

THE WRITE PLACE

A newspaper dedicated to the Greater Montreal area writing community



THE CHICKEN BROTH EXPERIENCE

by Caterina Panzera

It was a beautiful Tuesday afternoon, early June. The sun was shining and the warm spring breeze wafted through the air, promoting the promise that our Montreal winter was indeed over. It was my day off and I had decided to take this opportunity to spend it with my grandma and learn the tricks of her trade, cooking. I went with the intention of learning to make cavatellis, a delicious traditional Italian pasta that I did end up learning to make that day, despite a slight detour.

As I waltzed into the kitchen, after my grandma had let me in, I kissed her hello and noticed right away a pot on the stove and my grandma going back to her activity of cutting carrots on my mother's granite table top. What was she doing? What was she cooking right now?

I put down all my stuff and mentioned to her that I had to leave around 4:30 because I had to see a movie with a friend. A frown crinkled on her forehead. *'These youths'*, she probably thought as she brought her cut up carrots over to the stove and gently released them into the pot.

"Do you know how long it takes to make cavatelli?" she asked me in Italian. "When it was my sister's 60th birthday", she paused, "or was it 80th?" She shook her head. "It doesn't matter. I had to make cavatelli for 60 people. Do you want to know how long it took me?" she exclaimed, waving her hand behind her to show the time that had passed and the amount of time consumed to make these cavatellis for her sister and the guests. I patiently told her that we weren't going to be making cavatelli for 60 people, that I only wanted to make a small quantity, just to learn. "Quanta gente?" *'How many people'* she asked me in Italian, again assuming I was organizing a major event.

"Nonna," (which means grandma, in Italian) "it's just for me. I want to learn how to make cavatellis. But, if you think it'll take too long, I can learn to make this," I said, pointing to the pot sitting on the stove.

This led to a beautiful beginning between me and chicken broth. I was actually quite excited and wouldn't have been too disappointed if we hadn't made cavatelli that day, because I had wanted to learn how to make chicken broth for the longest time.

I probably know what you're thinking... 33 years old and still hadn't learned how to make chicken broth. What could I say, I was a little busy. However, there was an opportunity here and I was going to take it.

As I stared at the pot on the stove, I took in its contents. Water, shallots, chicken, and the little



cut up carrots my grandma had just put in there. *'This is so exciting,'* I thought and right away opened my notebook to take down everything she said.

"So, Nonna, what's in here? I see onions, chicken, carrots..."

"That's right. You'll also need a potato," she said, "and celery, which I don't have right now but write it down," she said, pointing at my notebook. "By the way," she said, looking at my notebook, "what are you doing?"

"Nothing," I responded, "just a project."

"Just a project?" She looked at me questioningly, "hmmmm..." she mumbled with a playful frown. I gently guided my grandmother back to cooking because, knowing her, she thought I was plotting something mischievous.

"Who taught you how to cook?" I asked as she peeled the potato over the sink.

"Who do you think," she responded, struggling a little over the potato. I offered to help but she waved me away. "My mother, I learned by watching her. I've been cooking since I was seven years old. With five men in the house," (meaning her father and four brothers), "you had to know how to cook." She walked over to the stove with the freshly peeled potato and plopped it whole into the pot. Then she looked at me and sighed. "Che facete vu?" *'What do you people do?'* she asked in her dialect, addressing me and my generation, implying that we were spoiled, lazy and didn't have to make the sacrifices that she had made as a child. I laughed, saying that we weren't lazy and did work. I knew, however, what she meant.

Her generation had never had the option of not working. Even at the tender age of seven, they were made to cook for their families and tend the

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SOFT*by Keira Pincus (age 3)*

The other day, I woke up and I felt soft and warm.

Soft as Kleenex.

Soft as white bunny fur.

Soft as a pillow.

Soft as stuffing.

Soft as a polar bear.

Soft and cuddly as you.



That annihilate raw sorrow and pain.

People are wonderful

They all have hearts that beat

People are sick

I word them to total inner health...

I want You so much

You have a complexity of a galaxy

We'll lie together as I press against You

And listen to the music

Of Your numerous solar systems

I will inhale Your scent

INTENSELY HELD*by Dog McMurphy (Margarita Fert)*

Desperation flowers.

I wrote the finest book on solitary hell

Its structure resembles sapphire

It shatters numbness

Like a dog bark

It contains transcriptions from sonic frequencies

And share it with my animal group

During Show and Tell

Together we understand a simple truth:

"I need to be held.

She doesn't know what it means

When someone wants me.

It's that I need to be intensely held..."

Submission Guidelines

An eight- to twelve-page B&W news magazine, dedicated to the English-language community of the Greater Montreal Area, will be published every three months. Submissions for entry into the paper will be accepted from any writer, with preference given to those resident in the Greater Montreal Area.

