



PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 4 SUMMER 1995

SUMMER CONFERENCE FEATURES AUTHOR OF *SUNDIATA: LION KING OF MALI* PROGRAM INCLUDES TWO VISITING SCHOLARS

This year's Whole Language/Literacy conference for K-8 teachers features notable children's author David Wisniewski as well as scholars J. David Cooper and Sheila W. Valencia. Twenty presenters from area classrooms and universities will round out the two-day program, to be held on August 9-10 at Main Hall, West Chester University. Both days begin at 8:00 a.m. with registration and breakfast, and include lunches, book exhibits, and trade book sales. As in the past four years, the conference is co-sponsored by the Houghton Mifflin Company.

Wisniewski found his inspiration for writing and developed his abilities as a writer while spending three years as a clown with Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus, performing with a traveling puppet theater, and working side by side with his wife on their own puppet troupe, the Clarion Shadow Theater. The circus gave him the opportunity to construct his own props, costumes and gags, and to design the puppets, plays, and their scenery. These experiences and his unique creativity have enabled him to produce several widely acclaimed children's books: *Elfwyn's Saga*, *The Warrior and the Wise Man*, *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali*, and *Rain Player*. *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali* has been praised by Kirkus Reviews and ALA Booklist for its "intricate cut-paper illustrations" that "create a series of dramatic

images." His recent book *The Wave of the Sea Wolf* was #1 on the *New York Times* Best Seller List for ten weeks. Born in Middlesex, England, Wisniewski currently resides in Bowie, Maryland with his wife and two children.



David Wisniewski

J. David Cooper has the distinction of having been asked to make presentations in all fifty states. A noted educator currently on the faculty of Ball State University, he is the author of *Literacy: Helping Children Construct Meaning* (2nd ed.) and the popular book *Improving Reading Comprehension*. He has taught in elementary and high schools, conducted many seminars for teachers, and written many articles on literacy subjects. He was an author of Houghton Mifflin Reading/Language Arts, a consulting author of *Celebremos la literatura* (a Spanish-language reading program), and a senior author on *Invitations to Literacy*. He returns to the literacy conference to speak on "Meeting All Children's Needs in a Literature-Centered Classroom."



J. David Cooper



Sheila Valencia

Speaking about "Classroom Portfolios to Enhance Teaching and Learning" is Sheila W. Valencia, Associate Professor at the University of Washington. Valencia has been an elementary teacher, district reading coordinator, and a reading clinic director. An expert in the area of

assessment, she has written numerous articles and served on national, state, and local assessment committees and task forces. Valencia was assessment editor of *The Reading Teacher* from 1990 to 1992 and is co-editor of the book, *Authentic Reading Assessment: Practices and Possibilities*. She consults with school districts and state departments of education to develop new approaches to literacy assessment aimed at improving teaching and learning. On the editorial boards of *Reading Arts*, *Journal of Reading Behavior*, *The Reading Teacher*, *Language Arts*, and *Educational Assessment*, Valencia is a coordinating author of Houghton Mifflin's *Invitations to Literacy*.

From the Co-Director

REVISITING THE WRITING WORKSHOP

Harvey Daniels, Director of the Illinois Writing Project at National-Louis University in Evanston, guided a conversation on "Revisiting the Writing Workshop" at the Spring NCTE Conference in Minneapolis. As a participant at the conference, I was delighted to find the format changed from formal presentations to conversations. Presenters were asked to arrange their information to include time and activity for the participants to discuss the topic.

Smokey (Harvey's nickname), best known for his books: *A Writing Project*, *A Community of Writers* and his newest, *Literature Circles*, first had the participants reflect on their own practices and compose a list of concerns they had in running a writers workshop in their classrooms. Some of the concerns included: how to involve students in peer editing, how to evaluate, how much writing is enough, how to handle taboo topics, how to build a positive writing community, motivating students and sustaining their interest in writing, teacher intervention, finding the time to write more, mini-lessons, parental involvement (educating the parent), and "Yes, but..." (excuses for not writing more and more often).

From the list the participants discussed successful practices that were helpful to those teachers who had concerns. For instance, one teacher suggested having the students compose and design a Writers Workshop list of what to do during writing time: write more, share writing with a peer, look through books or portfolios to get more ideas, brainstorm an idea. Another teacher reiterated the importance of students talking about their writing before, during, and after they write. She felt this was her most successful revision strategy. Another teacher suggested developing a list of good sentences and having students figuring out why the teacher would like those sentences.

Talking to students about their writing seemed to dominate successful practices by the participants,

because it creates a positive climate in the classroom, produces more and better writing, as well as motivates students to continue to write. But many teachers remarked that questions and comments to students about their writing must be genuine. There were many references to the Nancie Atwell's writers' workshop and most of the participants' concerns went beyond teaching a process of writing and convincing students the importance of writing. Writing as a process, once thought to be just another passing fad, has become the mainstay of many classrooms across the country.

The best tip of the session for me was from another high school teacher of the gifted about portfolio assessment. In the past I have had my students reflect and assess their portfolios in January and June, which I thought was helpful for me and my students. Carol Jargo has her gifted high school students go one more step by having their parents read and reflect on their portfolios. She invites her students and their parents to return to school two evenings once in January and then again in June, to read their children's portfolios and reflect on them. I'm always looking for ways to involve my students' parents in their writing, so I hope to try this next year.

Smokey ended this interesting and resourceful session by stating that it was evident by our suggestions and successful practices that a writers workshop should have a balance of guided reading of writing as well as sufficient time for independent writing and reading.

WHAT DOES A ROSE SOUND LIKE?

by George Martin

Teachers lucky enough to attend PAWPDAY 5 on February 11, had a rare opportunity to witness first hand an excellent and exciting mini lesson in the art of teaching poetry.

The presenter that day was Len Roberts, a Pennsylvania poet and teacher (Northampton Community College). He is excellent at both! Len is a teacher of teachers as well as students. His students have ranged from kindergarten through graduate school. He has taught prisoners, the elderly and published poets. And although his manner and language may change with different ages and backgrounds, amazingly his message is simple and practical, taking advantage of the singular similarity in all -- our common human experiences.

Len's keynote address was entitled "What Does Your Rose Sound Like?" The presentation dealt with strategies and techniques of both personal and/or in class writing.

Len opened with a reading of two of his own poems "Learning on Olmstead Street" and "More Walnuts, Late October." Both are memory poems that pull together

three generations of the Roberts clan: father, son, grandson with Len being the son and poet. Listening to his reading, I believe we all heard what his "Rose" sounds like!

Following his readings, Len shared with us the three most important techniques any poet must consider -- images, line breaks, and comparisons. These three techniques are the building blocks of poetry claimed Len. He stressed that the teacher should encourage free verse, the "gem of expression," in the novice poet. Rhyme takes away from expression for it saps creative energy and replaces that with forced, fake, unnatural concern for unreal expression which has little true beauty.

As he led us experientially through the three techniques, Len shared with us some of his insights about the creative process of poetic expression.

1. Poetry is first and foremost oral expression.
2. The poet needs to taste the words he uses.
3. The poet needs to hear his words.
4. Vowels and consonants need to complement each other phonetically as the poet reads aloud his creation.
5. "Poetry chopped up in little lines is not poetry." (E. Pound)
6. Images need to be specific and personal, not symbolic or general.
7. Writing is discovery. "No discovery in the writer, no discovery in the reader." (R. Frost) One need not know where the poem is going.
8. Poetry needs to be visual. The mind's eye must see the image.
9. Images in usual (normal) situations are boring.
10. Poetry doesn't need to make sense or be logical. It must be spontaneous.
11. If a writer wants to make sense, let her/him write an essay.
12. Music of the sound and logic determine the line breaks.
13. Comparisons give snap to poetry.
14. Poetry will create its own dominate sound.
15. To write students need to feel free, to be loosened up.

As our poetic exercise began, Len asked us to think in concrete images where sensory details are personal and specific. "is the word *bird* an image?" Thus we began his "bird" exercise. It is important to understand that this learning activity was a group effort, because group dynamics allowed all participants to realize the universality of the human experience. There is a oneness in humanity even though we are all unique individuals. We were creating one poem. The human experience made it universal, yet each participant's personal experiences made the final creation unique. This type of

learning empowers the student to think and explore without taking away that which is safe, secure and comforting. The Greeks have a word for this empowerment; it is *dynamis*, from which we get the word dynamite. It is the power from within -- exploding.

