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Gregg Brown

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on Interviews with these
Port Dover and Norfolk County
authors



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Kari Gunson



Peter Ivey



Autumn Demarest



Janice MacLeod



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Writer-Artist Bruce McCall came back to Simcoe to rest

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

When I contacted Amanda McCall, she readily agreed to speak about her late father Bruce - the Simcoe native who found success in New York as a writer, illustrator, and humorist.

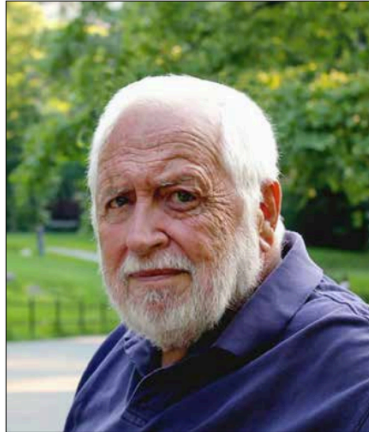
But she said it might not be easy.

"Of course, the Norfolk County area meant so much to him and was such a formative part of his life - it would be my pleasure," Amanda said. Still, she added, "Though it's been over a year since he passed, I've only just started to speak about him publicly."

Her emotions echoed the many affectionate profiles and heartfelt obituaries published after Bruce McCall's Parkinson's-related death in May 2023. These tributes, often quoting admirers like Steve Martin, David Letterman, Adam Gopnik, and Andy Borowitz, celebrated McCall's creative brilliance. He left his mark as an advertising executive, humorist, and contributor to *National Lampoon*, *Vanity Fair*, *Playboy*, and especially *The New Yorker*, for which he illustrated some 80 covers.

Yet the tributes also emphasized the personal: his deep love for Polly, his wife of 50 years, and the pride he felt in their daughter, Amanda.

Many stories touched on his early life in Simcoe, sometimes framing his success as something achieved despite his upbringing in Norfolk County. In fairness, McCall often encouraged this interpretation. He frequently lampooned his hometown as a place of small-town dullness and a difficult childhood. His years on Union Street were marked by an often-absent, stern father and a mother who relied on alcohol while raising six children. Both parents, who died relatively young, are buried at Oakwood Ceme-



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Writer-Artist Bruce McCall, from Simcoe, found success in New York as a writer, illustrator, and humorist.

tery - now also the resting place of their famous son.

"Dad always wanted to be buried in Simcoe," Amanda said. "Though his books might suggest he couldn't wait to leave town and Canada, in the end, he wanted to come back."

McCall chronicled his early days and his quest for a bigger life in two memoirs: *Thin Ice* (1997) and *How Did I Get Here*, completed with Amanda's help shortly before his death. Reviews often describe the story of a bubbling talent who felt stifled by the dim context of mid-century Canada and who found light and opportunity south of the border.

But readers also find warmth in these pages: a fondness

for childhood books, the seed of a lifelong passion for art, and glimpses of a curious, inventive spirit shaped partly by the quiet of a rural, Canadian town.

"This place was the start of his career," Amanda said. "He basically did the same thing as a kid in Simcoe that he did all his life - and ended up getting paid for it."

His creativity may have been nurtured by the very limitations of small-town life - and by a lack of big-city distraction. That early spark led to an eclectic career that included a stint writing for *Saturday Night Live*, time in Germany overseeing advertising for Mercedes-Benz, and a series of offbeat, visually inventive books.

For Norfolk County readers, McCall's autobiographies offer a unique window on a bygone era, local history, and a one-of-a-kind life. His other books, however, reveal the quirky, two-dimensional genius of a man who left Simcoe with mixed feelings but returned to it in the end with love and affection.

Illustrative titles such as *Zany Afternoons* (1982), *Viagra Nation* (1998), *All Meat Looks Like South America* (2003), and *This Land Was Made for You and Me (But Mostly Me): Billionaires in the Wild* (2013) hint at the trope of satire and surreal imagination presented on the pages inside. The latter book was co-written with Letterman.