There will be no compensation to the writer for any work that we might publish. All submissions will be reviewed by our team of editors. There is no guarantee that any submission will be accepted for publication, nor that any accepted submission will be published. Submissions can be made a number of ways:

by e-mail : the.write.place@hotmail.com (subject line: Submission)

by fax : (514) 383-6683 (with a cover page)

by snail mail : The Write Place, C/O 9770, boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montreal, Quebec H3L 2N3

Please include, with your submission, your name, an e-mail address where we can contact you, and a short bio that we might include with your story, if it is accepted. If you have a picture, please feel free to include it. If you want your snail mail submission returned, please enclose a SASE with sufficient postage. Any submission you provide should try to stay within a reasonable limit of these word count guidelines:

Short story :	500-2000 words	Postcard story :	250-500 words
Poetry :	3-50 lines	Book reviews :	500-525 words
Articles (by experts in the field) :	500-1000 words	Letters to the Editor	50-250 words
Advertisements:	increments of 1/8 page (contact us for rates)		

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THE DICTIONARY—A WRITER'S BEST FRIEND

by *Anne J. Fotheringham*

www.bookeditorplus.com

Today's technology offers writers and editors a range of electronic tools to assist them in the creation of correctly written texts. I find, however, that many writers ignore the most basic tool of all – the dictionary.

When I began as a reporter/editor at The Canadian Press, I was taught "when in doubt, look it up." It is a good rule for writers. Otherwise misused and misspelled words can change the intent of your written communications.

A case in point: A magazine article about conservation efforts for trumpeter swans advocated the development of more accessible "breeding" grounds. Due to a misspelled word, a serious article about helping the swans survive, ended up sounding if the author was suggesting the birds should be breaded and, one presumes, deep fried.

Misused or misspelled words can confuse the reader, or worse, send publishers and magazine editors into gales of laughter. Unless you are writing comedy and the word misuse is deliberate, this is not a good thing. It is a pity to send out a manuscript with such errors in it when there is a solution at hand – the dictionary.

Thomas Elliot Berry, author of *The Most Common Mistakes in English Usage*, devotes the first 30 pages of his book to a chapter on "Commonly Confused Words" and another on "Words Commonly Misused." In the first chapter, Berry emphasizes that "speakers and writers use these words incorrectly because they have not learned their precise meaning."

Some words are confused because they are synonyms (they sound alike but don't mean the same thing). Does an artist use a palette or a pallet? Is your heroine a wanton or a wonton? Others words have similar spellings but different meanings. Are we

all together or altogether? Do we raise or rear our children?

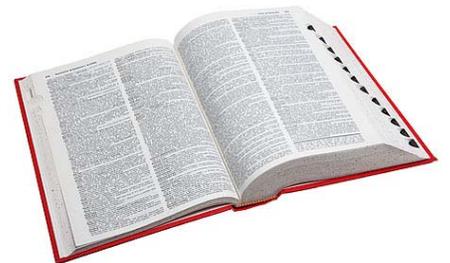
Another form of confused words is called malapropism – using words that sound similar, but have vastly different meanings. The term comes from the name of a character in Richard Sheridan's 1775 play, *The Rivals*. In the play, Mrs. Malaprop uses similarly sounding words in the wrong context for comedic effect. Unfortunately many writers do it because they don't know which word is which because they don't look them up.

For example, in one published article about a senior, the author said the man would live for many more years because he came from a family blessed with "longevity." I guess laughter really is good for you.

In an online report about railway pensioners making a video, the reporter wrote that the men wanted to "relieve" their memories of the steam era. Silly me, I thought they wanted to relive them.

We think of the dictionary as that hefty tome we hauled down off the shelf in school, inwardly groaning at the thought of flipping through its many pages. Today, dictionaries are available online. Writing software usually includes a dictionary function. For example, in MS Word, you can right click on a word, select the "Look Up" function and select the dictionary option. It is fast and easy. So there is really no excuse for using the incorrect word.

So dust off this tried and true writing tool and look up those words you aren't sure about. You will improve the clarity of your writing and your readers will be able to enjoy your work without scratching their heads in confusion or laughing so hard they forget what the article or story was all about.



The CANADIAN WRITERS SOCIETY is a group of writers, both aspiring and published, who believe in sharing their works and ideas with other like-minded individuals. Society activities include:

"Reading and Feedback" evenings, where members are asked to bring in a short piece they have written, to be read in front of the members present, who will then constructively comment on the piece;

"Imagination" evenings, where members are only asked to bring their imagination and quick wit. They will be asked to write short pieces on the spot, either given a single line to embellish, or a topic to expound upon. Once finished, each member will read their piece for the other members present;

"Match Game", where members get to fill in the blanks of phrases and compete to match other members;

Workshop evenings, where selected authors or publishers animate a hands-on workshop of techniques and tricks intended to help and enable members in their craft;

Round Table Discussion evenings, where selected authors, publishers and other members of the industry come together to discuss topics of interest to members;

Lecture evenings, where members can benefit from the wisdom and knowledge that selected speakers are able to impart on topics of member interest.