Of course "bird" is not an image. Then someone suggested that "crow" is, and our poem began the birth process. We were then asked to add specific sensory details about our crow. The end result was

Crow
thinking about
daisies
hiding juicy squirmy
worms
in the muddy ground.

As we created this poem and several others which I will spare you the ecstasy of reading, Len stressed the importance of using comparisons, especially similes, by novice poets. He taught us that line length and placement are a matter of breath pauses and desired emphasis. They should not be based on numbers of words or syllables per line. Len pointed out a problem teachers need to be aware of. Many writers do not pick up on the unusual and out of the ordinary, but the key to much good poetry is a focus on the unusual and extraordinary. Thus, the teacher needs to encourage students to see and use images and extensions of images that definitely seem unusual to them.

In the concluding activity for the morning, Len cut us free from the group and asked us to write a "place" poem with specific images. He gave us ten minutes! Here is mine:

Driving along Westtown Road
on my way to hear
Len Roberts emote
about
the creation of poetry,
I by chance witnessed a poem in creation.
Jumping a few feet from the roadside,
a red cardinal
(made most vivid
and starkly beautiful
contrasted against a brilliant snow blanket
a few feet
from the muddled, plowed road side snow)
chirped, fluttered and found
breakfast
in a dirty, discarded McDonald's bag.

George (Ed) Martin, a 1982 Fellow, teaches at East High School in the West Chester Area SD.

PAWP YOUTH PROGRAMS - THE ULTIMATE SUMMER JOB

by Bruce Seidel

As the director of PAWP's youth programs, I have a very busy Spring. There are supplies to order, university contacts to be made, staff to hire, and phone calls to parents. There are class lists to draft, letters to write, problems to solve, and still more parents to contact, but Spring makes me wonder why I ever left my favorite summer job, teaching for PAWP's summer youth programs.

I remember those days so well: sleeping in late, arriving at work *after* lunch. Why did I ever leave that job? To this day, I still don't know.

Perhaps I left because of the small class size, or was it the complete academic freedom. (I never could stand it when PAWP gave me free rein to serve up hefty portions of writing without the side order of curriculum.) It was probably both of these reasons, compounded by those delightful kids who loved everything we did and their appreciative parents who had the nerve to thank me.

Now that I think of it, teaching for PAWP youth programs really can't compare to my current position as Director of the Youth Writing Program. Those teacher never get to feel the thrill of pressure, major deadlines, and working for an eternally demanding boss (Sorry, Bob). Those air-conditioned rooms get chilly too, and there is never enough time to decide on a snack-drink combination. I recall the times spent agonizing over whether to choose chips and juice, pretzels and lemonade, popcorn and iced tea. Life is so simple now that I only have to pick up, lift, carry, count, display and serve the snacks. Of course, sharing ideas with the area's best teachers of writing didn't add to the fun. I never liked working with published authors either.

Wait a minute. Maybe this teaching thing *is* appealing. Maybe I *don't* have the most desirable job on the planet after all, but I haven't seen anyone apply for the director's job lately.

Oh well, I guess someone has to count the 11,000 or so bags of Cheetos.

Bruce Seidel directs PAWP's summer youth writing/reading programs. He really does like this job, but he secretly knows that he would have much more fun teaching. Contact Bruce at (610) 436-3089 for more information about teaching positions in the summer of 1996. Programs are currently offered in writing and reading with morning and afternoon schedules at eight locations in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties.

NINE VISITING AUTHORS WORK WITH YOUTH PROGRAMS THIS SUMMER

by Denise Richart

Nine authors will work with students in the upcoming Young Writers and Young Writers/Young Readers summer programs at West Chester and seven other off-campus locations. Six are new to PAWP's youth programs, and three are returning. The authors will help stimulate participants to write many different kinds of prose and poetry. At least one of the many pieces written by each student will appear in published form. Each author has different credits to her name and each has something unique to offer.

Poet-teacher **Julia Blumenreich** has had many past experiences with the Writing Project, working with teacher and with youngsters. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* recently released an article explaining how her fourth grade class at the Andrew Hamilton Elementary School in Philadelphia wrote "wish-lists" for equipment and services needed by the school. Once an English instructor at West Chester University, Blumenreich will also be a guest writer at the PAWP summer institutes.

Poet **J. C. Todd** has had several works published in various journals. A resident of Philadelphia, PA, Cooper's works: *Potato Eyes* and *Nightshade* have won awards. Returning to the summer programs, she continues her involvement after working with the Writing Project for several years.

Also returning to our summer programs, poet and storyteller **Claudia Reder** received her Ph.D. in Educational Theatre and MFA in Creative Writing/Poetry. She is a member of Poets & Writers and the Poetry Society of America.

Alicia Askenase, a poet from Moorestown, NJ, is currently coeditor of *6IX*, a literary journal. She has held such occupations as bilingual English teacher and Teacher of English as a Second Language.

Jennifer Fisher Bryant, a writer from Uwchland, PA, has thirteen published books and nine years of teaching experience credited to her name. This is Bryant's first summer with the Writing Project.

Poet **Nzadi Keita** of Philadelphia has led community development programs in Africa and the United States, and has conducted poetry workshops independently and through the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. She joins the Writing Project, having three published books, including one for children.

Elizabeth Abrams-Morley, a poet and fiction writer from Wynnewood, PA, has participated in seven "Poet-in-the-Classroom" programs, two adult education programs, and a middle school and high school arts program.

Evelyn Clark Mott, an author/photographer from Yardley, PA, is the founder of Lakeside Writers for Young People, a children's writers group. Her first book, *Steam Train Ride*, was inspired by her son Christopher's fascination with trains. Her other two books are titled *Balloon Ride* and *A Day at the Races*.

Author and journalist, Linda Riley has won several awards, including two Philadelphia Press Association Awards. Currently, she is the Public Relations Manager at the New Jersey State Aquarium. Two of her most recent children's books include *Television: What's Behind What You See*, and *Elephants Swim*.

Denise Richart contributed four articles for this issue working as an intern for PAWP from mid-March until May. She graduated from West Chester with a degree in Liberal Studies and a minor in Organizational and Technical Writing, and she will be employed at Business and Association Administrators, Inc. in Collingdale as a health plan administrator.

RESEARCH ON NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT BRINGS POSITIVE RESULTS

by Denise Richart

Two researchers recently studied the National Writing Project principle of regarding teachers as expert consultants to their colleagues in staff development programs. Ruie Jane Pritchard of North Carolina State University and Jon C. Marshall of South Dakota State University assessed the impact on teacher practices and student achievement of a staff development model created by NWP Teacher-Consultants.

Teachers from five school districts received training in a summer institute modeled after the NWP. Participants in the NWP summer programs showed heightened motivation and better attitude levels among teachers; they felt better about themselves as writers and as teachers of writing. Pritchard and Marshall also found a dramatic difference between essays from students of trained and non-trained teachers over a three year span. These results confirmed their previous studies that student achievement rises when teachers have participated in NWP summer institutes.

The results of this study were published in the October 1994 periodical *Research in the Teaching of English*, Volume 28.

AN INSIDE LOOK AT A NEARBY INTERACTIVE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Carol Meinhardt, a Springfield High School English teacher, hosted a showing of her recently completed documentary film, *The Whole Language Reading and*

Writing Workshop in the High School, at Border's Bookstore in Springfield. This film developed in cooperation with a media specialist offers a visual picture of a classroom in which students are actively involved in their learning experiences.

The film makers began their collaborative efforts two years ago in response to many requests from teachers and administrators over a wide geographic area, who wanted to see this kind of classroom operating on the high school level.

The film shows an environment where students regularly select their own topics and forms for writing as well as their own reading texts. They make their choices in response to numerous available models and work in various learning configurations to create products, give presentations, and demonstrations. These activities allow them to increase their involvement as well as master essential skills.

