



NEWFOUNDLAND WRITERS' GUILD

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THE PAGE

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NEWFOUNDLAND WRITERS' GUILD CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Roberta Buchanan, Vice President

The Newfoundland Writers' Guild is celebrating its fortieth anniversary, and we have a lot to celebrate. The Guild is the longest-running of all the many Newfoundland writers' groups. Since it is open to all we have a constant transfusion of new members. At the same time, we have our Elders - founding members Paul O'Neill (our first President), Helen Fogwill Porter, Bernice Morgan, Geraldine Chafe Rubia - who give the Guild stability and dignity. Writing - the grinding process of getting it down on paper, revising, polishing, work in progress - is the focus of our monthly workshops and semi-annual retreats. Presided over by a chairperson, these follow a set formula: each person reads their work, and it is critiqued by each member present in turn. The writer is not allowed to respond until everyone has had their say. No one can dominate the floor; and even the shyest members know that they will have their turn to speak, and to read. Everyone gets feedback, sometimes differing opinions, on their work. It's a stimulating and thought-provoking process.

And it's successful. We celebrated our quarter-century with an anthology which was partly historical: *Life Sentences: 25 Years with the Writers' Guild* (1993). (It contains Lillian Bouzane's useful history of the Guild to that date.) This was the third of the four anthologies we have produced. The latest, *A Charm Against the Pain: 29 Voices from Newfoundland* - the poignant title is taken from a poem by Geraldine Chafe Rubia - was widely reviewed, both locally, and nationally in the *Globe and Mail* and *Books in Canada*.

The Guild has been a catalyst on the local scene. We organized a Margaret Duley Short Story competition. We lobbied for a wider selection of genres to be included in the Arts and Letters Competition. We protested against censorship of writers' work by the Department of Education. We agitated for the establishment of a Writer-in-Residence at Memorial University. To celebrate Cabot Year, we held a series of Waterfront Writing Festivals, in Ferryland, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Sheshashit and St John's. The Guild was a key player in organizing the province-wide conference which led to the formation of WANL. WANL's first president was our own Lillian Bouzane.

Yes, we have much to be proud of as we look back on our forty years.

So how are we going to celebrate our Fortieth? We are launching our first website, partly funded by a City of St John's Arts Grant. We are planning an event to showcase Guild writers - a Grand Meet and Greet the Authors (date and venue to be announced). Our publishers will be there with our books: by latest count about 130, and still coming. (2007 was a peak year, with seven books published by Guild members.) There will be readings and songs, for some of our members are songwriters. We will also have a grand celebratory Banquet, with speeches by local luminaries. For a bit of fun, we have started a Rolling Novel. Each member will contribute a few paragraphs to carry on the story. It has begun ominously, with the heroine running out of gas on a lonely country road....

WORKSHOPS & GUILD EVENTS

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| June Eastport Retreat | June 20-23, 2008, White Sails Inn, Eastport |
| July 19, 2008 | WordFest, Meet and Greet our Writers Commissariat Coach House 12 Noon-3 pm |
| July 20, 2008 | Full Day Retreat – July 20, 2008 Melba Rabinowitz 42 Churchill Road, Portugal Cove (895-2884) |
| August, 2008 | Full Day Retreat– Looking for new host |
| Eastport Retreat | September 6-9, 2008 |
| September 24, 2008 | City Hall Hosted Luncheon for the Guild Location and details TBA |
| October 20th, 2008 | AGM – location TBA |
| October 16, 2008 | Government House Reception on Guild's 40th Anniversary Details to follow |
| November 23, 2008 | 40th Anniversary Banquet and NWG Christmas Party Location and Details TBA |

Remember to notify hosts if you plan to attend a workshop.