How CAA helped an idea grow

By Arlene Smith

Our *Writers Helping Writers* slogan in action in our branch.

Some of us were there to watch the seed of Kit Flynn’s idea planted at one of our monthly CAA meetings. The guest speaker, Laurie Fyffe, spoke about the art of playwriting and how it differs from other forms of writing. During discussions at the end of the meeting, Kit mentioned some plays she had received as an inheritance from an aunt. Her great-aunt Mary Flynn from Pembroke, Ontario had written the plays over her lifetime as a school teacher and well-loved community member. Before that CAA meeting, Kit had kept the plays as honoured gifts, but had not thought about writing about them.

Laurie Fyffe planted a seed.

More of us were there to see Kit’s idea sprout and shoot out a few tendrils at our CAA Summer Social in June. That evening Phil Jenkins sang songs and read excerpts from his books. Jenkins dislikes the term “creative non-fiction.” He prefers “poetic documentary” and he spoke about how the term gives him a feeling of creative freedom.

Kit carried Phil Jenkins’ insight home with her.

I was there when Kit’s idea blossomed at the Canadian Writers’ Summit in June. There she met our CAA national chair, Margaret Anne Hume, who wrote *Just Mary: The Life of Mary Evelyn Grannan*. She and Kit talked about the art of writing about someone else’s life. By this time Kit knew she would write her great-aunt’s story.

Kit bought Margaret Anne Hume’s book to use as inspiration.

Back in Ottawa, Kit began to research her aunt’s life and reach out to people. An article in the Pembroke paper sparked an outpouring of response to her request for memories of Mary Flynn. The number of responses and the depth of emotion in the tellers of the stories let Kit knew for certain that she had to share the stories, and that she an audience for a book.

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Kit reached out to Margaret Hume by phone to seek more advice. In a long and generous call, Hume gave her more information from her about permission forms for interviewees and helped her flesh out some of the challenges or obstacles Mary Flynn might have faced during her time in history.

**Kit’s idea is growing, blossoming and bearing fruit.**

One small action led to a connection, and then another, and then another. “That’s writers helping writers in action right there,” Kit says. Variations of Kit’s story play out on our CAA Facebook page, at workshops, at meetings, during webinars and at the national conferences.

**We share information, we spark ideas and we grow our writing together.**

The Canadian Authors Association will be one hundred years old in 2021. For almost a century writers have been working together through this organization. Margaret Anne Hume wrote her report from the national chair for 2017-18, “While we face competition from other writing associations, we do have some special characteristics that set us apart. We are open to aspiring writers and all genres of writing, and we have a national presence as well as a local one at our various branches and twigs. Our motto of Writers Helping Writers continues as our focus. We learn from each other both in the giving and receiving of help.”

That’s what makes CAA special. May we all take advantage of all the opportunities the organization presents.

Happy writing.

_Arlene_

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**Child of the Fifties**

**By Marianne Jones**

In the street where I grew up
mirror image wartime houses
stretched out in flat, treeless lines, straight as telephone poles.

New beginnings:
barbecues and baby carriages,
kids playing in the glory of spring evenings.

Parents drank, smoked, danced, partied
their youth not yet totally cindered by scars of war, scars of pain,
scars of their embattled ancestors fighting each other,
fighting for survival, fighting their demons, always and forever fighting.

Anger was my birthright.
My parents’ quarrels; my mother’s good dress slashed by my father.
I could not understand
the fury that permeated the walls and cupboards.
I knew only that there was no way out.

Like my piano exercises
my parents repeated the patterns of my dad’s drinking:
ONE two three
ONE two three—
a circle dance that kept returning to the same starting point.
I could feel the pause between bars,
the moment of silence before the dance began again
while I kept looking, trying to find the invisible key to escape.

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**Judge’s Comment**

“A post-war experience of families, the new suburbia, a startling contrast as the poem unfolds into the narrator’s own family life. It becomes stark in its imagery, and unsettling. I could sense the child’s fear, and my own hope for the child’s ability to break free.

—Carol A. Stephen, NCWC 2018 Poetry Judge

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**2018 NCWC Poetry - Second Place**

**Poetry - Second Place**

2018 NCWC

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Tues., September 18
First Page Challenge
CAA-NCR Annual General Meeting
Seven writers submitted first pages from their novels and short stories to be evaluated by expert eyes. Join us to learn how to capture the attention of readers from the first page.