As the facilitator of such a classroom, Carol creates a schedule and structure, which allow for flexibility and adaptability to essential curriculum requirements and assessment, including self - evaluations of individual and group projects and reflective appraisals of portfolio notebooks, methods which they have opportunities to apply to particular activities.



Carol Meinhardt chats with interested teachers after her video presentation.



Carol Meinhardt's students enjoy the celebration at Borders.

WRITING FOR WORKFORCE SKILLS

A PBS Video Teleconference sponsored by PAWP

"Writing and Service Learning / Major Projects / Community Relations" was the topic of a PAWP-sponsored PBS Video Teleconference, held for senior high school English teachers on February 28, 1995 at West Chester University. The video conference focused on extending the school curriculum outward into the community and the workplace--getting the students outside, producing authentic written and related documents that could be used by social agencies, businesses, hospitals, and so forth. Viewers could call in their questions and receive immediate answers on-air from the panelists, each of whom talked about their particular service learning projects.

The essential purpose of all of the programs featured is to combine the emphasis on improved basic skills with active individual responsibility and with community involvement. The three aims work together. Writing is an answer to many concerns of educators and educational reformers. The students involved in the programs we watched could not have accomplished the same objectives merely by doing volunteer work or by raising funds.

Students in these programs get a chance to change their own community in powerful ways. This unusual and far more authentic for students, who more customarily just sit in classrooms and write.

Language is not just a symbolic means of cooperation; it is used actively to achieve community and individual goals. The talking that has to be done to solve problems is the practice in talking that yields growth in speaking skills.

Writing makes thinking visible. When students are learning difficult skills of problem-solving, only writing makes their thinking permanent and lets them explore and weigh alternatives and varying perspectives.

The Featured Schools and Programs

Linda Flower described the Community Literacy Center (CLC), featuring its partnership with Carnegie Mellon University, a local high school, and Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. The CLC promotes the use of writing--petitions, plans, proposals, and newsletter--as a means for young people and adults to define and analyze community problems and bring together diverse groups to problem-solve and plan action.

Through the Partnership, the CLC has begun to address issues of "building a healthy community". At each site, the Community Problem-Solving Partnership operates on the premise that urban teenagers must become working partners in the intercultural

collaboration to build healthy communities. In part the project aims to help healthcare workers understand the problems and stresses their teenage, urban patients face.

Hospital representative Ian Lawson says this partnership yields better information than focus groups. Student and professional personnel:

1. hear, define the problem
2. stand back & listen, interpret
3. collaborative planning between patient culture and medical culture, seeking better models for effective care

Patricia Stock described the Service Learning Writing Project and the Write for Your Life Project at Michigan State University. In the first, students in university composition courses study civic literacy and compose writing that advances the purposes of local social agencies. Several departments are involved. The project gets students involved in 5 current issues, with pertinent readings selected in advance according to topic.

The Write for Your Life Project (sponsored also by the Bingham Trust) invites secondary school students in cities and rural areas in Michigan and Wisconsin to learn to read and write by reading and writing about issues affecting their health and well-being. They wrote about their own lives, when they had stress, when unhealthy things occurred. They met to share their work and found patterns. They had a "manuscript day" at the university to share and edit their work. They wrote mini-grant proposals to take social action which were funded under the Bingham Trust grant. Similarly funded are 12 sites in Michigan, 12 in Wisconsin, and one in Virginia.

The Andover Breadloaf Writing for the Community Project in Massachusetts was discussed by its director, Lou Bernieri, as a joint effort between the Phillips Academy (Andover) and the Lawrence Public Schools. Young writers work as partners with businesses and other community organizations to focus on major health-care issues facing young people in Lawrence: AIDS, depression, rape, street drugs, pregnancy, smoking, and domestic violence. The students create such materials as "Teens Needing Teens" health care pamphlets, published in both Spanish and English, and a "Health Comics" series related to these health issues.

Freshman high school students were writing about "how to improve my life," about their feelings, about being faced with temptations and problems of violence, guns, gangs. What emerged was their sense of the importance of achieving some basic literacy, to succeed in their work and personal lives. The chief program component is a summer three-week workshop in which students are free to write what they want. It features what captures them and is important to them. Training in

brochure writing, cartooning, and related publishing matters is provided. Philips Andover seniors then "cross over" and respond during the school year. They are surprised to see what the Lawrence kids can do. Some Lawrence kids continue and in subsequent years become leaders (a kind of mentor) and provide cross-age tutoring.

In the component for Writing for the Healthy Community, a head nurse talked about key problems, the kids then discussed these and did library research on what they were most concerned about. They then wrote up short information pamphlets (some bilingual) and published these topics which included depression, drugs, how to be effective, etc. Other publishing formats included writing to put in buses, doing a billboard.

Finally, Susan Miera of Pojoaqua High School in New Mexico described a desktop publishing and writing for the community project in which high school students find relevance in their writing assignments because their projects offer a service to the community, especially to at-risk teens, Native Americans, and Hispanics. Students write, often in both Spanish and English, such materials as brochures, flyers, and newsletters for local businesses and community projects. Key leaders included the local hospital's Community Relations Specialist, also a Vice President. Students offer their local agencies as a kind of internship to earn senior English credit. Examples of projects are: a form a cancer treatment department wanted revised, a role-play needed by a hospital intake department to become more sensitive to patient needs, a small ad for a local newsletter, business card, interviews of community citizens, writing a short story about someone. Finally, participants compiled a portfolio of their projects. From them, they learn life-saving things, survival things including self-esteem, and good writing and problem-solving skills.

TUESDAYS ARE POETIC AT SIMMONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by David E. Bingaman

School begins every Tuesday at Simmons Elementary school in a very unique way. The second day of every week is known as "Poetry Tuesday." "Poetry Tuesday" occurs during morning announcements and recognizes a poem written by a Simmons student. At Simmons, we are always eager to feature poetry and writing created by our students. Prospective poets can deposit their completed works for consideration at a designated area in the library. All entries are then reviewed in order to select the week's featured poem. The "Poet of the Week" reads his/her poem to the student body and staff on Tuesday morning.

Parallel to the benefits of reading literature aloud to

the children, the Simmons faculty understands the importance of reading poetry aloud to students. Consequently, a second component of "Poetry Tuesday" includes a teacher or staff member reading a selection aloud from the poetic literature to provide samples to students of published poetry. Hopefully, this oral exposure to poetry on a weekly basis by our staff provides ideas and insight to our aspiring poets.

The "Poetry Tuesday" program is conducted by the Assistant Principal as a means to create an awareness and interest in poetry, as well as to "spotlight" the creative efforts of student writers. The program, now in its second year of operation, has been very positively received by students, faculty and staff, and parents. Tuesdays at Simmons Elementary School now begin with an exciting and literate start because of the "Poetry Tuesday" program.

David Bingaman is the Assistant Principal of Simmons Elementary School, an off-campus location for Young Writers/Young Readers this summer, in the Hatboro-Horsham SD. PAWP has held 2 courses for teachers here and there are two Fellows in the building.

IN SUPPORT OF WRITING

by Karen Nina Klingerman

Our common ground -

Wednesday afternoons
women in support of writing

Our uncommon ground -

substitute teacher	artist
sales rep	elementary reading teacher
	curriculum supervisor
	gourmet cook
middle school teacher	immigrant mother

On solid ground

in support of writing
ourselves, our children,
our students, our school, our community
a foundation that will become the cornerstones of our
masterpiece

Karen, who teaches in the Bensalem SD, wrote this at a five-session workshop for parents she coordinated for the Upper Dublin SD, Winter 1995.

**TRAVELING ON "THE HUMPT":
A LESSON ON BLADDER CONTROL**

by Elisabeth Schaefer Muska

A Vega Hatchback with pop-out rear windows sat on the lot of Lucky Leo's Used Cars. I stopped my new Chevy S-10 pick-up to check it out. Peering in the windows at the cracked vinyl seats and the newly scrubbed carpets reminded me of a different Vega Hatchback. It was the first car that I had vivid memories of from my childhood. Ours was green with pop-out rear windows. My father was not one to spend his hard-earned money on "extras," so it had your basic features: four cylinders, no air (what was the use of air when we had windows?), AM radio, vinyl seats, little head-room (not that we needed much since no one surpassed the 5'4" mark!) and two full-sized windows in the front with two "pop-out-to-create-a-tiny-breeze" windows in the rear. Just my father's kind of car! This car took my family on many memorable adventures. The one that I'll never forget was to the Skyline Drive in the mountains of Virginia. It was on this trip that I was given my first lesson in bladder control.