At present, we hold one meeting a month at the Cote-St-Luc Aquatic Centre on Parkhaven. Our year starts in January and ends in December, with a break in July for vacationers' pleasures.

We usually request a small donation of \$2.00 per meeting to cover the cost of coffee and cookies we supply.

So, take a minute and see what we're all about. Come and join us at one of our meetings and find out what you've been missing.

You can find out a bit more about us on our website:

www.canadianwriterssociety.com

OBSOLESCENCE*By Zachary Chauvin*

I used to frequent an organic tea shop in Monkland, before it very suddenly disappeared. Its entrance was bordered by a lovely water garden and one was led through a chocolate-coloured veranda which was interlaced by a creeping vine. The sounds of a water fountain seemed to peak at the exact moment one walked through the door, and this left you with a sort of dreamy sense, as though you were completely immersed in the natural ambiance of the place. The shop owners were a friendly couple, well versed in the knowledge of ceremonies and pastoral selections. Their willingness to help the patron left one feeling immediately at home, as though the tea leaves represented nothing more than a medium to amicability. The entire place was beaming with plant life. Brown and white was the exterior, viridian green and turquoise surrounded you within.

I ordered the *natural* milk oolong, specifically non-flavoured, from a most-informed man who ran down for me the nuances of leaf distribution and the elaborate manner of ceremonial presentation. As an aspiring apprentice, I muddled the intake, improperly spun the whisk, filled the wrong bowl, misused the trap, and burnt myself on almost everything. The tea master just smiled and led me through it, assisting me with a modest demeanor and focusing his gaze completely in the occupation of this personal engagement. Lo and behold, a steeped product I managed. The first cup was an early pour, optimistically drained, as its subtle notes settled me into the prospect of the remaining leaves, more strongly soaked. I personally never understood the disdain that many tea drinkers feel when consuming tea that has been left to soak longer than five to seven minutes. I certainly appreciate quick steeps, but the lengthy soaks have their own notes and character.

But scorn must determine this piece now. For this quaint little tea shop suddenly closed, as it was. Many genuine things must disappear, must either wander into fairer pastures or enter the all too common predicaments of bankruptcy and receivership. And I, of course, did not expect the place to flourish, not with its unique technique that sought to entice the patron with a completely sensual exercise. It seems, after all, that the present day customer is less interested in the authentic experience, for many spend their days in contrast to reality.

Now, let me explain about contrasting reality, about the encompassing of self, whereby individuals would prefer to surround themselves in ephemeral provisions rather than deal with tangible ones. To move us forward, I mourned the tea shop with a cynical understanding that all proceeding stores on Monkland could not possibly compare to that which I had just left. But, after wandering the avenue in a Western direction, it suddenly occurred to me that a new tea shop had opened up, on the same block as a Starbucks, on its flank, similarly designed by the machinations of moulded plastic. Monkland is not unlike many other streets across North America, where independent stores are, for the most part, fleeting by nature. They waver in and out of our lives, diminished ever further by large corporate substi-

tutes. Interesting tea shops with engaging owners are swapped for architectural templates, mass consumerism and a banal technique.

I purchased from the corporate tea shop, one of sterility and false enthusiasm, one of anxious order and boring sanity, one of pretense and forbearance. In their attempts to devise some sort of wild fantasy for the customer, they managed to withhold critical aspects of sensuality. We are not expected to touch anything natural in the substitute tea shop. It is a narrowing of the senses, where nothing but sight and a sparsity of sound should be accessed.

I recall my own ordering incident, which reinforced this exact predicament. The man working the counter greeted me with a trodden smile before he committed the heel of his hand to the subtle swiping of a digital device. I was urgently asked to place my order, his demands given in that sort of rush, accented tone that is typical of these new age servers, who wish to, first of all, inform and command, then proceed to record and text before once again looking up impatiently. As I was working my order through, I noticed a tiny nub of an antenna had sprung out of his right ear, and it began emitting strange sounds that seemed to keep time with a beaconing ray strategically inset on the door. My voice cracked. The knees upon which I relied were in desperate need of focus. I had to move my panic from the stark consciousness of corporate plasticity back to the sump of zen rites, although this time there was no naturally coloured and coordinated ambiance, just the rigid lines of an alien interior and the endemic grid of radiation. People were queuing up behind me and, because they had digitally loaded all their selections beforehand, they breathed heavy sighs, as they just wanted what was promised them, confirmation screen and all, where addendum and digital evidence marked them. And yet, I had no mark at this juncture, and my only relevance to them was as a blithering essence, causing interference.

Discussions behind me were struck on versions and adoption, new models and compatibility, whether or not the group text functionality was seamless, if it recharged quickly, if it looked better decaled in black or silver, perhaps mauve and cherry blossom. Harrumph and pshaw, I heard whisperings that the old model was dead, for it couldn't synch my order and relay to accumulative reports, the flabbergasted unit was amiss, it was an old dog, caught in riddles which it mistook for tricks, the hair was a mat of loose follicles, the wires were fraying at their circuits, desperately clinging onto any resemblance of the direct current. Obsolescence is a bitch.

