



## Newfoundland Writers' Guild

P. O. Box 1133 – St. John's  
Newfoundland and Labrador, A1C 5M5

# *The Page*

Date: November 8, 2013

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### Editorial

Congratulations to our new board as the Guild begins another year. In the very short time since their installation, the board members have proven to be a valuable asset to our group. We wish them all the best in their work.

At this point in time, four members of the Guild, Roberta Buchanan, Lillian Bouzane, Marilyn Porter and myself, Esther Brown, have formed a committee to produce *The Page*. We hope others will join us. At our initial meeting, it was decided that *The Page* will appear every two months. Along with the usual format we are adding an additional column *The Art and Business of Writing*. Our first columnist Lillian Bouzane will select next month's contributor, who will continue the pattern. We are hoping our new column will be a continuance of the Guild's mission to aid writers in honing their skills.

As we travel through life we realize that we humans have a tendency to establish "homes" outside our immediate walls and friends who become family. One of my most treasured homes has been the Newfoundland Writers' Guild. It has been a safe place for me in many ways. It was here that I learned to trust others with my work. I had a tendency to consider my writings in some way my babies who I was thrusting out into the world. It was here also that I made friends who became family.

Like many others, it took me a while to get up the nerve to present my first piece. It was met with much encouragement along with honest critique. They had to break me from my tendency to use clichés! Not only did they offer their help in the setting of our workshops, but when I had a few articles published in the *Telegram's* Slice of Life, I received many congratulatory phone calls which boosted my confidence. Helen Porter and Gerry Rubia offered to read chapters from my book and provided some very helpful advice. Without the assistance of our members, I know I would never have published my book. For that I am forever grateful. Perhaps some of our other members, too, would like to share their first memories of joining the Guild. We would love to publish them.

*Esther Slaney Brown*

The Editorial Committee for this issue of *The Page* was Roberta Buchanan, Lillian Bouzane and Esther Brown with technical assistance from Georgina Queller.

### *THE NEW BOARD:*

Elizabeth Tobin, President  
Marilyn Porter, Vice-President  
Carol Mitchell, Treasurer  
Roberta Buchanan, Secretary  
Joan Scott, Communications  
Susan Sinnott, Member at Large  
Grave Bavington, Member at Large  
(Photo by Joan Scott)

### *PROFILES OF THE NEW BOARD:*

#### *Elizabeth Tobin, our new President:*

*How did you become involved in the Guild?* - I attended a general poetry reading, called *A Poem in My Soup*, (named after Geraldine Chafe Rubia's book) at the Botanical Garden Café in 2007. (I had talked a friend into coming and reading her poem). I sat with Lily Bursey, Guild President at the time, who persuaded me to come along to a Guild workshop. Lily also talked me into joining the Board in 2009 (She can be persuasive!). Lily and I, with the help of Sheilah Roberts and Sheila Sullivan, edited *The Page* in 2010 and 2011. I began writing poetry while doing a Graduate course in Literacy Education at Mount St Vincent University in Halifax. In recent years, since my retirement, I have been working on a series of "hospital poems" based on a journal I kept while my mother was in hospital with a broken hip. (These journal entries are largely a record of what was said). The support I have received as a member of the Guild, has given me the confidence to participate in several week-long writing retreats. "Un gros merci", Guild members.

*What's on your bedside table?* - I am usually reading, and re-reading, a number of books at the same time. I recently finished reading and re-reading sections of : *How the Scots Invented Canada* (Ken McGoogan); *44 Scotland Street* (Alexander McCall Smith); *After the Error: Speaking Out about Patient Safety to Save Lives* (Susan Mclver & Robin Wyndham). I am presently reading and quite enjoying Anne Budgell's *Dear Everyone*. I have always liked reading mysteries, beginning with detective Trixie Belden. I have recently discovered the very captivating Sister Fidelma mysteries (Mysteries of Ancient Ireland). Would you believe there is an International Sister Fidelma Society? Finally, I usually have the monthly editions of *Alfred Hitchcock \ Ellery Queen Mystery Magazines* within reach, as I normally have to read before going to sleep.