BIO: Stacey D. Atkinson has edited fiction and non-fiction manuscripts and written and self-published two novels. She completed an editing certificate program at Simon Fraser University, and works as an editor for Global Affairs Canada.

BIO: Cyril Dabydeen teaches creative writing at the University of Ottawa, and is a former Poet Laureate of Ottawa (1984-87). His work has appeared in more than 60 literary magazines and anthologies. He was twice adjudicated for the Governor General Award (Poetry).

Tues., October 9
Short Story Writing, with Jean Van Loon
In preparation for the National Capital Writing Contest, Jean Van Loon will share the fundamentals of spectacular short story writing. Make your work stand out.

BIO: Jean Van Loon has published short prose, poetry, and reviews in Canadian literary magazines. Her first poetry collection, Building on River, was published by Cormorant Books this year. Her stories have appeared in The Dalhousie Review, The New Quarterly, The Queen’s Quarterly, Event, Room, and Journey Prize Stories 19.

Tues., November 13
Marketing 101: Marketing for Writers, with Sarah Sambles
Whether traditionally or self-published, aspiring or established, every writer needs to know how to market themselves. This can seem overwhelming, but it doesn’t have to be. Sarah Sambles will demystify the process, explore how to approach marketing as a writer, and introduce key components to an effective marketing plan.

BIO: Sarah Sambles is a local children’s fiction writer and communications coach with nearly 20 years’ experience as a marketing consultant. She helps writers overcome fear of marketing and gain the skills to engage a target audience.

December Winter Social
A Warm Celebration of the Cold
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2018
1:00 P.M. AT THE HOME OF ARLENE SMITH
An afternoon of feasting on the food and words you bring to share. As the afternoon progresses, we’ll create a collaborative writing project. What will that be? It will be whatever those in attendance shape it to be. Come and add your presence.

Tues., February 12, 2019
Step by Step to Completion, with Jennifer Mulligan
Are you mired in a mound of half-completed manuscripts or stuck in the middle of a novel you can’t quite finish? Are your notes scattered and all over the place? Accomplished screenwriter, Jennifer Mulligan, leads us in steps she follows to complete her works—steps that adapt to all kinds of writing.

Tues., March 12, 2019
Polishing Your Manuscript, with Nerys Parry
You’ve completed your manuscript and now you want to send it out to the world. Before you do, you need to make sure it is as professional as possible. Nerys Parry shares her expertise in preparing a polished manuscript.

Tues., April 9, 2019
Not Your Parents’ Poetry Workshop, with Pearl Pirie
April is Poetry Month. Using ideas gleaned from sessions at the Canadian Writers’ Summit, we will celebrate and create poetry.

Tues., May 14, 2019
2019 National Capital Writing Contest
We celebrate the finalists in the 2019 National Capital Writing Contest.

Tues., June 11, 2019
Summer Social
LIKE ALICE STEPPING through the Looking Glass, or Harry Potter conjuring the Room of Requirement, a weekend away at a writing conference offers an opportunity to step out of our work-a-day lives and into a kind of magic.

Writers can lose themselves in the world of writing at the Canadian Writers’ Summit at the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto. The summit is the largest gathering of its kind, allowing writers from across Canada to exchange ideas, provoke thought, listen to keynote speakers and mingle at social events.

The summit was held for the first time in 2016 when 14 writing association, including CAA, joined together to organize it. As would be expected for the first try at such a large event, there were issues with scheduling, food service and the quality of presenters. The organizers received feedback from that event and took action to fix the problems. This year’s version of the conference ran smoothly.

200 speakers in more than 75 sessions. CWS is the largest gathering of its kind.

The food was plentiful and delicious, the sessions involved more interaction and fewer panels, and the schedule was clear and manageable. Sun shone on it again, which was important given that some sessions were held in marquis tents on the grounds.

The Toronto location for the conference is both a blessing and a challenge. Harbourfront is close to public transit, shopping, theatre and restaurants. Participants can enjoy a drink at a table overlooking Lake Ontario or stroll along the waterfront. I took in a Toronto Blue Jays game while I was there. But Toronto is also expensive, so some sharing of accommodations might be required for those with financial restrictions.

