash over me.

I attended Young Mums Bible Studies on Tuesday morning, church on Sunday and tea five days a week with my best friend Janet. I was fragile. I was young and alone much of the time, and my illness had been under control and now I was locked up with every other mentally unstable person in the Nanaimo/Parksville area.

Every morning I put myself together with the makeup and hair routine with a good splash of Chanel No. 5. I went down the hall with its scent of rose petals, orange blossoms and vanilla. I wore my diamond earrings and spoke to the other patients as if I were somebody. But in the middle of a conversation, or group activity I would burst into tears and hurry back to my loby box. With my purchase came an appraisal, on official looking stationary. I put them both in the bottom left hand drawer of my dresser. My husband worked as a helicopter pilot away from home, and was only home ten days a month.

Matt breathed in the door that week and kissed me with intent, “Hi Gorgeous…”

Dustin, took a few tentative steps up to the dresser, opened the bottom drawer and pulled out the appraisal. He handed it to his Dad. It was uncanny what he did, but we laughed. Matt had no idea what the piece of paper was. Matt’s face lit up with generosity as he read it, “Where are they?”

When Dustin showed me in my room, I didn’t want to do things like that. What was I going to say? “You can’t have them!”

I put them through my ears and showed them to my amused husband.

After that, I wore them constantly. They made me feel special. I wore classic clothes that suited my features, and the diamonds were a touch of elegance. When I told my friends, they thought it was a hoot that I had bought myself diamond earrings.

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“Who do you think you are, speaking to me like that?” Rachel echoed back with utter contempt. They made menacing gestures towards one another. I stepped in between them and grabbed Sarah by her shoulders with my face two inches away from her. She smelled of cigarettes and bad teeth.

“Come on now, it’s not worth it. Relax, have a cigarette,” I said.

Sarah’s anxious tears flowed, “I’m feeling awful and I have to go home to that jerk I’m living with. You wouldn’t believe how he treats me.” I hugged her. She smelled like she hadn’t washed in days. I felt her degradation through her tears, her words and her anger.

The nurses got wind of the near struggle and rushed belatedly down the hall to avert the fight. She gestured towards me, “She’s my angel.”

A woman who was married to one of the doctors in the hospital was in the process of separating from him, a separation she did not want. She was desperately trying to hang onto her marriage. She checked herself into the psychiatric ward to embarrass him into a reconciliation. She was in her mid 30’s, blonde and attractive. She was intelligent and educated. Arthur went gray at the temples. He tells me about all of these struggles and rushed belatedly down the hall to avert the fight.

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“She’s my angel.”
Airborne
BY KEITH FOSTER
As a professional photographer, I get some tough assignments.

Last week, a farmer hired me to take aerial shots of his fields.

Talked my friend Jack into taking me up in his little Cessna.

I couldn’t see clearly through the pint-size window, so opened the door for a better view.

Got some great shots — until sudden turbulence threw me onto the wing.

I held on with one hand and gripped the camera like a vice in the other.

I didn’t dare let go — of the camera. It cost me $1,500.

Jack put the plane on auto-pilot and somehow managed to pull me inside.

Got home with some great shots. But my wife has serious concerns about my priorities.

How to live forever
BY KEITH FOSTER
My friend Gloria says we don’t have to die. There are other options.

The secret, she says, is to think positively. And surround yourself with happy people who think positive thoughts.

Watching funny videos also helps. A belly laugh an hour works wonders.

Put them all together and you’ll live forever, says Gloria.

Personally, I think there may be a kink in her cable. I certainly hope so.

Otherwise I’ve made all my funeral plans for nothing.