It was a steamy summer day in July when we piled the family into this dream car, three teenage girls vying for room in the snug back seat. Being the youngest, and also the shortest, I had the pleasure of sitting in the middle on "the hump." Sure, I could see more because I was so high up, but I could also FEEL more. The bumps in the road caused me to propel out of my seat and into the interior light above my now sore head. After receiving many blows to the head numbness began to set in. Both my head and my tailbone were sore before we journeyed toward the on-ramp of I-95.

To make matters worse, my father was not one to make frequent stops once his course was set. My bladder control was put to the test along the monotonous stretch of asphalt. Sitting on "the hump" and feeling all of the slight bumps in the road, weakened my bladder. The rest areas flew by, unlike the flies that were plastered on the windshield. We entered Maryland still without a break. Pressing my legs together and wiggling seemed only to increase my need for relief. A sign appeared: "Rest Area 25 miles." Thank goodness he got the hint after what seemed only to be 1000 miles! As he pulled into the rest area he said, "You had better empty your bladder because we'll have to make up the time, and who knows when we will stop again." I will have no problem emptying my bladder if you will just get me to the bathroom on time!

Driving through the rest area was an adventure in itself. Where to park? Look for shade, but not a tree. We wouldn't want birds to leave anything behind on the newly scrubbed roof. No parking next to trailers, they

blocked the view of the car. Out of state licenses? Keep away! You know how bad Jersey drivers are! After maneuvering around the parking lot for twenty minutes, Dad finally found the perfect space. After fixing his pompadour in the rear-view mirror, he finally opened the door to release us from our prison. I stumbled out, relocating my shorts, that were giving me a wedgy, back into position on my sweaty thighs. My sisters and I reached the ladies' room in record time, only to join a dozen others in line. It seemed as if all of the women in Maryland converged onto the bathroom at once: little girls with tear-dirt stained faces, an old woman fanning herself with a folded-up road map, a young mother with a tired face balancing screaming tots on either hip. I hopped from one foot to the other impatiently waiting for my turn. I was in front of my sisters. Thank goodness I ran faster! Some women were trying to maneuver their way in front of me. I gave them a cold stare that moved them grudgingly to the rear. Finally the stalls were in sight. The next empty stall was all mine!

The sound of the flushing toilet was music to my ears. The door swung open, almost whacking me, as an old woman exited. I scooted inside the graffiti-lined stall. It wasn't the cleanest sight, but little did I care. I quickly fulfilled my mission while, unbeknownst to me, the soggy remains of the last toilet tissue roll swayed aimlessly on the floor at my feet. I reached over to grab a sheet from the empty holder. My eyes quickly fell to the floor. Oh no! I don't dare use that! I sat and pondered what to do. Should I drip dry? The lady should have told me that it was empty. I heard my sister telling me to hurry up. I checked my purse and came up with a semi-used tissue. This will do. As I flushed I thought, "Should I tell the next person waiting, my sister, about the lack of toilet tissue? Maybe I'll trade her a piece of toilet tissue for a window seat in the Vega." I smiled and opened the stall to see my sister waiting. As she grabbed the door with a hostile stare, I knew just what to do.

It was going to be nice to look out the window at all of the sights in Maryland.

Beth Muska, a 1994 Fellow, teaches first grade at the Pen Ryn School in Bucks County.



You don't know what it is to stay a whole day with your head in your hands trying to squeeze your unfortunate brain so as to find a word...Ah! I certainly know the agonies of style.

Gustave Flaubert

[Editor's Note: The following two articles were written by Judy Endicott from the Abington SD. She was asked to report on the February 11 PAWPDAY.]

THE RELUCTANT WRITER: USING A STORY BOARD

A Keynote Address by Peter Catalonotto

Author-illustrator Peter Catalonotto entertained the crowd of teachers April 25, 1995 at the last PAWPDAY session of the year. With humor and warmth he shared personal accounts of his career as an artist and author and how to use his story board writing approach when working with students. His story board technique has been shared with teachers and students across the country and was the subject of a recently published article by Suzanne L. Harrington in *The Reading Teacher*, November, 1994.

Peter emphasized several thoughts for writers of all ages:

- Be a writer *before* you try to be published.
- Learn and explore writing by keeping a journal and writing everyday.
- Put your own life into your writing by drawing upon ideas from your journal.
- Write about what you know and care about.
- Whatever you put in a story has to be as dramatic as it is effective for that story.
- Once you decide on the situation/problem, focus on this. Jump immediately to decide on the ending and then go back to the beginning and build the problem to connect to the ending.
- Be as creative and imaginative as you want, but your story must first make sense and your problem/situation, characters, and ending must be believable.
- Making mistakes is part of the process.

Accompanying these ideas was Peter's slide presentation of story boards from several of his books. The audience learned the origin of the ideas for these stories and the development of the story lines, seeing into the artistic and literary processes and the thinking behind the myriad decisions that go into writing and illustrating children's books. We now look forward to a great PAWPDAY series in 1995-96!

USING FACTS AND FICTION TO LEARN Presented by Tracy Houston

The group which assembled to participate in Tracy Houston's presentation was a composition of teachers of kindergarten age students all the way through the grades to one gentleman who teaches adult literacy. Tracy paired us off and challenged us to think of ways we could

use writing in the content areas to boost thinking skills. Each pair identified particular concepts in subject areas of their curriculum and then brainstormed ways to incorporate writing activities to assist students in learning facts. A wide range of activities were suggested, including: learning logs, chants, songs, poetry writing, language experience activities, daily edits, double entry journals, ABC books, riddle books, timelines, story boards, debates, Venn diagrams, letter writing, diagramming, and many others. As the reporter for each pair talked, many questions were asked which provided further explanation to the listeners and extended our understanding of how to connect writing to the learning of facts. Most of us were busy writing down the activities mentioned by others.

Our group was then encouraged to explore the connection of using facts within fictional writing. Tracy shared her view that students, especially at the high school level where she teaches, find it easier to write fiction rather than just being involved in writing activities in which they "spit back" what they know. Using two of the concepts shared by audience members, she modeled how the students might create a character based upon the facts learned. This type of activity could be extended into the creation of a children's story, she suggested.

At this point Tracy read to us a story she wrote in which she turned the parts of speech into characters. She very effectively demonstrated how facts were incorporated into fiction. Using a "Bare Book" (hard bound blank book which can be purchased in bulk) she created a professional looking book.

The remainder of her presentation involved explaining the process of writing these stories and publishing them in Bare Books in her high school classes. A variety of student published stories were circulated for us to enjoy. It was obvious to all how much thought and hard work went into these finished products. Tracy commented on the variety of writing techniques the students demonstrated throughout the process and explained how she structured the activity to assist students. It was interesting to hear her describe how she offered support to the variety of student needs that were observed by her in the classroom.

I took away many good ideas from Tracy's presentation and from the ideas shared by the other teachers in the room. The handout included articles on the writing of fiction and nonfiction in classrooms of all levels. These articles supply additional information for teachers to consider when working with student writers. I found them very helpful for my own writing also. Teachers of all levels certainly benefit from this type of sharing. The more I learn about writing, the more I realize how little I know.

From the Associate Director

WHAT ARE THE FIRST AMENDMENT LIMITS ON CENSORSHIP IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS?

(excerpted from the ACLU Arts Censorship Project Newsletter, Spring, 1995)

How far can school boards or administrators go in imposing their own moral, political, or even religious beliefs on curriculum and library choices? How far can they acquiesce in ideologically driven demands for censorship by parents or community groups? Countless censorship incidents throughout the country raise these questions...

In 1982, the Supreme Court decided *Island Trees SD v. Pico*, a New York censorship case involving ten books that the Island Trees Village school board had removed from the school library because it considered them "anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy." Among the books were Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice*, and Alice Childress' *A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich*.