The associations that join together to organize the CWS do so every two years. The next one is planned for 2020. In the alternate years, CAA hosts its own CanWrite! conference. For the past many years CanWrite! has been held in Ontario, but plans are in the works for a 2019 conference hosted by the Vancouver branch of CAA. If it is at all possible for you, I recommend participating in the national conference. It is a time of bonding, inspiration and growing as a writer.

Magic.

The Canadian Authors Association held a social and a launch of the Blood Is Thicker anthology, a joint venture with Iguana Books.

Photos by Kit Flynn
THE LATEST THREAT to our computers targeted older systems running Windows XP, but the next one may be designed to penetrate firewalls and patches in newer systems. And climate change means a natural disaster causing extensive power outage could destroy offices and/or computers.

What would happen if you lost access to all your electronic devices?

If your phone were stolen, would you lose all the photos you've taken that you didn't have time to download to your computer?

Would you have to worry about banking information and passwords that could fall into the wrong hands?

How about your laptop or desktop computer?

Do you have a back-up routine?

Most computer consultants suggest we make a complete (mirror) copy of our entire system, save that to a CD, and store it in a safe place. I keep my disk in the “grab and go” bag in my back hall, so in case of any emergency I can grab that, my car keys, purse—and the cat!

That bag is a soft tote in which I also store extra cash, an extra credit card, back-up flash drives, and an envelope containing important papers.

Yes, papers.

You may remember the promise of “the paperless office” but if you pride yourself on how little you use your printer, you may be making a huge mistake.

My office contains a paper wall calendar, so I can see upcoming appointments, deadlines, and other dates with a quick glance. I also keep calendars from the last three years, which can provide a helpful reference.

I also keep a submission list, a lined legal pad on which I note the date, the title of the submission (query, article, contest entry, etc.), to whom it was sent, any additional info (such as photos or the name of the editor), and the result.

This lets me quickly see what's pending, but also to consider older articles where I didn’t sell all rights that I might recycle to other markets, and to follow up on invoices.

I print out all submissions because it's difficult to proofread on the screen. Then I save those drafts (which may have corrections I've added by hand) in a folder. It makes it easy to refer to a current article if an editor phones while your computer is busy doing something else. And these drafts mean you have yet another version of saved work.

I have short lists I can refer to if I need to remember instructions for programs I don't use frequently, telephone lists, and a list of pages on my website that I often send to email correspondents. Yes, I could find any of that information on my computer, but it's faster to glance at a printed list.

Where do you store banking information?

If you bank online, you might be more vulnerable to hacking than you realize. I do my banking only on my landline phone. Phone numbers and my customer number are in a small folder beside the phone, where I also note, on paper, current transactions and keep photocopies of checks and deposit slips until they've cleared.

Encrypt your passwords.

Print out the list to put in that “grab and go” bag. I use a simple method that would work for anyone. My password list contains hint rather than actual letters and numbers. For example, the password I call Daddy contains my father's initials and the phone number of his work that I memorized as a child. You could do the same for Favorite animal + first address, Favorite restaurant + its address. Create a number of these, using information your closest friends or family would know, but strangers would be unable to guess.

Your contact list should contain phone numbers, account numbers and other details for banks and credit cards (with password hints), insurance policies, doctors and other key medical info, and for organizations you belong to. Add to this the names, telephone numbers and email addresses of key people you might want to reach in case your computer and/or phone are compromised.

This printed list should be given to the trusted friend or family member who will advocate on your behalf if you're ill or injured. I realized how important this is when the son of a close friend died suddenly. He hadn't shared passwords

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for his phone, bank account and computer with anyone, not even his dad or his brother. Chaos ensued.

You should also store all this important information on a flash drive you give to this trusted friend, along with other important documents and photos you want to preserve. My “grab and go” bag contains several flash drives. One contains my books, workshop notes, the Canadian Libraries Database I sell, and important photos, including a complete photo inventory of my house. A duplicate of that flash drive has been given to the executor of my estate, along with a printed copy of my contact list and other vital information.

There are several excellent and low-cost clipboard programs.