Had the basic terms of existence been so radically altered that a process of wiring oneself to civilization was now required before legitimacy was even considered? Could one properly exist outside the digital world? In absence of digital pointers, could I claim a life in this world? Meanwhile, they all wagered that the new model was less inhibiting, for it seamlessly straddled the interface between antenna and door, it interjected and commanded, tied into the new order with the greatest of ease. As though to reinforce, that nub of an antenna in the barista's ear

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(OBSCOLESCENCE, continued from page 4)

continued emitting strange sounds until a beep signified a sync up, and this, to me, was so hopelessly distracting that I had to attribute much of my concentration on phasing portions of it out. But, in the attempts at performing such feats, it became all too obvious that the only true way to cancel the load bearing was to contribute to it myself. And there was this conforming technique that took over, all played out in the presumption of expectation, the very nature of obsolescence, for all that which technology and technique could not co-opt became so unfamiliar that it was either vanquished to the dust bins of runic stacks and asymmetrical heaps, or it was hopelessly absorbed. You either vomited the substance out, or clenched your teeth and drove it down. I very suddenly felt myself tethered by the al-

tered but basic function of survivability, as my audible sense could not realistically interpret the signals without further integration, and, as I was heading for the door, I immediately recognized that such a conciliatory measure might as well comprehend the meaning behind this beaconing ray, and sign-in with open arms. Outside, the wind kicked up and barely disturbed this figure I was. He walked amongst the right-angled polyurethane and the glory of new-age detritus that sticks to the gums, and lines the inner wall of the ear. And who knows what will become of him and it, all this destruction of tea shops and the implementation of poor substitutes. It seems we are expected to be enthralled by the prospect of tearing down all that can be re-instituted into a pale sort of likeness. Like it, tweet it, blog it, share it, tag it, expose it, diminish it.

(THE CHICKEN BROTH EXPERIENCE, continued from page 1)

fields, never having the full opportunity to simply be children. Our generation was lucky because we got to be kids, as we were supposed to be. Had we, however, outgrown our childhood?

Looking at the clock, Nonna mumbled to herself that she could start putting the water to boil after lunch so that the broth could simmer slowly and gather its flavour. "The amount of water depends on the amount of people you're serving," she told me, observing the pot. Of course, I wrote this down because I knew myself and this was a mistake I could, and most probably would, make.

"Are these the onions that you use?" I asked, pointing to the shallots. "Or can we put in 'normal' onions?" I asked as I shaped my hands in the form of a circle, trying to show a "normal" round onion. She said either one is good, whatever I happened to have at the time (which was likely to have been none.)

"Then you cook whatever pasta (or noodle) you're planning on putting in your soup and that's it," she said. Tortellini for me, I thought to myself. Then I looked up from the notes I was taking and tried to take in what she had just said. The pasta was cooked separately? This was news to me. Well, for anyone who spent time in the kitchen other than to get a glass of water, this wasn't news to them.

"You need to cook the pasta separately?" I asked inquisitively. She nodded, gently stirring the pot.

"Yes, that's why I make the broth first because that takes time. The pasta you cook at the end because it's quick to cook."

"And, after cooking the pasta, you mix it in with the broth?" I asked.

"Yes," she said. "You drain the pasta from the water that it was cooking in and then put them in the broth. However, while the broth is cooking, there will be some foam bubbling up. It's important to remove that while cooking. Also, if there are any chicken bones, make sure you take those out, too."

I was rapidly taking notes, like a young apprentice learning from her master. In this case, a master chef, and Nonna is my Gordon Ramsay. I was really impressed at how much I learned that day and how little time it took. For me, cooking had seemed elaborate, like a grand symphony where I was the conductor, guiding an entire orchestra, whe, in fact, it could be as simple as

me and a piano, alone, one on one.

"Also," Nonna added, "you can make a little bit more and use only what you need. You can use some, cook your pasta in it, then put the rest aside and freeze it for another time." I was half listening to Nonna, dreaming of other meals where I could use chicken broth. Oooh, I remember my aunt once mentioning that she made her risotto with chicken broth and I just imagined how good that would taste. I made risotto once and it actually came out pretty good, despite having used water to thicken it. But, now that I knew how to make chicken broth, it would be easy for me to transition it to my risotto.

"So, now you know what to do." Nonna said to me.

I nodded, repeating what she had mentioned before. "So, you can use what you need and freeze the rest, right?"

She nodded, laughing. "Chi te la fatto fare?" Loosely translated, this meant 'who's making you do this'. It was an Italian expression, usually used when someone decided to do something, only to see that this specific activity required a lot of strenuous effort or was really scary. I used this expression when I was on a scary roller coaster, not having realized how scary it was when I had been waiting in line. In this specific case, my grandma said it because she didn't understand why I had to trouble myself and labour over this. What I didn't think she realized was that, if no one took the time to learn this, then our days of cavatelli and delicious chicken broth were truly numbered.