"My dad was particularly good at making fun of the wealthy - the excesses of the obscenely rich," Amanda said in reference to the *Billionaires* book. "Only his love of drawing cars came close."

The connection to Letterman didn't stop with the book. Amanda herself spent a number of years working on *The Late Show*, before moving on to other TV projects and authoring books of her own. Her creative path may have taken varied forms, but when speaking with her, you sense that the deepest bond with her father came in the shared pursuit of laughter.

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

You can find many of Bruce McCall's books at the Norfolk County Library or through Beach Reads Bookshop. For the full podcast interview with Amanda, check out doverwrites.blogspot.com

Eating local with author Autumn Demarest

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

"English and writing used to be my weakest subjects," says Autumn Demarest. "I really struggled with it (and) I probably cried writing essays in high school."

The Norfolk County food writer and photographer (formerly Autumn Ongaro) overcame her challenges with the written word, in part, through education and work experience, which included studies in biological sciences, psychology, and teaching.

But Autumn really wrestled the written word to the ground when she decided to celebrate local farmland and food crops in her book FEAD. The book, published in 2022, combines local history, profiles of farms and farmers, innovative recipes, and high-quality photography in a work that is both entertaining and informative. It is a wonderful souvenir of our region.

Autumn grew up on the border of Haldimand and Norfolk, had lots of friends, and liked the area. But as a teenager, she looked forward to moving away and seeing more. This took her to Guelph and Cardiff universities and work as a teacher.

"But I didn't have a passion for it and would have to drag my butt into the classroom each day," she said. "I felt that the kids deserved so much more than this and that they needed a teacher who wanted to be there."

So, Autumn moved back to Norfolk County to regroup and to find a new career. One that might satisfy the cre-



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Norfolk County author and photographer Autumn Demarest.

ativity she craved.

"Since I was two, I've been painting," she said. "But I also really enjoyed cooking."

After having been away from the area for years, she was struck on return by the abundance of food crops in the area. She saw an opportunity to tap those creative instincts with food photography, innovative recipes, and posts on Instagram, which drew international attention and eventually demand for her web content services.

"Companies would send me their products, and I would invent recipes using them and then take photos," Autumn

explains. "This inspired me to wonder how I could make these recipes better with local, fresh ingredients."

Going to markets and talking to farmers led her to make the connections and to gather material that eventually manifested in FEAD, a title that plays on the notion of "feed" as "the act of giving food to encourage growth and to satisfy."

Today Autumn and her chef husband Matt, another Norfolk native, walk the local crop talk with their business Thrive Norfolk, which offers a six-course outdoor dining experience amid the bounty and beauty of their Langton area farm.

"That's what really brings a lot of joy to me," Autumn said in talking about food and creative recipes. "I'm very passionate about it."

This passion not only drove her to hone her writing skills, but also study photography, learn specialized software, and develop her marketing networks. This has, in turn, positioned her to produce other books such as a new one on the magic of sourdough (The Sourdough Mini Guide: Just the Essentials for Beginner Sourdough Bakers) - and possibly a sequel to FEAD.

"I would definitely like to do another one," she says. "There are so many different farms that could be interviewed, more knowledge out there, and more education that could be done about the food we eat."

So, even though high school English was a struggle and working in a classroom was not a good fit, Autumn Demarest is still very much a teacher.

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

Autumn's books can be found at retail locations throughout Norfolk County as well as the Beach Reads Bookshop and the Norfolk County Public Library. For the podcast interview in full, check out <https://doverwrites.blogspot.com>

John B. Lee strives to create melodic poetry

“Easy on the ears and easy to read”

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

Port Dover's celebrated poet John B. Lee writes with his ear.

No. He doesn't stick a pencil in it and turn his head at right angles to the paper. He tests his work against the standard of its sound.