I use ClipMate, which can store an unlimited number of clips (words, phrases, entire paragraphs) in collections you can sort. ClipMate is inexpensive, and provides a quick and easy back-up routine which allows you to save all your clips anywhere you wish. I use ClipMate to store important email addresses, URLs, and telephone numbers, encrypted passwords, descriptions of my books, courses and Canadian Libraries database, credit and bio paragraphs, and a great deal more.

I use an external hard drive, which is set to back up all key files and folders every night. I also keep a small flash drive plugged in where I save whatever I'm currently working on (like this article). I have a sub-directory I call “In Progress.” This is easy to back up quickly, and contains everything I'm working on right now. I back up ClipMate to that every night, then unplug it in case an unexpected power outage.

I also carry a small flash drive in my wallet. I back up key files to that drive every week. It's a wise idea to rotate flash drives regularly, to make sure you always have copies of essential data in case one of these fails.

Am I overly cautious? Perhaps. But I believe that when you prepare for the worst, you can relax and not have to worry if something goes wrong.

Next issue’s article will deal with protecting yourself online, including your email, blog, and website.

BIO: Barbara Florio Graham mentors writers, serves as a publishing consultant, and offers a contract review service. The author of three books, her website is full of free information. www.SimonTeakettle.com

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Pass along your copies of Byline to your friends and fellow writers.

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Note: Yearly prices reflect the cost of three issues; the fourth publication is free.

Byline is distributed by e-mail to those on our extensive CAA–NCR mailing list.

To have your name added to our mailing lists, contact the editor.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/CanadianAuthorsNCR/
By Gill Foss

The fluttering of a falling leaf
or passing of a cloud across the sun.

An evening star winking in the dark,
a firefly flickering in the dusk.

A wish unspoken.

The smile of dandelions beside the road
or a turkey vulture rising on a thermal.

A crow swooping low between trees,
the taming of wayward ideas into a poem.

Steam rising from a cup of coffee
or the tantalizing smell of baking bread

To me, silence is the most invisible sound,
revealed only when it’s broken.

Phyllis Bohonis

New in the 73 Windsor series.
You need a new man in your life they said.
You have to get out more and add excitement to your life they said.
So she did—and abruptly disappeared.

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FROM THE CAA NATIONAL CHAIR

By Margaret Anne Hume

Thank you to all members for your continued membership and support for the Canadian Authors Association. In addition, I would like to say a special thank you to all those members who volunteer their time and effort so generously at the branch, twig, and national levels on various boards and committees. Your work makes CAA function.

Thank you as well to our hard-working executive director, Anita Purcell, and the volunteers and interns at the national office.

CAA is rapidly approaching our 100th anniversary in 2021. While we face much competition from other writing organizations, we do have some special characteristics that set us apart. We are open to aspiring writers and all genres of writing, and we have a national presence as well as a local one at our various branches and twigs.

Our motto of Writers Helping Writers continues as our focus. We learn from each other both in the giving and receiving of help. Thank you for continuing to make CAA special.

Highlight of the year 2017 include our successful CanWrite! 2017 conference in June at Humber College, Toronto, the start of our exciting Social Media Expert in Residence program with expert Catherine Saykaly-Stevens, and continued webinar programs.

Our Executive Director, Anita Purcell, organized several meetings during 2017 for the Toronto Branch in an effort to help the branch reorganize. We are hoping that this assistance will spur Toronto members into taking charge and rejuvenating their branch. All of our branches and twigs are critical building blocks for our organization. Their local successful programs are extremely important. We would like to see all our branches continue to be vibrant.

Canadian Authors Association is a community of writers, and the bonds of friendship among us keep us strong.

Our Canadian Authors Association members at work

Sylvia Adams
Poems that recreate the life of Florence von Sass, her wanderings through Africa and love affair with traveling companion, eventual husband, the explorer Samuel Baker. Runner-up for the Scott-Lampman Award.
Sylvia Adams Publications

Richard I. Bourgeois-Doyle
Elsie MacGill, the world's first female aeronautical engineer and professional aircraft designer, influenced early bush planes and guided production of famous aircraft in World War II.
NRCresearchpress.com

Sherrill Wark
Available at Amazon.com Amazon.ca
Or order it through your favourite bookstore.
A remake/remodel/update of the original Really Stupid Writing Mistakes.
I consider myself a peaceable woman, but suffering fools was never my strong suit. It’s gotten me into trouble many times, as my friend Holly likes to remind me.