Now, you're probably thinking that I could have gone in any recipe book and learned how to make these meals, or seen an aunt or another relative to learn this, and you would probably be right. My grandmother, however, was my blood, my past and my culture, and learning to make things the way she made them brought tradition into my family. This was something tangible to pass down to my children and their children.

"Ok," she said, bringing me back to reality, "Are you ready to go downstairs and make cavatellis?"

Was I?



MAGIC SOCKS

by Hannah Sklar

My parents, my brother and I arrived in Halifax, Canada, on March 24, 1960. We left our home in Poland for a foreign, distant land that would be safe. Canada was the land of opportunity and freedom.

We boarded the train for Montreal, what was to be our final destination. My father had a sister in Montreal who sponsored us. His brother, along with his wife and two children, would follow us six months later. Our families would be together.

We were greeted by my aunt and uncle at the station in Montreal. Their son was at home. Their daughter had recently gotten married and was away on her honeymoon. My aunt was a tall, heavy-set lady who spoke with a hint of a lisp. She had a habit of crossing her arms at her chest, and giggled as she spoke. My uncle was short, extremely muscular and always angry. His indulgence in a ritual "schnapps" brought out the best in him. He worked as a brick layer. For a child of ten, this first meeting was very scary. Who were these strangers? Where was I? Where were they taking us?

The taxi ride took us through various parts of the city. I saw men in white tights, with black coats and huge round fur hats that were about a foot tall. From around the ear flowed a single long strand of bottled, curled hair. I had never seen Orthodox Jews like that before in my life. As the taxi drove along in the dark, I was able to see people who were equally as dark. They were black. I had never seen black people. My parents spoke with my aunt and uncle in Yiddish. I only spoke Polish. Foreign land. Foreign language. Foreign people. I understood nothing.

We lived at my aunt's and uncle's house in Outremont until we got settled to some degree. My parents had to find employment, a house and enroll my brother and me in appropriate schools.

My parents thought we would benefit from a French education. We would acquire English through playing with other children. The English language was the language of choice in my aunt's house and in the community. My parents were unaware that the School Boards were separated by religious beliefs. French Schools were Catholic. English Schools were Protestant, with a good mix of Jewish. As Jews, we were not permitted to attend French Catholic School.

We were enrolled at Guy Drummond, an English Protestant School. Our first meeting was very positive and welcoming. We were given instructions as to the rules and regulations. We had to adhere to a very specific dress code. For boys, the requirements were dress pants, white shirts, and black, laced shoes. Girls had to wear navy pleated tunics, white blouses, white bobby socks and black, laced shoes. Our aunt was our translator, guide and navigator. I understood nothing.

My aunt took us to get our uniforms. She told my mother not to spend money on the white bobby socks. She had a drawer full of them, from her daughter who no longer needed them.

I got all dressed for my first day of school. My mother brushed and braided my thick curly hair and put in white bows. I was excited, frightened and disoriented. We all walked to school together. Every few steps I had to stop, because these wonder-

ful bobby socks kept falling to my ankles.

We finally arrived at school. My brother and I went to the office. We met with a teacher who would take us to our appropriate classrooms. This lady would later be my English teacher, with whom I would spend most of my day.

Miss Gilmore had thick curly hair, twisted into a bun. She always had pencils sticking out of her hair. I guess, this way, she would never lose them. She was the best English teacher that I had ever had. I owe the love of the language and the special relationship that words can create, to her ability and dedication in communicating this to me. She was a true teacher. I have never forgotten one of her first classes teaching the difference between "this" and "that".

In the first hour in my homeroom, the teacher took attendance. When she called out my name, I stood up. My socks fell to my ankles. The whole class laughed. I stood, unable to move. The socks were chains that imprisoned me. Where I came from, when an adult addressed you, you stood up. One never spoke to a teacher sitting down. It was meant to be a sign of respect. Manners were extremely important to my mother. Did the class laugh at me, at my fallen socks or at the fact that I stood up.? I will never really know. What I do know for sure is how I felt.

Walking home with my brother, it took me twice as long. I would walk until the socks were at my ankles, then I would pull them up. My brother continued walking. I would run to catch up to him. By then, the socks were at my ankles again. This continued all the way home.

As I walked through the door, I ran into my mother's arms, sobbing. I could not stop crying. I would never have worn socks like that in Poland, nor would I have given them to someone else to wear. I never wore clothes that were handed down. We were the ones who gave our things to people who could not afford them. Now it was the other way around. I only wanted to know why my parents brought us here. Why did my aunt give me socks that belonged in the garbage? Why?