“I always read what I'm writing back to myself out loud,” John says, adding that he is looking for specific, melliferous qualities. “To see if it's euphonious.”

Regarded among Canada's leading poets, John is a three-time Poet Laureate whose work has garnered many, many prestigious national and international recognitions. These include the People's Poetry Award and the CBC Literary Award, both of which he has won twice.

He says a euphonious quality is the aspiration of modern poetry. It contrasts with the staccato, rhythmic form of what many might consider traditional verse.

While he still appreciates the value of the traditional forms, he strives for works that are both easy on the ears and easy to read. John's poems are not crafted with meter and rhyming patterns, but rather to flow.

“When it works, you don't stumble when you read it aloud,” he says but adds that good poetry needs more. “(It shows in) the combination of the beauty of the vowels and the euphony of the consonants.”

John calls it “Dictionary Music” because it is melodic and can draw upon the whole lexicon, every word in the English language as well as words that a writer invents or borrows from other languages.

Close to 100 published books carry John B. Lee's name as an author or editor. Many are, of course, poetry collections but they also comprise works of non-fiction. The former include two recent publications, *That's not You*



John B. Lee

(DICK BOURGEOIS-DOYLE PHOTO)

and *A School called Normal*. The latter is exemplified by a 2023 biography of controversial War of 1812 figure Joseph Wilcocks.

The recent poetry collections are inspired, in part, by memories of rural schools in the 1950s, high school days, and years in front of classes. With a graduate degree in education and 14 years experience as a teacher, John remains comfortable with students of all ages. He has lectured at universities and colleges in Canada and abroad as well as serving as a Writer-in-Residence and Visiting Professor. While students at this level might appreciate his lessons on the craft of writing, others know the poet for something other.

“When I go into elementary schools or Kindergarten,

I have so much fun,” says the poet and children's author who plays the guitar, writes songs, and sings.

Although Lee feels we too often underestimate the capacity of younger students, his Wilcocks biography, *King Joe*, might not fit all elementary school sensibilities. It touches upon grisly elements of Upper Canada history including linkages to the bloody Ancaster Assizes trials that brought hung, drawn, and quartered penalties for condemned traitors. Wilcocks was sentenced in absentia and eventually fell in battle around Fort Erie.

John B. Lee was drawn to this story for two reasons. One was the complex forces that led Wilcocks to change sides and earn the label of traitor. The other was the association with Peacock Point, the location of Lee's family cottage. The Point's namesake and his son were both implicated in the treason episode with the younger Peacock facing the agonies of the Assizes.

“Names are like a little thread, you pull it and you see what's behind it,” John says in describing how he became drawn into the Peacock story and then that of Wilcocks.

King Joe is informed by original research and a history lover's quest for truth. But it also shows the poet's touch in its vivid description of events and the humanity behind them.

To acquire that poetic skill, John B. Lee says a writer needs to learn the craft through study of the masters. With that, inspiration and creativity can flow. His own early heroes were Dylan Thomas, Irving Layton, and Leonard Cohen.

“If you practice it long enough, and your models are people like Thomas,” he says. “You will recognize someday that you are doing it intuitively and creating that music.”

And at that point, you will be writing with your ear.

- Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

John B. Lee and his writing group meet at 1 p.m. on the first Thursday each month at the Lynnwood Arts Centre. Anyone is welcomed to attend. Look for his books at Beach Reads Bookshop or the Norfolk County Public Library. For the podcast interview in full, check out <https://doverwrites.blogspot.com>

New York Times bestseller returns to Norfolk

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Voltaire, and other writers throughout the centuries would beg to differ.

But one best-selling author might say that it's better to live in Port Dover than Paris. At least sometimes.

Janice MacLeod says that while she loves travel, urban settings, and international experience, she appreciates small-town serenity when it comes time to sit, think, and write.

"When we go to Paris, ideas flood back," she says. "And it's great to have those inspiring buckets, (but I like to) bring them back home because for a creative the biggest asset is time, you need to manage your time, and Norfolk County is great for that."