The city of Ottawa had just finished retrofitting bike lanes into all major roads. There were painted Zebra crossings for pedestrians, dayglow green strips along bike lanes. They even installed special little bicycle traffic signals, not that any of the riders paid them much attention.

“Somebody’s going to get killed,” I said to Holly. “You just watch. They’ve made the car lanes too narrow for safe passage.”

“I hope I’m not driving when it happens,” she said.

“Well, I’m going to take it up with City Hall.”

Her eyes widened. “Deb, you’re not! Remember what happened when you protested speed bumps and 40 kph limits around schools.”

I grinned. In one of my more creative moods, I had broken into the mayor’s office and plastered the walls and his desk with plasticized leaflets and resident-signed petitions against his favourite by-laws. I used polyacrylamide glue on the leaflets, making them almost impossible to scrape off. His defective sense of humour resulted in a suspended sentence for me. They got me for vandalism, warned me off the premises for a year, and made me pay a fine to cover the cleanup cost.

I shrugged. “They over-reacted. Anyway, the restraining order expired six months ago. I can and will contact my councilor, and the mayor, too. I’m all for saving the planet, but it should be done systematically. Judiciously. And I’m sick to death of smug bike riders weaving in and out of traffic. They don’t even wear helmets.”

“You be careful. Next time they’ll throw you in the slammer.”

The city had put in place all kinds of so-called green initiatives, without thinking them through. In the case of bicycles, the powers that be should have worked a lot harder on things like education, licensing and traffic control before throwing taxpayer dollars at bike lanes. For both riders and drivers, I might add. Things like mutual respect, mandatory safety equipment and enforcement of violations, to name but a few. But no, far easier to slap some paint on the roads and put up flimsy barricades, narrowing the thoroughfare for cars and trucks, to make room for what they hoped would be an ever-larger bike-riding population. I bet they hadn’t allowed for freezing rain or snow. Summer was bad enough – winter would be a nightmare.

I was miffed when my councillor told me to back off, but my irritation would probably have moderated if it hadn’t been for Eric “the Biking”, the guy who lived in the ramshackle bungalow, two doors down.

That Eric – a real piece of work, constantly in everyone’s face. He jogged up our street morning and evening, rain, sleet, snow, hail, all in black spandex, mirror shades and a thick blond braid slapping his back as he ran. There must be birds, or maybe chipmunks, nesting in his chest-length beard. Then his bicycle— Harley-Davidson with pedals. That thing could not only climb hills, it could flatten them.

I suspected he might be an attractive man under the haystack, and wouldn’t have minded finding out. But incompatibility doomed a more convivial relationship between us. I’d overheard him say something to our councillor about “back in Deborah’s day…” – the nerve! I just turned forty, and there couldn’t be more than ten years between us, if that.

Our personal vendetta dated from the time he stole my squirrel traps and started a campaign to feed up the neighbourhood wildlife. Maybe he wanted to barbecue them, or maybe he wanted wire-chewing varmints invading his attic. I sure didn’t. Once you encourage the dang things, they’re tenants for life or until your house burns down thanks to their depredations. He cemented the feud by ramming my bumper with...
Bikezilla. Cost me a ridiculous amount to have it hammered out and painted.

Eric was politically active, too, and a regular donor to our mailboxes, distributing leaflets on everything from a cyclist’s bill of rights to calls for doubling taxes on fossil fuels used for personal vehicles. Being a proud SUV owner, that got my back up. Smug bastard. So I returned the favour by handing out cards advocating mandatory driver education and safety equipment for bike-riders.

Holly thought I should resist responding to his latest campaign. She said I should rise above and not pander to his provocation. “He’s just looking for attention. He might even be secretly attracted to you, and this is his way of getting your notice.”

“Pffft. You’re not serious? I wouldn’t go near him. Probably has lice.” Holly has been my best friend for more than twenty years, and sometimes she hits far too close to the mark.

Eric wouldn’t let a challenge rest. He – I’m sure it was him – planted a “Bikes for Life” sign on the city property side of the sidewalk outside my door. I fired a return salvo with a “Road Rules for Everybody” sign in front of his. And the battle began.