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*Marilyn Porter, Vice-President:*

*How did you become involved with the Guild?* - I joined the Guild because I had just had a significant birthday - I forget which - and decided that I needed to start making a break from working so hard academically (and politically) and pay attention to my creative side before it atrophied entirely. I love writing and do so much of it in my regular life, so I wanted a real contrast. I chose to focus on poetry. It requires such different skills. Above all, it requires the absolute discipline of the fewest words possible to express both meaning and all the senses. And it needs time, focus, attention. And I joined the Guild, rather than just doing it, because I admired the Guild writers I knew and wanted their guidance and support; and also the pressure of critique to push me further. The fabulous writers in the Guild at the time were warm and welcoming and intelligently critical. I hope we can do as well for our current members.

*What's on your bedside table?* - The bedside table is somewhat mobile at the moment and I tend to read junk when on the road: I recently finished Vincent Lam's *The Headmaster's Wager*. I don't think it's as good as his *Bloodletting and Miraculous Cures* but I am about to go to Vietnam and it gives great background. I read a couple of novels a month because I can't go to sleep without reading! Of non-fiction, I am enjoying Eric Hobsbawn's rather ponderous *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* - the last of many mighty tomes that have shaped my historical understanding over the years.

*Compiled by Roberta Buchanan*

**Note: The other members of the Guild Board will be profiled in the following issues of *The Page*.**

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**Notice of Next Workshop**

Sunday November 17, 2013  
2 - 5 PM  
Sobey's Supermarket, Howley Estates  
Elizabeth Avenue East

**THE PAGE** Committee is hoping this column, THE ART AND BUSINESS OF WRITING, will be a permanent fixture of our newsletter; to insure it becomes so, the person who writes the last column will be responsible for securing the name of the person to write the next one. The name will be announced at the end of each column. The topic is broad enough to allow you to write about any aspect of writing. The next column could be about your tax return.

## THE ART AND BUSINESS OF WRITING

I have attached to my desk, just above my computer, at eye level, George Orwell's six rules for good writing. I cut it out of some magazine more than a decade ago. The scotch tape fixing it to the desk is starting to curl. This item contains the best advice I have ever seen or heard about writing. I read it every day when I am editing a text.

*Here are the six rules:*

1. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive voice where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or jargon word, if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

I wish I knew where I got that item because the last sentence in the piece is, "Few saints of the Church have left such useful advice".

Of course, I am not as saintly as George Orwell. I have been known to break the rules. Those of you who have read my novel *In the Hands of the Living God* will note that I often used Latin words. I excused myself since this novel is set in the fifteenth and most of the main characters would have gone to university where Latin was spoken even in the garden.

However, I kept strictly to Rules 3 and 4. I used my red pencil fiercely to cut out unnecessary words and I think Orwell (were he alive) can't accuse me of using the Passive Voice in this novel because it is a book of letters and diary entries.

*Lillian Bouzane*

*The next column will be written by Dylan Seaward.*

## THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

**Date:** December 6, 6.30

**Place:** St. Marks' Church, Logy Bay Road

### Bring

Guest: If you wish

Food: Something for pot luck

Present: Gently used; bring two if you bring a guest

**Cost:** \$5.00 at the door per person.

There will be games, writing contests, prizes, readings, recitations and hopefully music.

**N.B.:** Joan Scott needs to know as soon as possible if you will attend (with or without guest).

If you would like to volunteer to contribute to the overall success of the evening contact Joan: [joans@mun.ca](mailto:joans@mun.ca) or 754-8116.

## CHRISTMAS CONTEST

### Dear Guild Members:

We are going ahead with our traditional writing contest for the Guild Christmas party on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Kate Evans and Bobbie Brennan have agreed to take on the task of setting this year's guidelines which are as follows:

**Prose:** (Kate Evans) The topic is *A Christmas Memory*. It could be your own memory or someone else's memory. It should be no more than 250 words, double spaced, 12 point font.