This is an interesting comment coming from a writer whose New York Times bestseller *Paris Letters* celebrates the City of Light, a place where she lived, created, and fell in love. In a 2024 interview, Janice talked openly

about her work, her setbacks, and her successes, sharing tips that could help anyone looking to publish and to make a living in creative arts.

One tip is to look at the enterprise from the perspective of potential publishers. To this end, she set out a detailed marketing strategy in a successful seventy-page proposal to the ideal literary agent.

"I'd already created a business ecosystem with my Etsy shop where I sold illustrated letters, and I had a growing audience for my blog," Janice, who is also a watercolorist and online marketing expert, says. "Now, the books act as a kind of brochure for the shop and my other products."

Having a ready-made audience and business infrastructure can attract a publisher. But the Norfolk County native stresses that the starting point has to be the work. Not wanting to be "braggy," Janice says she feels that her book was well written.

"It's an easy read," she adds. "It's short chapters, and all the letters are just one page, very short, but hopefully sweet, kind, thoughtful."

Paris Letters is indeed unique. It is a memoir that tells how MacLeod landed in Paris, became an artist, and financed her life abroad with illustrated letters she mailed out to Francophiles around the world. Her follow up, *A Paris Year*,

is an illustrated journal of her time in Paris and features photos, sketches, and stories. Finally, *Dear Paris*, is the complete collection of all the letters, spanning over a decade of monthly missives about her favourite European city.

Nevertheless, after twenty-five years spent between Los Angeles and France, Janice, who was raised in Clear Creek and spent ten summers on her uncle's tobacco farm, chose to return to Norfolk County. Here she has established a home with her *Paris Letters* husband to raise their daughter. She continues to create art and more letters. A notecard collection will be published next year along with a letter series on cottage life.

Though she likes the quiet small-town surroundings when it comes time to write, the author also appreciates the amenities that were not here when she left. Janice cites "the bookshop, the cheese store, the Good Bread Company" and, of course, the store named "Urban Parisian."

- Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

Look for *Paris Letters* by Janice MacLeod at the Norfolk Public Library or Beach Reads Bookshop, and for the podcast interview in full, check <https://beachreads.ca/our-community/dover-writes>



Janice MacLeod

(DICK BOURGEOIS-DOYLE PHOTO)

Fantasy, sci-fi can be a journey of self-discovery

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

Grotesque creatures, mysterious portals, and unexplained powers - these aren't exactly everyday experiences in Port Dover.

But for fantasy writer Peter Ivey, they sprang naturally from the imagination he developed while growing up in the tranquil Norfolk County fishing village.

Today, Peter finds joy both reading and writing in the fantasy genre. His work, including The Lost Tribe series, takes readers on adventures across multiple imaginary worlds - and offers him a unique creative outlet in the process.

"Since I started reading, fantasy writing has always been a dream of mine," Peter said in an interview. "One day, I realized the creativity wasn't coming out in any other way. So, I told myself: just sit down, stop being intimidated by the blank page, and write."

So far, Peter has written four installments in The Lost Tribe series, with more on the way - alongside other book projects. The series follows a sometimes-reluctant hero, Mick Farrow, who has mysterious powers he doesn't fully understand. Those powers link him to others with their own gifts and backstories.

A research analyst, educator, poet, and novelist, Peter Ivey has deep Port Dover roots, with family ties running through both the Ivey and Gamble families.

"Growing up in Dover, you had to go about 20 kilome-



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Peter Ivey, fantasy fiction and sci-fi author.

ters before you didn't trip over a cousin," he joked. Though he now lives in Hamilton, Peter visits often.

Despite his strong local ties, Peter enjoys the challenges and pleasures of inhabiting other worlds - and meeting beings defined only by the limits of his imagination.