Green
BY VICTOR ENNS
the colour
Gilles de la Tourette remembers
she has opened a door
she has entered
her hallucination
a green dress
long sleeves pull at her wrists as she raises her arm
her hands clasp
the ivory
handled silver pistol
she pulls backs
the hammer, he puts down his pen, he is writing
his sister, her picture
on his writing desk
next to the green shaded lamp
this is not his mother
who has entered his chamber with an ivory handled silver pistol
cocked, with a message
in her hands
a memory of green,
she is patient
her hallucination
stepping into his

Coprolalia is a presenting symptom in only 10 to 30 per cent of Tourette’s cases. It is only one presenting symptom of “Tourette’s Syndrome,” named after Gilles de la Tourette, first to describe its complex and neurological and behavioral symptoms in 1885. Freud initially considered a genetic and neurological cause for brain dysfunctions, of which this could be one, before discarding the theory and integrating it into his theories of repression, and the unsuccessful integration of the oral and anal stages of childhood development. In 1893 a former female patient shot Tourette in the head, claiming he had hypnotized her against her will. Both Tourette and many modern hypnologists state that this is impossible. His mentor, Charcot, had died recently, and his young son had also died recently. After these events Tourette began to experience mood swings between depression and hypomania. Nevertheless, he organized public lectures in which he spoke about literacy, mesmerism and theatre. Around 1902 Tourette’s condition worsened and he was dismissed from his post. Gilles de la Tourette died on 26 May 1904 in a psychiatric hospital in Lausanne, Switzerland.

– from Involuntary Tongue

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Ribbons
(To Donovan's lung donor family)
BY BETH GOBEIL
He came in from a run, slammed the door, sat down to remove his shoes and socks, which he draped on the back of a dining room chair.

I start to tell him take those stinky socks— when it bubbles up in me like a geyser, stinging my eyes leaving me speechless
I want to take this moment, and a thousand more just like it, wrap them for you as a gift:
My lanky son, his wind-reddened face, a smile playing at the corners of his mouth, and the jubilation of his sweaty socks like first place ribbons, draped on the back of a dining room chair.

Untitled
(from Breathing Room)
BY BETH GOBEIL
We count weeks without illness instead of new baby teeth
Stack pill bottles like they are building blocks
Clap your back to make you cough others play pat-a-cake
Make countless trips to hospitals and specialists instead of visits to great aunts or old friends
Cheer for higher lung function scores like they are straight-A report cards
Learn that normal is a relative term best used to describe a setting on a dryer

Tightrope
(from Breathing Room)
BY BETH GOBEIL
This illness stretches me thin as the tightrope we walk
I lose my balance time and again
slip and hang from fingertips
you pull me up hold my hand
take small steps together we never look down.

Love songs
BY AYAMI GREENWOOD
I
Attraction is only a fraction of the total stimuli that goes into action, when it’s just you and I. When it’s just you and I, there’s no lack of satisfaction.
II
For your care, there is no rival. For your care, I strive. I go into overdrive, When I prepare for your arrival.
III
I have sung far and wide In the past, Sung of love that being strong lasts. But now, that is all cast aside. Being near you, I confide: I am tongue tied.

Pond
BY CATHERINE KATT
Winter sylph skates on the black icescape.
A little ballet turn and a diamond sky shifts overhead. The world of Snow and Ice spins under a dark canopy, a grace note step the blade cuts across the night—
The sound swish, swish, scrape and swoosh, hard against the empty open space below. So we go, skate and twirl upon our pond of silver, each day, until sunlight fades, and the stars appear to light the way.

Reunion
BY CATHERINE KATT
Today we visited Robert Frost's grave. You cleaned snow off the stone, with your bare hands, to uncover his name. Below that was engraved: "He had a lover’s quarrel with the world."