**Poetry:** (Bobbie Brennan) A ten line poem on the topic of *Christmas Star*. In Bobbie's words -"It could be funny sad, poignant, happy, sarcastic, joyful or whatever the poet wants to make it. The words *Christmas star* do not have to be in it but it should be clear that it is the focus of the poem. The poem could be written as a ten line poem with no stanza breaks or in any number of stanzas that a ten line poem can accommodate. The idea is to have fun with it, not agonize over it."

The deadline for your entries is **Monday, November 25, 2013.**

Please send your entries to **Joan Scott** who will print them out, without your name, and forward them to the judges.

## In Memoriam

### PAUL O'NEILL 1928-2013

Paul O'Neill was a moving force in the creation of the Newfoundland Writers' Guild in 1968 and became its founding President. Through his good graces, and with the help of other Press Club members who were also Guild members, our early meetings were held in the convivial atmosphere of the Newman Building. At these meetings, indeed at all meetings he presided over, Paul, who seemed to have memorized *Robert's Rules of Order*, made sure that the business portion of our meetings was conducted efficiently and with decorum.

Paul continued to support the Guild, serving on the Executive, on various committees and, most memorably, by hosting summer afternoon get-togethers at his sea-side house in Bay Bulls, and Christmas parties in St. John's.

Although he gave the impression of gentlemanly calm, Paul must have worked very hard. In addition to his duties as Executive Producer of Arts Programming at CBC Newfoundland, he gave time to a variety of community causes, acted in plays, wrote poetry, short stories, family history and books of juvenile fiction. His most memorable achievement is his two volume work *The Oldest City*; it is a huge gift to lovers of history and to generations of writers who will want to use St. John's as a setting for their writing. Paul's own account of the research, writing and publication of this work, contained in the Guild publication *Life Sentences*, is well worth reading.

Paul O'Neill was given honorary membership in the Guild in 1984; in 1988 Memorial University awarded him an honorary LL.D; he received The Order of Canada in 1990 and was elected to the Newfoundland and Labrador Hall of Honour in 1991.

*Bernice Morgan  
compiled with the help of Helen Porter*

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### EILEEN DICKS 1921 - 2013

Eileen Dicks (née Woodhead) epitomized the spirit of her generation: those who came of age during the Second World War. She was courageous, adventurous, optimistic, witty, and every inch a lady. I met her when I joined the Newfoundland Writers' Guild and found I enjoyed her company very much. For years we travelled to Eastport for the Guild Retreat with another dear friend, Isobel Brown. Both Eileen and Isobel had served in the military; Eileen was a WAAF from 1942 to 1945 and Isobel had been in the Royal Navy. It was fascinating to hear them talk of their experiences and learn how life in the air force compared to that in the senior service.

To hear her describe living conditions in London during the Blitz was illuminating, for instance: finding in the morning a street she usually walked on her way to work impassable - it had been reduced to rubble overnight, and yet defiantly attending a dance later that night. On one such evening young Eileen Woodhead met Ron Dicks, a member of the 166<sup>th</sup> Newfoundland Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, possibly while he was on leave before being shipped out in January, 1943, to North Africa.

Eileen's bravery and optimism and her love and trust in Ron Dicks led her to leave home

and family in April, 1946, and sail to Newfoundland on her own. She and Ron were married on Bell Island, and some years later moved to St John's and then to Manuels where they had a wonderful garden. They had one son, Keith.

My husband Murdo (RAF) enjoyed chatting with Ron at the Guild's Christmas parties. I don't think he attended after Ron's death. Circumstances prevented my seeing much of Eileen in recent years, but I feel blessed to have known the perky young bride-to-be who telegraphed her future husband when she was near Cape Race to let him know she would arrive very soon, asking him to roll out the red carpet, or words to that effect. I wish I had written the exact words down when she told me - they were so typically Eileen. Very jaunty.