When we met, I asked Peter to pitch the fantasy genre to someone who usually reads non-fiction - history, science, and data-heavy books. He explained that fantasy and adventure novels can offer new perspectives on the real world and its issues.

"People with interests in multiple disciplines often find that having a creative outlet like this helps them look at life through a new lens," he said. "Your mind goes to different places and makes new associations. You start thinking more abstractly, which gives you more flexibility when exploring the world and understanding the forces that shape history."

That's one reason Peter built his hero, Mick, not as a swashbuckling warrior, but as a curious mind.

"I was so in love with the way Patrick Stewart played Captain Picard on The Next Generation," Peter explained. "We went from the adventure-seeking Kirk - the space cowboy - to this intellectual who saw exploration and imagination as a duty to learn."

Peter also believes that writing fantasy or sci-fi can be a journey of self-discovery. These imaginary worlds provide rich landscapes for working through problems, navigating around obstacles, and exercising the creative muscles.

All in all, Peter Ivey makes a strong ambassador for the genre - and he encourages others to try it themselves. Start by reading more fantasy, he suggests. Maybe even begin with The Lost Tribe stories, which - like Peter - start out in a seemingly tranquil fishing village.

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

Look for books in The Lost Tribe series at Beach Reads Bookshop, and check out Peter's full interview on the DoverWrites podcast at www.doverwrites.blogspot.com

Local author's young reader books mix hardship, hope

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle



(DICK BOURGEOIS-DOYLE PHOTO)

Simcoe author Deborah Ellis.

"I don't know if that's a (YA writing) rule, but it's certainly my rule."

Deborah Ellis says it's her practice to end all books for young adults on "a note of hope." She feels that stories shouldn't leave youthful readers in despair.

"So, I have to look for how do we become stronger? How do we become more capable of loving one another? How do we become more able to deal with the difficulties that life throws at us?" the award-winning author said in a recent podcast interview.

Deborah has lived in Simcoe for many years, her wife is a long-time Norfolk County resident, and her father and late mother made the area their home long ago. She has built a highly impactful and celebrated career from this base, drawing upon a passion for writing and an identity formed when she was a young student growing up in Paris, Ontario.

Working in Toronto in the 1990s, Deborah tapped experience in poorer neighbourhoods to craft her first book: *Looking for X*, the story of an eleven-year-old girl whose friend, a homeless woman, went missing. The book was a success.

Around the same time, Deborah and her colleagues were searching for ways to support women living under Afghanistan's oppressive Taliban regime.

Inspired by the oral history work of American journalist Studs Terkel, she set out at her own expense to meet and record the stories of women who had fled to refugee camps in Pakistan. These stories fed into an academic monograph and later the more accessible book *The Breadwinner*. The post-9/11 interest in Afghanistan and the plight of its people led to the development of an animated film based on the book.

The film attracted support from Angelina Jolie, led to the assembly of a consortium of creative filmmakers, and earned an Academy Award nomination. This, in turn, solidified Deborah's status as an inspiring writer and rewarded her publisher Groundwood Books for its foresight and commitment to young audiences.

The *Breadwinner* has been published in 30 languages, and Deborah has written some 30 more books in the ensuing years. These works have brought her the Governor General's Award, the Middle East Book Award, the Peter Pan Prize, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, the Vicky Metcalf Award, and the Order of Canada.

Her books have, of course, also brought in a lot of money. But most of it has been redirected to worthy causes aligned with

the stories Deborah Ellis has told. She has donated more than \$2 million in royalties to organizations such as Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, Mental Health Without Borders, UNICEF, and the UN-HCR.

Though they touch many countries and tell of many forms of danger, all of Deborah's books echo the mix of hardship and hope epitomized by the *Breadwinner* series, which now includes five books. The fifth, *One More Mountain* published in 2022, picks up on the lives of Parvana and Shauzia, the brave girls who posed as boys to help their families survive 20 years earlier. Now, they are grown women facing the return of the Taliban and new dangers.