I snapped a photo of the site just before you bared him to the sky again. You were standing at the base of a blanketed slab, that hardly made an impression in the powdery snow. Disconcerted by death’s quiet sleep, You swept with your hands and then your forearms when your hands began to freeze. "Here's his wife. Here's his son," you said. Finally, when you reached his name at the top, you touched your hands to the stone reverently. We passed by it, at first. I turned back and called to you. "It's back there, at that arrow." A hand-painted, little yellow arrow on a green board, crookedly pointing, a terse indicator for the tourist. "Here it is." I took another picture of you standing at the foot of it, for our commemoration ceremony and you one of me. Two Frost lovers, who read his poems at twilight and in the middle of a sleepless night to one another, Meeting at this point in life for inspiration and meaning in an otherwise haunted world that we have cause to cling to with our wounded hands, as grave sweepers stand silently smiling into a camera lens, looking for our future.
My realm of dreams

BY GLADYS MacDONALD

I watch the other children as they go about their play,
Dreaming of places far away and near.
I hear their childish laughter ringing clear
And long to join them in their winsome way.

They chase the impish squirrels and friendly birds,
Then capture snakes and frogs beside the pond,
Or sail their boats into the great beyond.
I watch with envy, longing -- void of words.

And, when they ride their swings up to the skies,
It stirs in me a rhapsody in song,
Teasing my inner soul to sing along,
Oblivious of the tears that blur my eyes.

Carefree they dance about the meadow green,
Nonchalant, gracefully they flit.
Reckoning little creatures, "Come and sit."
I watch with wonder at the touching scene.

When August days are warmed with summer sun
The youngsters scamper to the swimming pool
And splash about -- their way of keeping cool.
I dream that I am joining in their fun.

Then Daddy lifts me from my wheelchair throne --
Shoulder high! I shout and sing!
"This is my castle! I am the King!"
My realm is filled with dreams that are my own.

Note: This is Macdonald's original version of the poem.
An edited version was published without the author's consent in our Fall 2012 issue. My apologies -- Editor

The rhythm of life

BY VONETTA MARTIN

Beat, beat, beat.. in a rhythm
A rhythm that sings...
Sings a song of the drum
The drum of life
Life that is growing in each direction,
In a path that will give me options
Options to choose...
Choose to understand, to learn...
To learn of what to speak
To speak of truth, knowledge...
Knowledge of right and wrong
A mind and body that is evolving
Evolving into someone we want to be

Beat, beat, beat.. in a rhythm
The words grow, grow, grow
Grow into the woman
That one day I will be


For crying out loud 2

BY IAN McINTYRE

For crying out loud
I am better now
Like a birdcage
The door is open I am free
I was sick but now I’m not

My life is off to a good start
In flying colors I write this poem
It goes out to all of my friends
Here at The Nest
For the memories we share
For crying out loud
You are my friends
Always will be forever
And never the end

Keep your chin up

BY JAMES SKELTON

Cold-cocked
Bone
Hitting
Cement
Stillness
A car waits for me to rise
I feel the place where I was waiting to leave
Now I have stitches to stitch in my own face
I hurt myself again.
Lost angel
BY HOLLY SPARR
Angels down devils die
You were the apple of my eye
You were my love, so full of grace
I miss your touch upon my face
I lost my love and my best friend
You were my love, so full of grace
You were the apple of my eye
so heavy that
Please don’t leave me
Please don’t baby
It’s no way to die
I lie awake shaking at night
It’s no way to die
You were my hope, my joy and pride
I lost my angel to suicide.

My heart
BY BARRY STYRE
My heart was so heavy that
I got a sore back from carrying it around.
I stood on the precipice
and a staircase appeared
written on the wind
were these words:
Out the health institution
Life dull pains to die over
Had to realize recovering takes more than wishes n dreams
Death doesn’t come for ya with chants n pleas
Comes with misdeeds
Stop this before you’re riddled over cant be restored
Happy
What to be alive pay offs that days cant stay steady
Hatred always listening
Sounds of machines controlling tug of war with my life
Never knowing when it be over
If ever I would be fixed same again

Fires tale
BY ADAM STAITE
Sun shines Heart turned cold Darkness is whats in there
What if we don’t give back T talkin n’ talkin is all thats that then how if not giving back be given back Taking will no longer be taken It be stolen robbed pilaging means no more I didn’t see a cent remorse for my see You save n went out a window with two upstairs How to cope when all that had been had been selfishly ruined never grieving fails n noise You went on to have your own lives as ours were on life support Souls left dead she was home left to endure Up the stairs screaming you came Put us out to a window A walker by seen then came reason for recovering us n where the fuck were u Nothing left to restore that what had been left if any was to be left to begin with