While conceding broad discretion to school boards and administrators to frame curriculum, and to inculcate civic and moral values, the Supreme Court in *Pico* announced important limits to this discretion. The First Amendment, it said, includes the "right to receive ideas," especially in the context of a school library, where "a student can literally explore the unknown." School officials, said the Court, may not engage in the "narrowly partisan suppression of ideas" by removing books simply because they disagree with the ideas they contain.

Six years later, in *Hazelwood SD v. Kuhlmeier*, the Supreme Court reiterated that local school officials have broad discretion to control curriculum (including, in that case, a student newspaper produced as part of a journalism class). But administrators' decisions must be based on "legitimate pedagogical concerns."

The dividing line between the "narrowly partisan suppression of ideas" condemned by the Supreme Court in *Pico*, and the "legitimate pedagogical concerns" that it approved in *Hazelwood*, is constantly being tested.

PENNLIT/WATCH: Recent book challenges reported by the ACLU Arts Censorship Project, the National Coalition Against Censorship, the Freedom to Learn Network, and People for the American Way.

Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger - Challenged by a parent in Silver Spring, PA, who requested the book be removed from the AP English curriculum because it "contains over 700 obscenities and over 100 profane use of the name God." The book was retained. The child of the challenging parent was given an alternate book to

read. (NCAC)

My Brother Sam is Dead by James Collier - Challenged by a parent and a school board member in Palmyra, PA, on the grounds that it contained "profanity," the book was withdrawn. The district curriculum committee reviewed the situation and reinstated the book. Now children whose parents object to the book will be removed from the class during its discussion and given an alternate text to read. (FTLN)

Shiloh by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor - Ordered removed from a fourth-grade reading program in Grayson, LA, because it uses three swear words and because the young boy hero, facing an ethical dilemma, does not tell his parents the whole truth. Naylor heard about the banning and wrote an explanation of her purpose to the school district. The book was retained. (NCAC)

The Great Santini by Pat Conroy - Challenged by a group in Guilderland, NY, who wanted the book banned from high-school English classes on the grounds that "students will become sensitized to the violence and sexual perversion and profanity clearly illustrated in the book." The book was retained. (NCAC)

Multicultural literature I - The high school in Chapel Hill, NC, established a multicultural reading program in which each student could choose one of seven areas to study. One student requested the gay and lesbian option be eliminated because it was contrary to her religious beliefs. That option, with its 218-book reading list, was eliminated. (NCAC)

Multicultural literature II - Books by 17 authors including Richard Wright, Dick Gregory, Alice Walker, and Kate Chopin used in the Desert Sands SD, CA, were challenged by members of the Eagle Forum (a right-wing group founded by Phyllis Schlafley). They wanted the books removed from the curriculum because each one variously "denigrates mothers," "questions God's power," "depicts unwed mothers," or "portrays father as an idiot, the teacher as wonderful." The books were retained. (NCAC)

Multicultural literature III - The Prentice Hall anthology, *Literature in Society*, was taken away from high school seniors by school administrators in the Hempfield Area SD near Pittsburgh. The text had been selected by teachers and approved by the school board. A complaint about "offensive" words in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Nikki Giovanni's poetry prompted administrator's action. The local teacher's union protested the book-banning and filed a grievance citing administrator's failure to follow due process. The administration denied the grievance. Since the removal of the anthology, school administrators have rejected several substitute texts suggested by the English teachers,

including works by Carson McCullers. The school's curriculum coordinator suggested that students be assigned books well below their reading level, because they contained no controversial language and were otherwise innocuous. (NCAC and ACLU).

For information about any of these anti-censorship organizations:

ACLU Arts Censorship Project
132 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036

Freedom to Learn Network
P.O.Box 21352
Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-1352

National Coalition Against Censorship
275 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001

People for the American Way
2000 M Street NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036

RETREAT/RECHARGE

by Diane Dougherty

Ah! Hidden Valley...Long about the end of April every school year, many teachers long to "hide out." Two teachers from PAWP, Judy Jester and Diane Dougherty, had just that opportunity when they attended the regional National Writing Project retreat at Hidden Valley, PA.

Joined by other writing project teachers, Judy and Diane spent the weekend meeting, discussing, and sharing ideas about teaching writing. Teachers and writing project personnel from Maryland, Western PA, West Virginia, and the Lehigh Valley negotiated an agenda that included short presentations on poetry writing, the 90 minute period, managing a reading/writing workshop, and informal chats at lunch and dinner.

Judy and Diane conducted an hour-long workshop on persuasive writing which emphasized building "scaffolds" for student writers. Judy addressed the needs of the middle school writer; Diane worked with strategies for the high school student.

The retreat was a great opportunity to meet and begin friendships with teachers who appreciate the nuances of writing instruction. It was a wonderfully relaxing way to spend a weekend at the end of spring while learning something useful at the same time!

Diane Dougherty is on a long-earned sabbatical leave from her job as English teacher and department head at Coatesville Area Senior High.

THE 1995 FELLOWS SUMMER INSTITUTES

PAWP Institute at West Chester University

Diane Barrie, Methacton SD
Bernadette Cant, Interboro SD
Linda Davis, Delaware County Community College
Elizabeth Early, Manheim Township SD
Carolyn Garverich, Rose Tree Media SD
Michelle Leddy, Philadelphia SD
Joan Mathews, Wyomissing Area SD
Maureen McGee, Philadelphia SD
JoAnne Morris, Diocese of Harrisburg
Susan Oliver, Rose Tree Media SD
Mark Paikoff, Rose Tree Media SD
Beth Ann Peticca, Oxford Area SD
Trey Reynolds, Springfield SD
Jill Sandler, Abington SD
Gail Snead, Coatesville Area SD
Anne Weber, Devon Preparatory School

PAWP Institute at Bucks County

Maria Banks, Wissahickon SD
Johanna Berman, Upper Dublin SD
Christine Coyne, Central Bucks SD
Jamie Fiermonte, Upper Dublin SD
Caren Gisburne, Colonial SD
Ruth Hohenstein, Central Bucks SD
Maureen Kosa, Pennridge SD
Debra Lafferty, Quakertown Community SD
Carol Lynch, Colonial SD
Eileen O'Hara, Hatboro-Horsham SD
Phyllis Smith, New Hope-Solebury SD
Janine Warnas, Souderton Area SD
Jeffrey Wolfinger, Quakertown Community SD

Penn Lit Institute at Bucks County

Tia Auteri, Hatboro-Horsham SD
Maureen Benner, Pennsbury SD
Lillian Chirichella, Council Rock SD
Janemarie Cloutier, Central Bucks SD, (PAWP, 91)
Karen Condit, Hatboro-Horsham SD, (PAWP, 93)
John Feaser, Tulpehocken SD
Susan Goodwin, Bethlehem Area SD
Jerome Hartle, Kutztown Area SD, (PAWP, 94)
Janet Kelly, Central Bucks SD, (PAWP, 88)
Shelly Pullian, Cheltenham SD
Carol Rohrbach, Springfield Twp SD, (PAWP, 94)
Joseph Tortorelli, Lenape Regional SD, (PAWP, 83)
Rosemary Welsh, Methacton SD

NEWSWORTHY DOINGS

Karen Venuto ('94) of the Rose Tree Media School District is coordinating a project in which students make writing connections with a local retirement community.

Richard Joseph ('88) of the Delaware County IU now is a regular consultant for teachers on the use of technology, especially Internet in the classroom.

Sue Mowery ('89), Manheim Township SD, presented at the International Reading Association Convention in Anaheim, CA in May. Sue is also on the PA Writing Assessment Advisory Committee.

Mark Boeni ('94), Chichester SD, is presently researching and implementing reading and writing workshops for emotional disturbed children.

Betsy Zaffarano (PAWP '92 and PennLit '94) of the Villa Maria Academy and **Patty Koller** (PennLit '92) of the Downingtown Area SD just completed facilitating a Literature Circle for Teachers at the Chester County IU.

Sylvia Pennypacker ('91), Neshaminy SD, is a presenter and coordinator for a primary-level Writing-to-be-Read program in her district.

Diane Bates ('84), William Penn SD, is studying for a Reading Specialist Certification at Cabrini College.

Kathy Hurst ('93), Hatboro-Horsham SD, is Staff Development Representative for her building and has organized a Writing Club for Teachers in her school.