They say creativity knows no bounds, and we certainly pushed the limits over the next couple of weeks. At first, it remained a war of words. Letters to the editor, our local councillors, the mayor, and more circulars to the neighbourhood. I have to give it to Eric: he could write eloquently and speak his mind as clearly as I did. Not just a semi-literate hipster eco-warrior. Neighbours who used to talk to me didn’t any more. That only added fuel to the fire. “Remove Bike Lanes” and “Ticket Cyclist Violations” met “SUVs Kill – Bikes Don’t” and “Bikes Save the Planet”. The one that galled me most was “Cycling Improves Elder Fitness”. Well! Just because some of us stay fit by shopping in box malls instead of riding laps around the block. How ageist could he get?

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Holly begged me to stop. “You know this is childish, right?”

I shrugged her off. “I’m just expressing my views. In writing. What’s childish about that?”

“You’re creating a problem, not resolving one. If either of you truly wanted a solution you’d sit down like adults and talk it over. Maybe even find a compromise.”

“Compromise? With that agitator? Trying to remake the world by Tuesday? Hah!”

Holly just shook her head. We still spoke, but not about this.

Eric took it to video first. He got a local TV news anchor to spot him on the six o’clock show, flashing his beard at the cameras as he railed against bike-luddites. I couldn’t take that lying down. I went with the competing channel, and our YouTube splash featured my well-reasoned slide presentation on education for all vehicle operators. But our neighbours were curiously passive. Apart from a few Facebook likes and retweets, they failed to get involved.

My days were consumed with plans for my next move. Rough gravel? Washboard? Those couldn’t be on the general bike paths, though. I was targeting Eric. He’d notice if I tried to sabotage his driveway. No, I’d go for something more subtle. So I invested in a few cans of paint. Black, white and green. I painted black over the bike lane markers around the intersection where he turns off our street, and re-painted them at two-thirds the width. Generously, I widened the pedestrian zebra crossing, too.

Took me all of one night to do a short stretch of road, but I felt satisfied to have done something concrete. I made sure to get rid of the paint cans, in case a by-law officer came calling. Laughed myself sick when Eric didn’t even notice for two whole days. Of course, the city painted it back again, but I had made my point.

I hadn’t seen Holly in over a week. Little voices in my brain hinted that she was right. But how could I stop? I knew Eric wouldn’t let it go either. We had locked ourselves into an epic struggle over a point of principle. Whatever it was. Oh yes, bike lanes.

And then I woke up one morning to slashed tires. Eric again – I’d seen a flash of blond braid vacating the scene and the glint of what was surely a knife when I looked out my living room window. I’d show him! Since he’d cost me a day’s work, not to mention four new tires, I’d sabotage his morning jog. I crept out that night and applied a thick coating of tar at the base of his driveway, where, at dawn, it would be indistinguishable from the roadway. I set the alarm early so I could watch it happen from my front yard. The fall left him with some ugly tarmac burns on his arms. Maybe I should have gone back inside before I started laughing. He sure looked pissed. Put his beard out of commission too – it had to be shaved off to get rid of the tar. I had been right. He was quite the dish without the face fungus. But it was too little, too late. When he threatened to press charges over the tar, I reciprocated over my tires.

I never saw the neighbours any more. Maybe they had all moved away, or only came out at night. I wondered vaguely about my sanity, and Eric’s too, but…nah, we were just dedicated. Principled. Obstinate. Obsessed…

The madness reached its apex one morning, when Eric decided to put his bike in the direct path of my freshly-tired SUV as I pulled out to head for the office. As if rush hour wasn’t bad enough. He hogged the road, veering from side to side in front of me. Every time it looked like I might pass, he dodged over so I had to slam the brakes. As my road rage escalated, it was only a matter of time before my brakes failed to engage.

Neither of us saw the garbage truck turning into our street. I don’t know that it would have made any difference if we had. It did put an end to our nonsense, though.

They tell me I’m lucky to be alive, and Eric The Biking bikes no more. Funny how our roles ended up reversed. He now complains to the city that the car lanes aren’t wide enough for his Tesla electric disability vehicle, while my SUV rests in the driveway and I’m reduced to riding my double-wide scooter down the bike lane. Holly? She moved to Vancouver.