Figurine to my life
BY ADAM STAITE
Met fucked left some months after Born into a world life damned to merge with destruction
Three years into life death comes to take souls leave bodies Careless fucks brought him there three day before Incident it was to be forgotten Lives lost but just forget about it I’m still alive Talk. Give me some reasoning was frowned upon Told its over with Sadness can’t heal with just that friend gone I branded He was there by my side but then died Living despair Body melded mists by fires bath. Screaming hatred always listening. Sounds of machines controlling tug of war with my life. Never knowing when it be over If ever I would be fixed same again
Whenever waking frustrations still living. Daily injections fed by tubes Sugar water only substance body needed to operate co-operate Drugs make body feel numb Those machines sounds felt not even human

W R IT IN G  TH E LIFE – PO E T RY

BY IRENE GROBOWSKY
Editors Lenore Rowntree and Andrew Boden, who contributed their own stories of afflicted siblings, have assembled from sufferers or family members a collection of real-life experiences dealing with various forms of mental illness.
Within these pages there is an entire education on the diversity of mental illness which includes bi-polar disorder, previously known as manic-depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, clinical depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and dissociative disorder. And this is entirely apart from senile dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.
Intensely personal, these revelations put the reader in a space that feels voyeuristic. However, the very fact that there is now more openness about mental illness and its effects shows a shift in public opinion. The silence and stigma surrounding mental health is finally being broken and its impact on mental health. Therefore, the very fact that there is now more openness about mental illness and its attitudes are changing. As the sibling of a mentally ill person, I was never taught to strive to get through the dark times often without nurturing and consistent medical and community support. Despite some humour and lighter touches, this is essentially a sad book because it reveals how slow is the progress to full acceptance and understanding of mental illness. It is, however, a book that deserves a wide audience.
Notes on contributors

ARTISTS

HENRY PETERS
Winnipeg artist and long-time contributor to TRANSITION.

ROLL
See Author notes.

JAMES SKELTON
See Author notes.

JUDY SWALLOW

AUTHORS

BAGGOTT, KATE
Canadian peripatetic living in European. Work ranges from experimental fiction to chick lit, from creative non-fiction to technology journalism. Links to recent work http://www.katebaggott.com

BLACK, TREVOR
Saskatchewan born, bred, and educated writer now completing degree in Professional Writing at Grant MacEwan University, Edmonton AB.

BRAUN, GORD
Ironic humorist and poet out of Yorkton, and a regular contributor to TRANSITION.

CALLAGHAN, SHIRLEY
PEI writer becoming a regular contributor to TRANSITION.

DEJSRALAIS, MELODIE
Cree - Mic Maq - French poet from Thunderchild First Nation in Saskatchewan.

DITRAN, HELEN
Moose Jaw student. First publication in TRANSITION. Daughter of co-facilitator of the Moose Jaw Muse Writing Group.

FOSTER, KEITH
Regina poet and art appearing regularly on TRANSITION.

GOEBLE, BETH
Meets regularly with Sans Nom, a group of Prince Albert writers. Studied creative writing with Lynda Monahan and at Sage Hill Writing Experience. Published on CBC radio.

GREENWOOD, AYIMA
A Prince Albert poet writing since her early twenties. Poetry, she says, slips her into a calm meditative state, somewhere the words can easily flow.

GROBOWSKY, IRENE
Moose Jaw bibliophile, Festival of Words activist, and regular reviewer for TRANSITION.

JOHNSTON, DONNA MAE
Member of Prince Albert CMHA Writing For Your Life Group whose artwork has previously appeared in TRANSITION.

KATT, CATHERINE
Studies, writes, and paints from life in the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Avid photographer inspired by the beauty of nature. MA in Interdisciplinary Studies.