Such a turn of events could be the fuel for despair in life and literature. But Deborah Ellis resists, seeing a ray of hope in the possibility that the new Afghan regime is not monolithic. She notes that it has pockets of men who were raised and educated in a society exposed to what women can contribute and that many are not like the draconian old guard.

"Regardless, I have no right to be in despair. I have money, I have health, I have people who love me," she says suggesting that the search for hope has helped her through the difficult circumstance she has witnessed. "So, I can't go there. That would be self-indulgent."

With this perspective and approach, Norfolk County's Deborah Ellis has helped millions around the world turn from despair and see hope in their own lives.

It is a particular measure of writing success.

Celebrating Local Writers

Find books by Deborah Ellis including her latest *The Outsiders* (2024) at *Beach Reads Bookshop* or the *Norfolk County Public Library* and for the podcast interview in full, check out <https://doverwrites.blogspot.com>

Local change management author 'sparks action'

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

"I knew I liked teaching," says Gregg Brown in reflecting on the career path that led to his status as a popular keynote speaker and trainer. "But I also knew I didn't want to be a teacher."

Brown, an internationally recognized expert on change management, started developing his communications and mentoring skills in high school. He tutored other students, taught crafts and canoeing as a camp counsellor, and worked as a tour guide at a national museum while in his teens. He thought that a career in early childhood education was in his future.

"I just loved doing that sort of stuff," Gregg says, adding how much he admires schoolteachers at every level. "But by the time I graduated, I knew I liked dealing with the kids for an hour or two, but not full-time and not for a stretch of nine months or more."

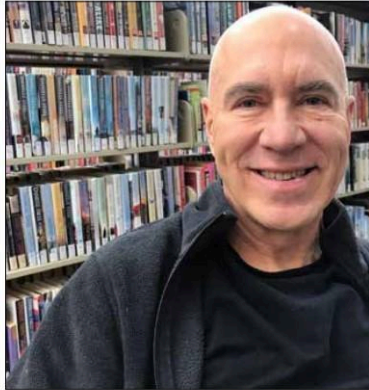
So, he abandoned plans to be a teacher and suppressed his educator inclinations for a while. Then he found himself drawing upon those skills in the late 1980s as part of the team that opened the first wave of Starbucks stores in Canada. The company recognized that he had a talent for training. This led Gregg into formal study and eventually work helping people increase their productivity as a consultant.

"I like helping people improve how they do their jobs and enjoy work," says Gregg. "We only have one life to live and most of us spend lots of time at our jobs so why shouldn't we make it as great as it can be."

As he refined his coaching and mentoring abilities, Gregg found himself working with people at the highest level in Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and international humanitarian organizations. The research and thoughts applied in his training programs have been packaged in contributions to trade publications, magazine articles, and books that include *Spark Action: How to Lead Change That Matters*.

This book presents tools to help leaders, teams, and individuals engage in new ideas and make changes that help them and their organizations. As the title suggests, the goal is to induce action and have an impact.

"There's a distinction between selling an idea and actually getting people to act upon it," says Gregg in describing the book's content and format. "There's no point in selling someone on something unless they're going to do



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Gregg Brown is a popular keynote speaker and internationally recognized expert on change management and the future of work.

something with that."

While Gregg Brown has an impressive portfolio of corporate clients, he also brings his training and motivational abilities to charitable organizations and other volunteer work which has included workshops in prisons and sex education sessions with nuns. The stories around these experiences add texture to *Spark Action* and make it an easy read that has been lauded by the leadership training world.

"That's the fun stuff,"

Gregg says, adding that,

nevertheless, his book is

intended to be a practical

resource as illustrated

by the exercises and

bullet-point summaries

throughout. The book's

success as a No. 1 Amazon

Best-seller attests to the

effectiveness of its format,

the value of its content,

and the author's inherent

ability to engage and com-

municate.