I hear that Eric says we should get together to lobby against reckless garbage truck drivers. Cooperate with him? Not a chance.
I really couldn’t have ended any other way. You can’t live that kind of life indefinitely. Sooner or later you are going to slip up and that’s when the law closes in. Even I knew that.

He stood there, hands clasped, hand cuffs jangling, his exposed left arm tattooed from wrist to where it disappeared beneath his short-sleeved orange shirt, foreshadowing the colour he would soon be wearing permanently.

He didn’t look like a criminal – whatever they looked like – and he didn’t put up much of a fight, not according to his reputation.

I stood there looking at him – Mom would have said gawking – as only a 14-year-old would, wishing Mitchell was there with me. I could tell the story later but it wouldn’t be near as good as Mitchell seeing it for himself.

I guess with all the cops and adults standing around and everybody looking busy and carrying clipboards, they didn’t notice me. I hoped not. Mom had gone up town and left me at the farm. I took the tractor into the next town and realized it was my lucky day when they were just hauling Troy Curtis out of a police vehicle, pushing his head down the way they do on TV. The cruiser was parked in front of Mabel’s Sunrise Café so I figured they were all stopped for coffee before they began the long drive to the provincial slammer.

Sure thing, looking at him, you’d never know he was guilty of all the stuff they accused him of. After they all got settled inside I looked to see if anyone was paying attention to me – nobody was – and I too crossed the road to the provincial slammer.

The law enforcement was making a big thing out of getting the prisoner settled in a booth. Some of them sat at the counter stools and some sat in the red plastic booth seats, either behind or ahead of where Troy Curtis sat.

There was a bank of video arcades at the back of the store, on the route to the washrooms, and I figured nobody would notice if I just stood at the machine, pondering what game to play. That way I could hear what was going on all around me.

In a few minutes two law enforcement guys escorted Troy to the washroom. They didn’t stand outside but went right in with him. While they were gone, the other guys all started talking. I got good ears and I could hear them telling what this guy done.

One cop, Rory Ferron, said they’ve been trailing this guy for six years. Apparently he fell off the radar when he left New Brunswick in violation of his parole for a burglary conviction. He had been charged with theft under fifteen thousand, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to two years in prison.

Two other cops chimed in that it was just about that time that they began investigating a string of camp burglaries, which mounting evidence pointed to one person. The burglaries were allegedly taking place all across Scott Mountain.

Scott Mountain. Now there was one of the prettiest places on earth. People built their camps on Scott Mountain to hunt in the fall and fish from the Shogomac River in spring and early summer. Most of the camps had a verandah running the length of two sides of their camp so they could sit out there and do what adults pay big bucks to do – drink coffee and get away from it all, all the while keeping their iPhones on and complaining about the service in backwoods New Brunswick.

Whenever I can get away from Mom I roam around Scott Mountain. I got a few secret hide-outs. I took Mitchell up there quite a few times and I came real close to showing him my secret – I’m glad now that I didn’t – Mitchell loves the woods like I do but he's a blabber-mouth and he'd have every Grade 9 kid from Shogomac Consolidated Secondary dragged up there and after a while the woods would be over-run with kids and they would stomp on everything and how could you do any good tracking then.

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The prisoner and his two wingmen were back from the washroom now and they were ordering lunch. The county was paying for it so they all ordered up, having super-sized cokes and two desserts. From my vantage point I watched Troy Curtis's hands, thinking how skilled they must be. Here are hands that picked locks, shot partridge, skinned a deer, knifed fish in a fast-flowing stream, picked fiddleheads and cook a rump of bear roast – all on somebody else's property of course, and the risk! Not knowing when the owners could come upon the scene – the risk was mind boggling. How do you explain cooking a roast in somebody's oven?

At that moment I ducked my head, pulled my John Deere cap low on my forehead and prayed silently that she hadn't seen me. Mava Wilson had just manoeuvred her large frame through the door. She is my aunt on Dad's side and knows everything about everything. If she sees me here today, she'll have that spread faster than I could text Mom and tell her. I was partially hidden by a coat rack and hoped it might be enough to protect me from Mava's prying eyes and blathering tongue.