LEEDAH, SHELLEY
Widely published full-time professional writer with ten books in various genres, including short stories and poetry. Frequently published in TRANSITION.

LENGELLE, REINNEKE
Visiting graduate professor (M.A.) at Athabasca University. Writer, consultant, and owner of Black Tulip Press. Designs, organizes, and teaches workshops and courses in writing and personal and professional development, online and face-to-face.

MARTIN, VONETTA
Cree Woman and Proud Mother from Ahtahakakoop First Nation in Saskatchewan.

MCDONALD, GLADYS
Writer, educator, and member of Prairie Pens (Moose Jaw).

MCINTYRE, IAN
Member of the Prince Albert CMHA Writing For Your Life Group.

Moric songwriter and poet who performs from memory. Published previously in TRANSITION.

MORIN, CHANTAL
Moose Jaw student. First publication in TRANSITION. Daughter of co-facilitator of the Moose Jaw Muse Writing Group.

PEREIRA, HELEN
Widely published short story writer and novelist out of Hallowby ON. Previously published in TRANSITION.

RITZA, LU
Member of the Prince Albert CMHA Writing For Your Life Group. Non-fiction writer and sometimes poet who writes about her life experiences.

ROLL
Widely published writer and illustrator from Southey SK; God’s Autobiog (short stories), Plum Stuff (poems/drawings), and five forthcoming titles for adults and children. Regular contributor to TRANSITION. <www.rollwrites.wordpress.com>

SETTE, DOR
Member of the Prince Albert CMHA Writing For Your Life Group. Raised in a little log cabin in Prince Albert National Park. Grandmother extraordinary now writing her life story. Previously published in TRANSITION.

REVIEW S

Shifting perspectives


NOT a book to be read at one sitting. Pivot Points deserves careful consideration and thoughtful assimilation. Author Jayne Melville Whyte has chosen to discuss the overall story in discrete sections, each with headings stating the focus of the immediate information.

In the brief introduction the author self-identifies as, firstly, a consumer, and then as a member of the Saskatchewan division of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Her first public contribution as a member was stepping forward to participate in a panel dealing with mental health care issues. It was not a matter of feeling particularly well-qualified to do so, but as she says, “(M)oments needed to do it” (p.9).

Depending upon any particular interest, the reader can now choose to concentrate on the development of the Canadian Mental Health Association and its branches and the services provided or on the reports generated by the various committees, both governmental and non-governmental.

Beginning in 1918, the National Committee for Mental Hygiene became in 1950 the Canadian Mental Health Association and the province of Saskatchewan, a leader in so many other fields, became the first provincial branch. The groups regularly acknowledge the need for an integrated system to provide, across varied demographics, access to support with housing, education, work, and income. Filling lives can be achieved when active education provides opportunities for community involvement, family support, self-help, and recreation.

The self-help groups supported by CMHA have played a particularly important role in assisting those with the lived experience of mental illness to feel validated as members of society. Much regarding valuations has been the encouragement of creativity with art and writing. An outlet for these has been provided by TRANSITION, a magazine which evolved from a simple newsletter.

Throughout the history of CMHA's Saskatchewan division, volunteers have played a key role. How reassuring it must have been for patients to know that there were people who cared enough to maintain a regular routine of visiting; people who would be a part of their lives in the institutions at Weyburn and North Battleford. With the closing of these institutions, the role of the volunteers continued to be a vital adjunct to regional branches which provided social and recreational activities.

Individuals who needed more assistance and were not able to meet outside employment requirements were provided with an employment assembly, making and sorting items. Contracts were pursued for useful work. Community contact - not isolation - stressed in many reports has been a very important part of today’s model for dealing with mental health issues and one which CMHA strives to meet.

This book does an admirable task of revealing the changes in attitudes reflected not only in the dry recommendations and reports drawn up through the years, but also in the growth and development of the services provided by CMHA.