Gregg has lived in Otta-

wa, Vancouver, and else-

where and could pursue

his career from a base almost anywhere in the world. But for close to two decades, he has been coming to Norfolk County and settled here permanently with his partner well over a decade ago, first in Normandale and finally in a home overlooking the lake in Port Dover.

"We wanted something that had more amenities and was walking distance to restaurants, the theater and shops," Gregg says noting that he later learned about a family connection to the village. "Long after we moved here, my father-in-law told me that his own dad is buried in the Port Dover cemetery, lived here for a long time, and used to work at Erie Beach flipping fish back in the 60s."

Gregg continues to be in demand as a speaker and trainer and will no doubt be busy sharing his knowledge and skills for many years to come. But he does not plan to write another book for a while.

"It's a long process for me... I started in 2021 (with *Spark Action*) then after you get the manuscript in, it's a good solid year of copy and content editing, production and all the sales planning," says Gregg. "I'm going to take a break."

In fact, he admits to being more comfortable talking to people than writing.

Stressing that all writers have to find a process that works for them personally, Gregg says that he found it helpful to engage the services of a writing coach to brainstorm, get his ideas down on paper, group them, and create a structure for his book.

So, while Gregg Brown's early experience as a teacher helped him in his career as a speaker and trainer, it was his experience with a teacher that helped him as an author.

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

For the full podcast interview, visit doverwrites.blogspot.com.

SIMCOE ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER PICK UP LOCATIONS

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- Cedar St Food Market

- Riversyde 83
- Robinson Chevrolet Buick GMC Simcoe Inc
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- Royal LePage Trius Realty
- Ruffins Pet Store
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- Simcoe Convenience
- Simcoe Little Theatre
- Simcoe Recreation Centre

- Waterford Heritage & Ag Museum
 - Waterford Home Building Centre
 - Waterford Pharmacy and Health Food
- ### DELHI
- Caffery Hardware & Electric Limited
 - Canadian Tire

Wildlife on Roads is a tool for citizen science

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

"Yours may be the only one I've ever seen with a dead bird on the cover," I said.

"That was controversial," ecologist Kari Gunson said, talking about her book *Wildlife on Roads*. "There was a little debate, and we went around in circles for a while."

The cover works though. It catches your attention and communicates the book's purpose immediately. It's a reference on the type of wildlife killed on Ontario roads and ways to reduce their numbers.

Kari began drafting the book with the goal of producing a technical manual using data collected, in part, during her years of work in Norfolk County and around Long Point. But Kari's bent for communications and public education guided the writing and the format. This led her and co-author Dr. Fred Schueler to produce a work that features lively writing and stunning images. The collection does more than just serving as a technical reference.

"It started with the intention of getting all this road-kill data compiled into something useful for those on the ground," Kari said in an interview.

She wanted to create a straightforward, user-friendly guide that could translate complex ecological information into actionable steps by road crews and planners. As Gunson began working on the manual, she quickly realized that making the data truly practical and accessible to non-experts required more than simplification: it needed



Kari Gunson holds her book, *Wildlife on Roads*. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

to be engaging.

"That explains the diverse components in the book," Gunson said.

She incorporated essays, case studies, professional illustrations, and some 140 photographs, transforming what began as a data-driven manual into a book of well over 200 pages. The book appeals to many people. It now serves as a tool for citizen science and public involvement

far beyond Norfolk County.

The book can be a model worthy of study by any writer hoping to reach a wide audience.

But it was a lot of work.

"The photos were so time-consuming as we needed many permissions," said Kari. "But they made the book more appealing as did the illustrations by Elena Karstad, a world-renowned nature artist."

Kari said she had a lot of respect for Dr. Schueler's work which includes recording road-kill information since the 1960s in a database that now contains about 25,000 records.

"But we had a tug of war over how much of that data and quantifying we really wanted to include," said Kari, suggesting that best way for co-authors to work as a team might be within a project plan. "I ended up taking the lead as I had more time for the book."