Diane Dougherty (PAWP '89 and PennLit '94), on sabbatical leave this Spring from the Coatesville Area SD, has been "resting" by coordinating Strategies for Teaching Literature in Bucks County, a Literature Circle in Kutztown, organizing resource files at the PAWP office, attending the MidAtlantic Regional NWP Retreat and two NCTE conferences on portfolio use and assessment, and helping to develop the new course for writing strategies for the 90 minute period.

Assistant Director **Lynne Dorfman** ('89) of the Upper Moreland SD is providing inservice at her elementary school and staff development in writing across the curriculum for teachers in all grades, serves on her District's Act 178 committee, is a member of her building's Literacy Fair and Before-School Inservice Committees, and may be starting a Publishing Center at her school for grades K-5. Congratulations too to Lynne for being selected as keynote speaker for the American Association of University Women 16th Annual Reception for Excellence in Writing Awards.

Amy Luckie ('93) of the Rose Tree Media SD is pursuing a Master's degree at Widener University.

Craig Fenimore ('81) of the West Chester Area SD is currently doing set design for a school play and is advisor to the student council.

Sue Tiernan ('91) of the same district has been

awarded a stipend by the National Endowment for the Humanities to participate in a summer seminar at the University of North Carolina on "The 20th Century Segregated South Through Autobiography." She has recently accepted an assistant principalship at Upper Darby Senior HS.

Bruce Fischman ('82), a 4th grade teacher in the Upper Perkiomen SD and that district's staff development director for writing, is on the faculty of a Lehigh University summer program on Whole Language.

Recent doctorates conferred by the University of Pennsylvania included **Braden Montgomery** ('89) of the Wallingford-Swarthmore SD ("Writing, Reflection, and Assessing in the English Classroom: The Role of the Portfolio in Knowledge Construction") and **Steven Taylor** ('89) of the Rose Tree Media SD ("Towards New Literary Discourse: Reconstructing Teaching and Learning in the Secondary English Classroom").

Assistant Director **Jim MacCall** ('85) of the Lower Merion SD is co-editor and co-author of a district publication, "Skills and Spelling in Language Arts for Elementary Teachers."

Assistant Director **Martha Menz** ('80), newly named Director of Curriculum for the Upper Darby SD, is the first recipient of the Outstanding Educator of Southeastern Pennsylvania Award offered by the WCU School of Education. Additionally, Martha now teaches a course in Secondary Methods for the WCU Department of Counselor, Secondary, and Professional Education.

Our respects to the memory of (Rev.) **Inez Hill** ('81), formerly of the Philadelphia SD, who died last Fall after a long and notable career. Inez was in our first institute that included Philadelphia teachers and she frequently presented for PAWP.

Presenting at the PA Department of Education's Chapter 1 Conference on Desired Outcomes were TC's **Conne Broderick** ('84) of the Southeast Delco SD and **Jack Eells** ('85) of the Souderton Area SD. Jack, along with **Bob Weiss** and a Souderton teacher, reported on the grant activities to assess performances in writing, reading, and speaking skills for elementary children.

Congratulations (again!) to **Pat Carney-Dalton** ('88), Souderton Area SD, on publication of her essay, "The Haunting," in *Educational Leadership*, March 1995.

Bruce Saybolt ('93), Chester-Upland SD, also teaches English 101 and 103 at Pierce College, and reports that his students there "need the latest Project strategies to aid their success in college."

Isabel Stefanisko ('88), newly retired from the Cheltenham SD to the pleasant clime of Florida, has been in touch with the North Florida Writing Project.

LITERACY IS ALIVE IN VIRGINIA

by Susan Smith

In early March I had the opportunity to attend the Virginia State Reading Association 1995 Conference, held in Richmond, Virginia. Phyllis Coulter, president-elect of VSRA and also my (now go slowly over this part) "sister-in-law's mother-in-law," sent me the information with a "this may be worthwhile for you to attend." I had no idea I would be welcomed by an association that is over 10,000 members strong and a three-day conference that overflowed with more than 2,000 enthusiastic teachers and administrators, committed to the literacy challenge.

We had breakfast with Nigel Hall of the United Kingdom, author of six professional books, nine children's books, among them, *Writing With Reason* (Heinemann, 1989). He discussed ways we can help children to understand *why* they should learn to read and write.

We lunched with Lynne Cherry, author/illustrator, while scribbling ideas for integrating environmental issues into the curriculum. I learned how important it is for young people to know that they have a say in the protection of their world and I brought home an autographed copy of *The Kapok Tree* for my children.

We dined with educator/environmentalist/author, Jean Craighead George as she bridged literature with the science world. Nancie Atwell examined possibilities of rearranging standard curriculum practices. Paul Janeczko filled us with poetry, and Mary Hatwood Futrell looked at educational reform from a cultural perspective.

Whether sitting in a conference hall of 1500, as Dorothy Strickland enchanted us with her ideas of promoting books, basics, and balance in the classroom; or sitting on the floor constructing emergent literature books, I gathered and learned.

Over 100 concurrent sessions were offered from the experts, with topics ranging from spelling to home-schooling and technical writing to fairy tales. I watched a video tape presentation of the *Swamp Publishing Co*, an after school club made up of fourth and fifth grade editors, illustrators, typists, and advertisers, who meet after school to publish student books! I was enlightened by Ruth Nathan's very personal reflections as she underlined, "To be effective teachers we must stay steady in an unsteady world and be passionate about our own reading and writing."

And when my eyes and ears felt filled to the very top and blisters from my "school shoes" issued their complaints, I was gently ushered into the exhibit hall, a gold mine that seemed to stretch for miles, where I was handed posters, catalogs, and professional materials, and received a hands-on chance to experiment with the newest

in software.

Thanks to Phyllis (did I mention she was *also* the conference chair?), to whom I am most proud to say I am related, we are reminded of the necessity of such gatherings. With every meeting, PAWPDAY, and conference we attend, we are renewed. Mary Parrish, President of the VSRA, quoted Thoreau and gave my journey a perfect ending: "A truly good book teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down and commence living on its hint...What I began by reading, I must finish by acting."

Sue Smith, on a long maternity leave from the Rose Tree Media SD, organizes the snacks for PAWPDAYS and frequently presents in PAWP programs.

From the Editor

ASSESSING ASSESSMENT

Might African American children be offended by reading a selection about a monkey named Topsy? Which "color" denotes respect? Could this decision be important to a child living in a gang territory? How do girls respond to an abundance of reading selections involving boys saving girls from perilous situations? These questions and many more were confronted by those of us who participated in the Advanced System in Measurement Evaluation session, which met in Harrisburg in May to evaluate reading and math items of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. As a member of the fifth grade team assigned to evaluate the reading test, I can attest to the fact that our table examined every item in the narrative and informational portions thoroughly for difficulty and appropriateness. Multiple choice questions and writing prompts were accepted or not recommended based upon genre, setting and multicultural appeal.

It is important that teachers from all backgrounds participate in evaluation assessment, because multiple viewpoints are required. Of the approximately fifty educators who participated in the recent Advanced Systems in Measurement assessment evaluation, there appeared to be few from the inner city schools or from minorities, so it is incumbent upon all educators to continually evaluate assessment instruments, their own as well as standardized instruments. It is necessary to monitor the test as well as the students during the test-taking process.



*Don't think and then write it down.
Think on paper.*

Harry Kemelman

NATIONAL BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS USES PAWP TEACHERS

Assessors for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (Early Adolescence) scoring session at Educational Testing Service this Spring included PAWPers Troy Czukoski, Rosanna Denney, Judy Jester, Karen Klingerman, Mark Linkins, Mary O'Gorman, Kathleen Rauch, Bruce Saybolt, Carol Schmitt, and Freda Schopfer. The assessment is intended to qualify teachers for a special voluntary advanced professional certification. As Bruce wrote: "It was just great. To meet other teachers from all over the USA, to be treated royally, to be respected as a professional, to be well trained in a new scoring system, and to be in the company of old friends from PAWP was a rewarding and renewing experience. Many of the assessors were Writing Project teacher-consultants from various states."