Educating and informing the public is a key role of CMHA which distributes brochures, pamphlets, and engages in public meetings. Combating the stigma associated with mental illness has been and often still is hard work.

To make information about CMHA’s wide range of services available to youth, parents, and family members is one of the most pressing of needs, and since 1993 special efforts are on-going to reach children and youth affected by poverty and high risk environments.

Helping those with lived experience of mental illness avoid isolation has been slow in coming, but the book clearly reveals that it is finally happening. With the fading of stigma, progress has been made possible in many facets of mental health care. More opportunities for changes in attitude are available as the apprehensions of those groups also begin to waver.

The development of the services provided by CMHA is a worthy contribution by one of the most important of these. Revealed the amount of research done by the author and make one wonder how many researchers were involved. The book clearly reveals that changes in attitudes will be one of the most important factors for progress, and this is truly happening.

Although fragmented, Whyte’s overview is comprehensive, and each section deals with positive achievements as well as the ongoing goals yet to be reached. Working with “consumers” and their families to ameliorate the sense of isolation is one of the most important of these.

The necessary annoyances were confusing, but the index does list these with full names. Sources listed in the endnotes revealed the amount of research done by the author and make it possible for the reader with a vested interest to search these out on their own.

All in all, Pivot Points is a worthy contribution by one who has been involved in both sides of the mental health story in Saskatchewan.
Notes on contributors

SHORTLAND, MEGAN
Student of non-fiction at St. Peter’s College, Muenster SK.
"Writing is a … powerful medium … [for overcoming] … depression."

SKELTON, JAMES
Saskatoon poet and artist. Long-time contributor to TRANSITION.

SPRATT, HOLLY
Member of the Prince Albert CMHA Writing For Your Life Group. Half of the dynamic Holly and Dale Spratt writing duo. Poet previously published in TRANSITION.

STAITE, ADAM
Member and co-facilitator of Moose Jaw CMHA Writing Group. Author of "Reaper Poems," unpublished writing beyond the literary.

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

WATSON, LILY
Very active and well-published writer out of Calgary of letters, essays, fiction, and non-fiction. Work posted on Alexander Writers Centre Society’s Writers page. Scholarship to Fernie Writers Conference.

WILKINSON, DENISE
High School English teacher in Prince Albert. Writes from perspective of the suicidal. "Mental health issues are rising in our youth, and it seems there is not enough support for them."

Conference Agendas
Friday, June 28 - Delta Regina

Connecting Communities: A Saskatchewan Mental Wellbeing Forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM 8:30</td>
<td>Registration and Hot Breakfast</td>
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Writing for Your Life Communitivity?

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<tr>
<td>AM 9:30</td>
<td>Mixer: Coffee &amp; muffins</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:45</td>
<td>Small-Group Workshop Writing your Life Story</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Small-Group Workshop From Page to Stage: Performing Your Writing with Shayna Stock, performance poet, facilitator, and community builder</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>LUNCH in Lombardi Room (CMHASK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM 1:30</td>
<td>PANEL: Moderator Lynda Monahan</td>
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<td>1:15</td>
<td>THE WHAT AND HOW OF A COMMUNITYALITY OF WRITING GROUPS</td>
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"But what’s it all mean, Alfie?"
RESOURCES CENTRE available on-line

Hundreds of books, articles, videos, games and programs are available for loan from the Friends for Life Resource Centre. Topics include (along with many others):

- Anger Management
- Anxiety Disorders
- Balanced Lifestyle
- Bipolar Disorder
- Bullying
- Conflict Resolution
- Cutting (Self-Harm)
- Depression
- Eating Disorders
- Girls’ Issues
- Homophobia
- Laughter
- Mental Illness
- OCD
- Relationships
- Self Esteem
- Separation & Divorce
- Social Skills
- Stigma
- Stress
- Suicide
- Suicide Prevention

All materials can be borrowed directly through our web-site at www.cmhasask.com

(Click on the Library button) visit us in person or call 1-800-461-5483