When my aunt came home from work, my mother spoke to her about these white bobby socks. Perhaps she had a better pair, with good elastic bands to hold them up. She brought us to the bureau, and pulled out a drawer full of these socks. Some were even brand new, in their original packaging. My aunt told us that I could not have them. She was saving the new bobby socks for my cousin, who had yet to arrive from Poland. I felt as if I had been physically slapped across my face. I understood nothing.

Why? Were these socks so special that they could not adorn my legs? Was I any less of a human being than my cousin who had yet to arrive? Why was she more special than I? What were we doing here?

These socks were a window into my life. These magic socks had the ability to shape who I was forever.

The older that I am, the less I know, but one thing I know for sure is how I felt. Intellectually, I understand and value the lessons. Emotionally, every time that I see my cousin, I am reduced to that child, anchored by the white magic socks at my ankles.



SPACE TRAVELERS*by Marie-Anne Ricci*

I knew him because I waited, in my dreams, in the depths of the curvatures of my brain, while counting the cracks alongside the decorated pavement
 A body that spoke my language before I could even extend my hand
 I recognized his smell as I did my favorite song
 Aliens of the same kind, he finally understood my mother tongue
 With talks of Jupiter, art and the future
 I assumed that he knew his way
 The funeral lingered in the background while the dead cattle sizzled
 "J'ai été perdu en l'espace avec lui"
 The thought of being uncovered by the strings of his guitar led me up his bedroom stairs
 My seduction wore his curiosity destructively
 My lullaby hung on his collarbone
 He gained what he wanted from me, what I kept guarded during a full rotation of the planet
 I danced barefoot to the vibrations of his throat all alone in my mind
 He brought back to life what was dead only to steal one more of my nine lives
 His ego was over fed by the broken pieces of my heart
 Words will only go as far as the edge of this page but aide in releasing the ones he wrote to me
 Evolution proved the religious seven day believers wrong
 Just as it took him seven days to live a whole lifetime with me in a dialogue
 Dropped from the ledge of the universe, I was recovered by the generosity of gravity
 Struggling to find the remaining beauty in the lack of oxygen that existed in space
 The pyramid of words that were strung together on a mountain,
 will always be remembered in cursive to romanticise our short celestial experience
 Aliens do exist
 No crime committed, his words were simply not as powerful as his eyes
 No confirmation needed on the speculation
 His charm came in first place.

FEARS AND TEARS*by Robin Goldstein*

Deformed bodies get up from wooden planks,
 Men, women and children they are, but look no more than bodies back from the dead.
 In the next room the elderly cry in agony with their last breath.
 Young children watch their parents fall to the ground next to a wall full of bullet holes.
 Fear pierces their hearts, and pained expressions are revealed on their faces.
 Murderers march along the camp walls.
 They are not afraid. They are the ones to be feared.
 Innocent people, ostracized, then killed.
 Doom could not be avoided by the unfortunate.
 People found out and sent away.
 Families separated and lost forever.....
 If only there hadn't been a HOLOCAUST.

**HAKIDONMUYA***by Ilona Martonfi*

Mother taught me about
 yucca fruit, and prickly pear berries,
 and even where piñons were growing
 my name Hakidonmuya —
 time of the waiting moon
 the female puberty ceremonies
 when she becomes a woman:

spinning sheep's wool on her spindle
 saying prayers at dawn.

Mother taught me about
 men hunting and trading
 women stayed home
 tending sheep, corn and weaving.
 Breads, tortillas, fry bread
 some baked in the ground
 water was scarce lots of times
 on a hill near the rattle snakes
 hogan doorway facing the sunrise

juniper, sagebrush, cliff rose.

Wrapped her in new blankets
 relatives placed her in the box
 carried her across the Wash.

Burned the hogan after she died.

THE HOUSE ON L'ACADIE

by *Andreas Kessarlis*

Growing up, my family never owned a home. We usually rented the top floor of a Park Extension row house duplex. When I was five, we moved from such a dwelling on Birnam Street after residing there briefly. My parents didn't get along with the landlord, a man I thought was named "Mooney" because that was what my father constantly referred to him as when he wasn't around. (I was ignorant at the time of what that word meant in Greek.) We found a new place to live, on L'Acadie Boulevard between Ball and Jarry Avenues that was owned by my mother's employer. It was an actual house for once, completely detached, simple and modest but with a basement, a driveway, a garage, and a backyard we didn't have to share with anyone else. What's more, for the first time, we would be living on the ground floor. (There were two small rental units above us, but they were single bedroom bachelors and we rarely saw the people who resided there.)

The southern side of the house bordered an unpaved alley that cut across from L'Acadie to Birnam where children could safely play but, when I first saw the property, what captured my imagination was the large vacant lot on the other side. My first thoughts, setting eyes upon it, were of how much fun it was going to be to frolic there every day of the summer. It was like having a park right next door.