Eileen was a copywriter/production assistant in radio and television, wrote drama for both media, and co-produced the TV documentary on the *History of the Sisters of Mercy in St John's*. Eileen wrote poetry and short pieces on her wartime experiences in England, and was co-editor of a book about Newfoundland war brides, *We Came from over the Sea*. She also published a young adult novel, *Only for the Weekend*.

Hilda Chaulk Murray

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## DON STEELE

November 5, 1932 – March 16, 2013

Don Steele, long time Newfoundland Writers' Guild and Board member, was an eager participant in our meetings. He joined our Guild after a long career as a fisheries biologist at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, where he "retired" as an Emeritus Professor in recognition of his teaching, research and many scientific papers. He never ceased to be an active scientist and followed environmental issues in Newfoundland and Labrador, and nationally. He always found time to contribute to provincial environmental organizations, committees and initiatives. Examples of his many contributions include: how he and fellow fisheries scientist John Gibson were behind the proposal that eventually became the Suncor Energy Fluvarium, and his valuable roles in associations like the Friends of Pippy Park, the Natural History Society (now NATURE NL), and the Memorial University of Newfoundland Pensioners' Association (MUNPA) which became a registered non-profit organization through his efforts.

Following retirement from MUN in 1998, Don joined our Guild where his deep curiosity and desire to write prose, poetry and drama took many directions. We recall our discussions of Don's writing at our workshops and small group meetings at Violet Ruelokke's home, and at Esther Brown's memoir group meetings. Among these interests were: the great naturalist, Audubon's, northern explorations into Canada; a play about the pivotal historical role of the 1762 War between the French and English over Newfoundland; and his late wife, Vladis's diary and family history under successive occupations by Nazi and then Communist forces during and following World War II; and many parts of Don's family history, from youth through formal education, professional training, marriage and arrival in Newfoundland and his work at MUN.

Don was an unusually resourceful, curious and generous man. He was a champion of many

causes which often made a difference in our lives.

Raoul Anderson

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### *MEMBERS' NEWS*

**Helen Porter:** We are very sorry to hear that Helen has been in hospital, and wish her all the best.

**Bernice Morgan:** reviewed Claire Wilkshire's novel, *Maxine*, in the Fall 2013 issue of the *Newfoundland Quarterly*.

**Kathleen Knowles:** I wrote a travel article / personal story, "Not a Walk in the Park", about a visit to Trinidad, specifically the Asa Wright nature centre, (with colour photographs by Ken Knowles) published in *The Osprey: Nature Journal of Newfoundland and Labrador* 44.3 (Summer 2013). If you are interested in reading it, Kathy will send you a copy via email.

**Laura Morry Williams:** I am happy to report that my book, *Over the Fence: Stories from Outport Newfoundland*, has just been published by DRC Publishing, St John's. There was a well-attended launch on September 22 at the Regional Arts Centre, Ferryland. *Over the Fence* and my other books, *My Many Moons* and *Becoming Sarah*, will be for sale at the Irish Loop Fall Fair, Bay Bulls, on November 17<sup>th</sup>, and I'll be there to sign copies. Christmas is near, and the book makes a good gift for relatives who live away from home. My poetry writing has been on the back burner lately, but I have a new collection, *Cleaning My Closet*, almost ready for publication.

**Kate Evans:** I am working like crazy on the second draft of my second novel, aiming for Christmas but not hopeful.

**Jeff Rose-Martland:** I'm pretty busy, committed to writing a musical before year-end, and advocating for veterans.

**Dylan Seaward:** I am working on a collection of short poems inspired by my cumulative course-load at MUN (BOTH degrees). Editing a final draft of a short novel I hope to publish. Brainstorming for a FRIENDS essay contest with a November 15 deadline. Working on TWO online fanfiction stories, as well as conceptualizing a few others. Plus hunting for a full-time job. Not that I'm busy or anything.

**Sheilah Roberts:** I have finished a short story, "The Red Head", and will be sending it around soon. My book on the weather in Newfoundland, *Rain Drizzle and Fog*, is now with Boulder Press for review. I am polishing up and editing a children's novel, *House Spirits*, in preparation for submission. My story, "The Big Wheel", was published in *Riddle Fence* no. 13 (winter 2013), p.47. I'm doing my last course through Acadia University for my TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) certificate.