Although the book has proved to be a useful tool for professionals, Kari is pleased that it appeals to the general public and anyone looking to protect endangered wildlife. To this end, she encourages readers to familiarize themselves with the iNaturalist website, a venue to share observations, such as location and type of roadkill, with scientists and others involved in conservation.

With more data and more field studies, Kari expects to update *Wildlife on Roads* someday. While a new edition would include more data and information, it will also retain the images, the photos, the stories, and, most likely, that dead-bird cover.

- Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

CELEBRATING LOCAL AUTHORS

For more on how you can help protect wildlife in our area, look for information on iNaturalist and the Long Point Biosphere Region websites. And for Kari's podcast interview in full, go to the Beach Reads Website under Community or to <https://doverwrites.blogspot.com>

Celebrating Norfolk County authors

ADVOCATING FOR AUTHORS

By
Dick Bourgeois-Doyle

"Tennis," he said.

"Seriously, tennis?" I wondered.

I'm not sure what I expected when I asked local author David Beasley about his favoured pastimes. But given that our interview earlier this year took place on the eve of his 93rd birthday, it might have been something less energetic than a racket sport associated with intense athletic competition.

On the other hand, lively physical activity fits quite well with his lively mind and spirit. Now well into his tenth decade of life, he continues to write, publish, and promote with enthusiasm, building upon a diverse portfolio and a life that has been a mix of scholarship and adventure. The Hamilton native and longtime Simcoe resident has lived in many countries and had rugged adventures that included one celebrated in the book *Through Paphlagonia with a Donkey*.

His publications range from poetry, plays, novels, historical fiction, nonfiction, and memoirs to texts on library science. The latter works draw up on his career and 35 years in New York City where he served as senior librarian at the New York Public Research Libraries and president of the New York Library Guild. Four of these books were bound as the authoritative 'How To Use a Research Library,' later retitled as 'Beasley's Guide to Library Research.' His library career also provided fodder for three detective novels, which speak to his creativity as well as his eclectic interests.



(DICK BOURGEOIS-DOYLE PHOTO)

Simcoe author David Beasley.

David Beasley began his research and writing life after graduation from McMaster University where he earned a B.A. in History and Literature. First, he travelled extensively, not every time with a donkey but always with a sense of fun and openness to the world.

This led him to Vienna and a chance meeting with Violet, a young woman who was working for the United Nations. When she returned to the UN headquarters in New York, David went with her. They married in Manhattan. In New York, Beasley would return to academia to gain graduate degrees that culminated in a doctorate in Marxian economics, which fed into another book and other genres. One told a little-known story behind the invention of the automobile which led Beasley into writing more histories in tandem with his librarian career.

When we met, he was most keen to talk about promoting his new book *Canadian Authors You Should Know*. His literary interests are far-ranging and eclectic, and this book reflects this. But of all the listed writ-

ers, David Beasley advocates most forcefully for Major John Richardson, the 18th century army officer and international best-selling writer whom Beasley branded *The Canadian Don Quixote*.

"Richardson was our (Canada's) first novelist," the author notes, adding that his subject had a rich and adventure-filled life. "I keep finding out more (about him) and may have to revise that book."

When I asked Beasley what he regarded as an advantage for an author to living in Norfolk County, he said that "there are so many stories that haven't been told." In this light, I might suggest you read *Sarah's Journey*. This novel was inspired by research on the life of a slave who escaped with three small chil-

dren to settle in Simcoe in 1820. The book illustrates Beasley's commitment to research, which involved trips to West Virginia to interview the descendants of Sarah's masters.

The book also exemplifies the Norfolk County tales yet to be told.

When David Beasley talks about these unexploited writing opportunities, he smiles and his eyes light up, making it easier to imagine him grabbing the racket and heading to the court later in the day.

Look for David Beasley's books at Beach Reads Bookshop or the Norfolk County Public Library and for the podcast interview in full, check out <https://doverwrites.blogspot.com>.