TEEN AUTHORS ELECTRONIC JOURNAL

TEEN AUTHORS is the name of a new electronic journal which hopes to publish works by world-wide authors in middle, junior high, and high school (generally ages 11-18). The editors seeking original works in any genre or form, in any length, and will work with authors whose work receives a favorable review but may need some revision before publication. Cash prizes of \$25, \$15, and \$10 will be awarded to the top three works published in each journal issue in categories divided across two age groups: early-teen (11-14) and late teen (15-18). Published authors, and their school library, can receive a hard copy of the journal issue at duplication cost.

This electronic journal is currently available on the Internet by FTP (FTP Address: [ftp.cac.psu.edu/pub/people/jmm12](ftp://ftp.cac.psu.edu/pub/people/jmm12)) and the editors are working on a World Wide Web version its development pages are now available in the same host/subdirectory (WWW:<ftp://ftp.cac.psu.edu/pub/people/jmm12/Literacy.html>).

The editors plan to publish three times per year, however, final decisions will be determined by the response to each call for manuscripts.

Authors' works are accepted at any time. Each issue has a deadline at which time the review for that issue begins: Fall review begins September 15; Spring review begins January 30; and Summer review begins June 30. All submitted manuscripts receive comments from the reviewers, and some are reviewed for future issues if they do not make a final review. The editors welcome resubmission after authors receive reviewers' comments. Issue dates are July 31, November 30, and April 30.

The number of issues may be increased if submissions warrant.

Submit pieces as follows (electronic submission highly preferred):

E-Mail: JMM12@psuvm.psu.edu

Fax: Jamie Myers at (USA) 814-863-7602

Mail: Jamie Myers, 260 Chambers, Penn State University, University Park, PA, 16802.

Submissions assume the author's permission to publish. The journal itself will not be copyrighted. All submissions must be accompanied with the following information:

Author's name, age, address, and phone number; author's school name, address, and phone number.

Please distribute this call to all teen authors you know. Address questions to Jamie Myers at the addresses above.

PAWP FELLOW KEYNOTES PHILADELPHIA IRA MEETING



Left to right: Toby Mallin, President Elect, Wendy Towle, '88 Fellow from the Wallingford-Swarthmore SD, pictured at the Spring dinner of the Philadelphia Council of the IRA with Penn Charter Headmaster Jack McGovern, current president Jackee Swartz (82) and past president Cecelia Evans (81). Wendy, author of The Real McCoy (Scholastic) was keynote speaker for the dinner meeting.



*You can be a little ungrammatical if you come
from the right part of the country.*

Robert Frost

TRUSTING AND EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND LEARNERS AN UNCOMMON SENSE APPROACH

A Review by Susan Goodwin

I used my index finger to follow the printed squiggles on the page as I told my favorite story aloud to myself and laughed at the picture. My mother seemed very surprised, "How do you know those words? Are you reading?"

Although I answered yes, she later told me how cute and funny I had been, pretending to read a book when I had actually just memorized the words and even the tone of expression she used when she read me the same book. But somehow, at some point before I started school, I did learn to read the books I loved. It happened very much from the inside-out, as there was no deliberate teaching (transmission) of the basics of phonics, punctuation, or vocabulary study. I simply wanted something very much-to engage myself with appealing characters and plots because I knew it was enjoyable and meaningful to do so. My desire to achieve that end stimulated me enough to find my own individual means to that end.

So in college when I took the course, *The Teaching of Reading*, I balked at the methodologies suggested and what they implied about the nature of how readers learn to read. Now, thanks to *Uncommon Sense* by John S. Mayher, I can begin to understand why so many things seemed artificial and unnecessary--sight-recognition words for grade levels, memorization of phonics rules, the very controlled exposure to basal literature. I had started to think maybe my experience of learning to read unconsciously and naturally was unique and that was why I couldn't relate to this kind of teaching.

I tried to make sense of it by believing that kids who were less intelligent than I had been or those who had not had the benefit of being read to at home probably needed such an arduous, conscious break-down of the skills involved in reading. How unfortunate that not everyone could be gifted as I was with the "natural" ability to learn on one's own. I could not have been more wrong (or more pompous!) in my interpretation of the experience of other learners, but my cognizance of my own learning process had given me the right instincts about the true nature of learning.

Of course, I didn't follow those instincts when I began to teach because they didn't make common sense. I taught as I had been taught; I bought into the world of right answers and mediocrity, and I briefly enjoyed the power of dispensing a preselected, controlled body of knowledge to my students. I was seduced into the common sense world of education because I believed it was good for the learners--good for them to practice, to

memorize, to regurgitate, to know steps for completing tasks, to seek right answers, and to let others decide for them what was worth learning. Maybe in a perfect world, students could make choices about topics and materials, and learn in more "natural" ways, but frankly, the kids in my very real classroom could not be trusted to do that. The dynamic of most typical school experience then perpetuates a cyclic problem; as we discourage and discount students' experiences and ideas, they become more passive and unwilling to invest themselves in their own educations.

Mayher challenges us to break that pattern, to stop making distinctions between how we learn something in school and how we might learn something outside of school like how to whistle, shoot a basket, drive a car, or wallpaper a room. There may be steps and particular skills involved in these tasks, but they are always seen as means to an end, part of a relevant whole. Also, in the learning of these out-of-school tasks, learners are free to, and indeed they must, find the diverse strategies that work for them, experiment with available resources, and continually stretch their zones of proximal development, sometimes in several different areas at once.

The educational system should study, respect, and internalize the models of "natural" learning. It would inspire teachers to portray their goals for students as relevant wholes, provide materials or approaches to materials that are familiar or relevant, and allow students flexible options for individual progress towards the goals. Much easier said than done, I know. Some faculty rooms sound like there is an on-going contest to judge whose curriculum is most boring and incomprehensible to students--Kids today don't care about Viet Nam. They won't edit because they don't know grammar and can't write a sentence. Try teaching quadratic equations during 8th period. Of course discussing the story is less than stimulating when only two students have read it...Blame the curriculum or blame the kids; it doesn't matter much. All we know for sure is that commonsense education does not work.

The teacher who gets to this point in her understanding may then see herself as powerless, controlled by the weight of a system that "they" have set in place. Such a perception must usually be largely inaccurate as commonsense and uncommonsense philosophies tend to agree on worthy goals, but disagree about *how* to get students there. Nonetheless, many teachers who value learning and want to care about their students find themselves demoralized, disillusioned, and burned out.

Another teacher at this point in his understanding may feel that he buys into idealism of uncommonsense, be he wants answers and recipes for success so that he

may make a conversion. When he perceives that there are no neat answers or explicit plans to help him, he may begin to think of uncommonsense theorists as pipe-dreamers who don't teach in a reality like his, and whose pie-in-the-sky ideals do not seem to be backed up by much detailed description of how to do it. I, too, sensed that Mayher glossed over certain areas like assessment, but ultimately, we need to read lots of theory and reports of practices, and make up our own structures for assessment anyway.

Nobody ever told us teaching would be easy. If we want professional autonomy and respect, we must find ways to make our philosophies applicable to our realities, to work for change where necessary, and to be prepared to justify our means in commonsense terms. This is not a toe-dipping excursion I'm talking about; this is really a deep plunge that teachers make when they change to uncommonsense ideas. If we expect our kids to invest of their true selves and to take risks in their jobs as learners, then we had better have a similar agenda for ourselves as professionals.

Susan Goodwin, who teaches grades 9-10 English in the Bethlehem Area SD, was a 1993 Fellow of the Lehigh Valley Writing Project.

WRITE ON AT WILLOW HILL ELEMENTARY

by Jeff Roth

The classroom is quiet, but there is a "hum" in the air. Pencils are moving quickly across the paper, the children's minds working faster than their hands can write. Occasionally someone stops to sound out a word: "el-e-fant." This pause does not inhibit the flow of language onto the page, as their teacher, Joan Pileggi, looks on with pride in what she sees, primary-aged children in their Learning Support class at the Willow Hill Elementary School, creating, composing, writing, and best of all, enjoying what they are doing. "Three years ago this scene would have been a dream," she reports, "something only achievable with non-handicapped children."