We moved in on the first of July. The next day I awoke to find a huge yellow backhoe parked on the property, and the day after that, workmen came with several dump trucks and dug up the entire property about fifteen feet deep. Apparently, the reason the previous tenants bugged out and the rent was so affordable was that a three-storey apartment building was about to be erected there and they wanted to take off before it happened. My parents were, to put it mildly, slightly upset that they were not forewarned about the impending construction before signing the lease. So was I.

My brother and I made fast friends with a skinny, blonde-haired Italian kid named John, from across the alley, who, age-wise, was exactly between us. We used to hang out, now and again, with other children who lived on the alley but, primarily, it was just the three of us. On weekends we'd mess around in the massive pit with other neighbourhood kids who could not resist the lure of a forbidden zone. It was fun playing in there, although quite dangerous. Some of the boys would throw small rocks they would find at each other and often fights would erupt. The younger set, myself included, usually needed help climbing out when it was time to go home for supper. John and my brother would never hesitate to give me a hand up, but others were less fortunate and sometimes remained trapped until their parents came looking for them. Kids would continue to trespass even well after the foundation was poured and the con-

struct slowly took take shape.

It was not long before a huge truck dropped off tons of various assorted lumber products, like large plywood panels, and a seemingly infinite number of two-by-fours. During the week, the loud, aggravating construction would continue, but on weekends the site was unguarded, with large piles of scrap wood dumped in the rear. My brother, John, and I would creep onto the property and nab as much as we could carry and, using my father's tools, we'd fashion the discarded lumber into elaborate, well-built, (considering we were children), play sets for our eagle-eye G.I. Joe's with Kung-Fu grip or our superhero action figures. At night we would store the architectural marvels beneath our spacious backyard patio.

Other young Park Ex denizens would sneak onto the site to steal what they could, or commit inexplicably senseless acts of vandalism, like smashing the soda bottles the workers left behind, unaware that they could have returned them to the local *depanneur* for the deposit. Sometimes, the owner of the lot would show up and chase the intruders away with a baseball bat, and other times he would have security guards do the same with billy clubs. Our little trio had long since stopped going there, except to pilfer the occasional piece of timber required to complete Spider-man's motel, or G.I. Joe's sauna, or whatever we were working on at the time.



One rainy day, late in the summer, my brother and I slipped onto the site for an attractive plank of plywood we noticed on the discard pile. There were already a large gang of kids messing around and causing havoc in what was, by then, a skeletal frame structure. The Heat unexpectedly showed up and, one and all, scattered like rabbits.

Some of the trespassers were corralled by Montreal's finest, but most adroitly gave them the slip. My brother and I managed to get back into our home safely, with one minor hitch: they saw us.

We trembled with fear as a police officer walked up the front steps and rang the doorbell. We thought for sure the cops were going to drag us away in handcuffs. My mother was home and well aware of what was going on. She knew that we "borrowed" construction materials from next door . . . hell, she encouraged us and praised our creativity and ingenuity. (Mom made a living at the time doing piecework for a children's clothing manufacturer, so it didn't hurt that the activity also kept us busy and out of her hair while she spent the better part of her day stitching together shirt collars in her sewing room.)

My brother and I watched from the living room window as my mother talked to the officers on the sidewalk in front of our house for over twenty minutes. We could not make out what she was saying but, typical of her, she was animated and did not give them a chance to get a word in edge-wise. I'm not sure what it was about her, but my mother always knew how to get

(Continued on page 9)

(THE HOUSE ON L'ACADIE, continued from page 8)

people to do what she wanted. If we went to a restaurant and there was a line-up to get in, she would ask to speak to the manager and aggressively say things like “we’ve been dining here for years” or “I know the chef’s wife” or whatever, and suddenly we would find ourselves at the best table. Who knew if what she said was true?

Mom led the officers, who by now were joined by the construction boss and the owner of the soon-to-be apartment building, to the backyard and showed them all the things we built with their lumber.

“What’s she doing?” my brother asked me, “Why is she showing them what we stole? Is she trying to get us into more trouble?” We retreated to our room to await the inevitable. About five minutes later, Mom came in and told us not to worry, the police had gone.

“What happened?” we asked.

“I told them that you were just taking useless old pieces of wood and using them to make things for your toys so you can play with,” she said in her thick Greek accent, “I showed them

what you made. They left you some more scraps in the driveway if you promise not to go into the construction place again and I told them you would stay away from now on, so that’s it,” she said as she threw up her hands and shot us her trademark wry smirk.

My brother and I looked out a window and saw a long two-by-four and some other discarded pieces of timber in the driveway, which we quickly collected and stored for later use.

We never went onto the site again. Within a few months, the building was complete. The view from my bedroom window became a depressing brick wall that blocked all sunlight. Soon people started moving into what was ultimately a poorly-made yellow tenement that, to this day, remains an eyesore in an area containing some of the more charming abodes in Park Ex.

We only lived there for two years before the house’s proprietor sold it out from under us. My parents found a cheaper rental on Stuart Avenue . . . another second floor row house duplex, where we would end up residing for over a decade.