**Lily Bursey:** I was delighted that my book, *Amy's Journey: A Young Girl's Struggle with TB*, was given a very interesting and favourable review by Nancy Pedri, English Department, MUN, in *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 27.2 (Fall 2012): 297-299. This is also available on line. Work is in progress on my sequel to *Amy's Journey*.

**Joan Scott:** I have rearranged my work space with my computer in a corner with handy surfaces of table and bookcase on each side. It feels as though it will work better. I have been doing a very enjoyable French course - French through Song - with Claire Wilkshire at the ACFSJ (Association Communautaire Francophone de Saint-Jean) on Ridge Road. We already

know the tunes of some very beautiful songs from Québec, e.g. “Le Canadien errant.” Also some from France. We read and translate the words. I submitted a memoir about my 50 years with MUN, as faculty wife, student, teacher and retiree, to an anthology, *Remembering Memorial*, by MUN pensioners (edited by Stephen Riggins and Roberta Buchanan)..

**Esther Slaney Brown:** Esther is writing her memoirs and organizes the Guild memoir group, which meets every second Monday at Sobey’s, Ropewalk Lane. Everyone is welcome. Contact Esther at 726-2411 if you want her to send you the details.

**Lillian Bouzane:** October news: 1. Finished an article on the history of the founding of WANL for WORD, the WANL newsletter. 2. Read with Scott Bartlett at the WANL Great Big Party at the Ship. Founding members of WANL were paired with new writers. The founding member read from the new writer’s work and vice versa. It was exciting to hear my work being read in a public space by someone else. 3. Have volunteered for THE PAGE committee for this year. 4. Have written a column for the upcoming edition of THE PAGE. This is a new column that we hope will be a regular one in our newsletter. 5. Have sent off my MS of short stories to my agent.

**Roberta Buchanan:** I attended the non-fiction workshop of Marjorie Doyle at the WANL AGM. “Great Big Truth: You didn’t make it up, but you gotta tell it well.” Marjorie had some crisp, down to earth advice about writing memoir. As a founding member of WANL, I read at the celebration of its quarter-century of existence at the Great Big Party at the Ship Inn; I read the work of upcoming writer, Eva Crocker, and she read from my memoir of coming to Newfoundland in 1964. I’m writing a lot of memoir pieces, and belong to two memoir groups: the Guild’s, and that of the MUN Pensioners’ Association.

**Georgina Queller:** Last year I edited a book by Daya R. Varma called *Reason and Medicine*. A longer version of this book was previously published under the title *The Art and Science of Healing Since Antiquity*. Both versions are available on-line. Essentially the book is a history of medicine. After that I sold my house and moved into an apartment where I can be found by the shores of Quidi Vidi Lake.

**Elizabeth Tobin:** I attended WANL’s Professional Development Conference at the Lantern in October. My chosen workshop topics included: found poems (Mary Dalton); reading your work (Ruth Lawrence); and creating engaging non-fiction (Marjorie Doyle). I found all the sessions interesting and helpful. This September, while visiting friends (the Hallidays) in Nova Scotia, I attended a poetry reading at a café in Tatamagouche. The poetry group – some 10-14 men and women, meets every Friday afternoon to share poetry selections, often around a theme. That afternoon, Bob Halliday, who is also a friend of Guild member Agatha McDonald, read a poem written by St John’s poet, Angela Otto (also a former member of the Guild) in honour of Agatha’s mother who passed away in February. It was a lovely tribute to Agatha’s mother.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The ***Memoir Writing Group*** meets every second Monday in Sobey’s Ropewalk Lane store. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 12, 2013 because of the Remembrance Day Holiday that Monday. Everyone is welcome. Contact Esther Brown at 726-2411.

**Deadline for Entries in the Arts & Letters Awards** is November 22, 2013. For more information call 727-7518.