Mava sailed past me like a barge on open water, paying no attention, headed for a better place. Courtenay, one of the wait staff, was just coming on duty, tugging on her crop top, when Aunt Mava assaulted her. Around the corner they couldn't know that I was privy to every word spoken. Aunt Mava was oh my goodness-ing and isn't – it – terrible, and right-here-in-our-own-community, and then she stopped to get Courtenay's take on where they had apprehended Troy Curtis. I perked up, randy to get this information too.

Did Mava know the Winslow Camp, just the next camp over from Howard Neilson's? Well, it wasn't there he'd been took, like everybody thought. It was a camp, looked like he'd built himself, behind the reservoir. Aunt Mava's eyes must have bugged out. I heard a sharp intake of air as she echoed "The Reservoir?"

Courtenay declared the cops had come upon this camp, not old and dilapidated like you might think, but newly built where Troy Curtis had a stash of guns, like an arsenal, all types of military guns. And how'd she know this? Courtenay's young husband has just started at the local sheriff's office and he had been one of the first ones on the scene. Later, driving the prisoner into town, he told his co-workers he needed to take a leak and that's when he had called Courtenay to gloat.

Mava sucked her teeth. I knew this latest tidbit would hit the cell towers within three to five minutes. In a breathy voice, Mava asked what was in the camp at the reservoir and Courtenay had replied impatiently, "I told you! Everything. All stolen. Dozens of guns and high-end outdoor gear."

Courtenay said she was sorry, that she had to start her shift, and Mava soothed yes, of course, and I knew she could hardly contain her excitement. She feigned a trip to the washroom and rushed right by me to deliver This Just In.

My eyes returned to the table. The law was reaching for their hats, reaching for the bill, reaching for the prisoner. I wanted to ask a question but I knew that it would be impossible for me to get close enough or private enough without being heard. I pondered how I could do this. I didn't have long. Soon they'd be taking him out, loading him in the car and taking him away for a good long time. He had evaded the law for six years. They weren't going to forget that any time soon.

I could just jump right out in front of them, startling everybody and start talking, but that would solve nothing,

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or I could just try to figure out by myself. Two options. What's it going to be?

“Playing a little pinball, are you, boy?” The prisoner had to pass right by me. He leaned slightly to the left, getting a look at the arcade emblazoned with Bag a Moose. Then he spoke to me. I met his clear, sparkling, oddly cerulean eyes, saying nothing. “It's always behind the Stag's Head, boy. Aim for there.”

I exulted. My heart soared. They must have taken the prisoner out to the car. They must have put one of their hands on top of his head and shoved him in the car, gently, as there were many witnesses. They must have turned on the siren, announcing this law enforcement coup d'état but I saw and heard none of it.

After the hoopla I walked around the side of the feed store to the tractor parked in back. No fear of the law stopping me now and asking for a license I didn't have. All the law was leaving for the provincial capital. A kid on a tractor would be small potatoes in view of the media descending on the entourage. Every law officer that could breathe was in that cortege as it made its way to the capital. Meanwhile, I knew exactly where I was going.

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Here is the slate of 2018-19 executive to be voted upon by members at upcoming September 18 Annual General Meeting.

Come out and cast your vote. Your participation is important.

Arlene Smith – President
Frank Hegyi – Treasurer
Phyllis Bohonis – Recording Secretary
Christine Beelen – Membership Coordinator
Gillian Foss – Branch Historian
Sharyn Heagle – Byline Editor
VACANT - Program Coordinator

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Evelyn Ann Davidson Crete

He toured with the Wilf Carter Show and The CFRA Happy Wanderers, was an original member of The Family Brown. He entertained royalty and celebrities Marlon Brando and Neil Armstrong.

Ken Davidson

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Do you live on Twitter?

A.Colin Wright

“At first I thought the papers were just notes Veronica had edited . . . When I looked more closely, there were things clearly written by her, mostly in the third person but occasionally in the first . . .”

http://www.acolinwright.ca/novels

Are you a regular on Facebook?

We are looking for someone to support our social media presence. If you can help, contact NCRadmin@canadianauthors.org

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Evelyn Ann Davidson Crete

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A True Gentleman of Music

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