It was a sad day for me when we left. I’ll never forget the house on L’Acadie.



WINTER

by Timothy Martin

Winter is the time of being indoors and keeping warm.
Away from the cold winter weather and away from harm.

It is a time of sharing and a time of renewing Love.
Open your heart; reaching out yours without a shove.

It is a time of renewal of beliefs of all types and kinds.
It’s a time to reassess your life and to open your minds.

Be thankful for all the blessings you have - physical and spiritual.
A time to reflect the New Year, and a time to be thoughtful.

When bundled up to face the cold and harsh silence outside.
Like children; instinctively listening for sleigh bells, eyes wide.

Whether sitting by the roaring fire, or snuggling under the covers in bed.
Cuddling together; ignoring all else, protected from cold by the warm bed spread.

It is a time to re-organize all past garbage; to put away the past and forget.
It is time to enjoy the holiday; coming closer to each other, singing together a duet.

Awaiting the passing of seasons; from winter to spring.
Kept behind walls; waiting until summer comes eclipsing.



CHRISTMAS DREAMS

by Doug Lucas

This time of year, memories of youthful Christmas mornings float around me like long lost friends.

One such memory is the year my brother and I got bicycles from Santa. After all the *clothes* were opened, my dad told us to take the trash and put it out on our back porch. That was where our shiny, red Western Flyer bikes were and that's where two disappointed little boys were suddenly screaming for joy. Santa didn't forget us . . . my dad was playing the Christmas Grinch and enjoying the results of his humor at our expense.

There are so very many childhood memories which seem to make this time of year even sweeter. Trips to see my Grandma or Memaw on Christmas afternoons for family dinners are right at the top of these cherished times in my life. Gifts had nothing to do with the joy these memories evoke . . . no, these precious celebrations were centered on love, family and, of course, all the sugar cookies I could eat.

No family gathering at either house was complete 'til the Christmas story was read . . . and I don't mean "*The Night Before Christmas*" either. But homemade root beer, apple or cherry pies and, of course, sugar cookies always seemed to add to the beauty of the story being read to us. This was also the only time of year when second helpings from Memaw or Grandma for any dessert were only a hug and kiss away.

There are other memories of Christmases past which are bitter sweet and always serve to make the joyful memories of Christmases from my youth even more cherished. The first year Memaw wouldn't be making Christmas sugar cookies, or the year I knew Grandma wouldn't be reading the Christmas story for us, are two I remember best. Another is the first Christmas I couldn't come home, followed the next year by the Christmas I wasn't even sure I would see. The loss of one of my sons last Christmas and the pain it caused his children are fresh memories

even sugar cookies haven't healed.

But I would say some of my most cherished Christmases as an adult more than make up for the bitter empty feelings these events caused. For example, I was married at Christmas time and spent my first Christmas morning that year as a married man with my own small family. This joy was amplified the next two Christmas mornings because I helped open and play with presents for my sons. I have an image burned into my memory of my wife holding my baby daughter in front of her parents' lighted Christmas tree, as her mother gave chocolate chip cookies to my sons. These are memories which are far different from those of my childhood . . . yet are just as dear, in their own way.

Just in case you're wondering . . . yes . . . I did keep my father's Christmas traditions of gift giving alive for not only my own children, but now my grandchildren. I also follow my father's example of Christmas snooping. I would offer a word of caution here . . . one should know how to act not only grateful for the gift . . . but surprised at the same time. These skills are gifts you give others and in no way should be considered crimes against Christmas. My grandson, who lives with us, would make my father proud . . . I know I'm proud of how he is learning the value of family traditions.

So, just what are Christmas Dreams? The older I get, the more I come to realize those dreams are memories of times spent with family and are filled with promises for the future. Christmas evokes the emotions we felt from those times we've enjoyed, or endured, with others. Christmas is the reminder from God to take pleasure in those little day to day joys of sharing, giving or receiving the gift of love. These dreams allow us to step back in time and once again be with loved ones who've departed and are filled with our hopes for new beginnings.

Christmas Dreams are love and really can, and should, be enjoyed year round . . . not just once a year.



Canadian Writers Society

For the Love of Writing

Rosalie, Joseph, and the members of the Canadian Writers Society, would like to take this opportunity to thank the Cote Saint Luc Recreation Department for their continued support, and to thank our numerous contributors to this issue, writers from Montreal and other areas of Canada, as well as contributors from the United States and the UK.

NEXT ISSUE — Deadline for submissions for our next issue: **February 15th, 2015.**

We would also like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of our readers, and our members, a very Happy Holiday Season, as well as a very prosperous, healthy, happy . . . and imaginative . . . New Year.

We look forward to receiving your SUBMISSIONS . . . short stories, poems, articles, book or movie reviews, letters to the editor. We know you can do it. Let's get your name, and your work, out there for the public to enjoy! Be a part of our new and exciting plans!