Pileggi attributes realizing this dream to her having taken eighteen graduate credits through West Chester University and the highly acclaimed Pennsylvania Writing Project, of which she has been a fellow since 1992. As a result, she now views writing as a process enhanced by the children's shared reading of quality literature. The emphasis is for the children to communicate their ideas on paper and, initially, not to worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar. She states, "What needs to be fixed, will be fixed, but not until the mind has exhausted all of its creativity. Revision and editing are taught, not just as some isolated

exercise, but within the context of a child's writing, so that it is meaningful to the student. The result is a sense of pride and ownership, for every word of every sentence has been created by that child."

Within a two and a half year period, nine children have "published" over thirty books and they are not finished yet. These young authors hunger to reach out to their audiences again and again. Through their words, communication is achieved.

This article first appeared in a newsletter published by the Abington Education Association. Joan Pileggi is a 1992 PAWP Fellow.

WHEN A CHILD STARVES TO DEATH IN YOUR ARMS

By Jeff Singleton

His little body was limp and heavy. That's what I remember most. Just before they die, their bodies fill up with fluid like that. -- It's one of the peculiar things about starvation. A few teenage Haitian girls looked in at me through the orphanage gate. The Sisters said that one of them was probably little Stanley's mother, who'd left him in a basket on the convent doorstep one night, when she could no longer feed him. He died in my arms. Right there in my arms! When a child starves to death in your arms,...it's not something you soon forget.

At the PAWP writing workshop, years later, the assignment was "angry talk," and then "fast talk", like a salesman. Then Jolene assigned "soft talk", words of comfort and I remembered Stanley, and I realized I had forgotten. I wrote softly to Stanley, promising him that I'd never forget him again. I promised him that whether I taught fifth grade, or ran for Congress, or sliced turkey breast at Wawa, I'd make sure my work had something in it for him.

My fifth graders have read a thousand books to Head Start kids, raised a thousand dollars for the community food bank, danced with a hundred senior citizens, and sent a hundred used bicycles to Nicaragua. I've spoken to church, school, and civic groups, and state and national conferences about my experiences with "service learning." I've served on two state committees in the Department of Education, and raised almost \$100,000 from private foundations and government agencies to help fund other projects like my own. I'm doin' it for Stanley.

Never underestimate the power of a ten minute journal exercise.

Jeff Singleton teaches fifth grade at East Ward Elementary School in Downingtown and directs many service learning projects with his students. He participated in a Strategies for Teaching Writing course coordinated by Jolene Borgese, PAWP's co-director.

NATIONAL EDUCATION ORGANIZATION PUBLISHES TWO SETS OF WRITING GUIDES

Our office has received two sets of lesson books titled *Ease Into Writing* and *Write More Learn More: Writing Across the Curriculum*. Both sets are a creation of the national education organization **Phi Delta Kappa**. They were published in 1994 and 1995 for the purpose of involving "students in writing as a learning tool and as a skill in communication."

Inspiration for the lessons in *Ease Into Writing* came from teacher-consultants in the Montana Writing Project. The lessons involve students in large and small groups, in individual activities, and call for minimum teacher preparation. There are three main sections to each book, representing Intermediate, Middle, and Senior High grades. Each lesson in the two volumes contains a variety of activities and is separated into five writing processes: Prewriting, Writing, Revising, Editing, and Publishing.

Write More Learn More: Writing Across the Curriculum was developed and written by teachers of Monroe County schools in Bloomington, Indiana. One volume is for preschool through sixth grade, and the other is for sixth through twelfth grades. Besides supplying possible lessons for teachers to use, each manual incorporates sections that provide tips for teachers and discuss writing in the classroom, like "Evaluating Student Writing" and "Writing By Grade Level."

All four PDK books are available for review and reference by Project teachers. Contact the PAWP office if interested. Comments on the usefulness of the manuals are helpful and appreciated.

THE MAGIC LAKE

by Kim Earley

As the leaves turn from green to vivid shades of gold, orange and red, I feel a sense of loss. Perhaps because for me it signals the official end to summer and closes another chapter on Cottrell Lake. Over the last thirty years I have spent part of my summer at the lake, a place that remains magical even to this day. But it was only this past summer that I realized just what it was about Cottrell Lake that makes it so special.

Looking back, I can still remember the long three hour drive up the Northeast Extension. As our old station wagon wearily climbed the red shale road, my brothers, sister and I waited anxiously, hoping to be the one to catch the first glimpse of the lake. Somehow, it was never me. We'd wind our way around the lake road and stop at the very last cottage, my grandparents'. From the second our feet hit the ground we soared through a

whirlwind of activities for the next week. We went swimming, fishing, boating, picnicked in the fields, took long hikes in the woods, played canasta, and ate berries until we were ready to burst. If we were really lucky, our vacation would fall during the week of one of the many Firemen's Picnics where we'd go for hayrides, pony rides, toss coins into bottles, and pick plastic ducks from the moat, hoping to go home with the prized stuffed animal. There was little television or radio reception, but it never seemed to matter. I doubt I was aware that it was the simplicity of the vacation that made it so special, yet I vividly remember the sad feeling I had as we drove off, my grandparents waving until we were out of sight.

As I grew older and approached adolescence, the Jersey Shore became a much more desirable vacation spot. With the nonstop action of the beach and the boardwalk, I couldn't think of a more exciting place to be. Suddenly a week of being trapped in a small cottage without television or radio wasn't quite so appealing.

Not long after developing a serious interest in the opposite sex, on one of the trips to Cottrell Lake, I discovered the "lake boys." Naturally this shed a whole new light on the mountain vacation. The lake was once again the revered vacation place from my past, and I found myself repeating events I'd so enjoyed as a child.

High school graduation took my life in yet another direction and waylaid my summer trips to Cottrell Lake. Sadly, it would be a number of years before I returned. When I finally did, my life had changed dramatically, and I had become all too familiar with the stressful working world. I looked forward to escaping to a place where phones, schedules, and deadlines didn't exist. Luckily, Cottrell Lake provided just such a refuge. Oh, there were changes. My grandmother had passed away; my mother had purchased the cottage next door; cable television had been introduced. My brothers, sister, and I were all married, some of us with children of our own. However, for the most part Cottrell Lake was just as I remembered from my childhood. Berry picking, swimming, fishing, boating, hiking through the woods, long walks in the fields, and even canasta were all waiting for me, only this time with three or four kids in tow.

Over the past summer I had a startling revelation. It was the Fourth of July weekend and my mother's cottage was packed with brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews. The people of Cottrell Lake were lined up on the waterfront surrounding the lake, with John Philip Sousa music echoing all around us. We watched the small display of fireworks that to many would seem simple, but to us was just as spectacular as any you'd see in New York City. When it was over, I laid down and stared up at the sky, mesmerized by the stars dancing through the milky ways. It was then I realized that even as the world

changed before my eyes, the lake remained the same. I watch my nieces and nephews experience the same wonderfully simple pleasures I relished as a child and can feel the magic of Cottrell Lake. How comforting to know that old fashioned vacations are still there for the taking!

For the meantime, it is my mother who stands and waves as we drive off. However, I know that someday I

will be standing there waving, until the car disappears from sight.

Kim Earley teaches sixth grade language arts at the Upper Moreland Middle School. This piece was produced in the Teachers and Writers course coordinated there by Pat Carney-Dalton.

PAWP SHORT COURSES

Recently we have begun to expand our offerings of one-credit workshops, both at the West Chester University campus and within school districts or Intermediate Units. For more information, contact Mariann Shirk, Program Coordinator, at 610-436-2297.

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Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter

Published quarterly

by the Pennsylvania Writing Project

West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383

Editor: Judy Fisher Director: Robert H. Weiss
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Sponsors: West Chester University Pennsylvania Department of Education
The Intermediate Units of Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties

The purpose of the *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter* is to link together all teachers of writing in our geographical area of southeastern Pennsylvania. The *Newsletter* features, but is not limited to, articles that deal with writing and the teaching of writing. We seek manuscripts from all teachers of writing at all grade levels and in all subject areas, and from anyone else interested in writing. Pieces originating in the Pennsylvania Literature Project are also welcomed. All articles and submissions will be considered for publication. Comments, questions, etc., are welcomed. Please send all communications to Judy Fisher, Editor, *Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter*, West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383.

The Pennsylvania Writing Project (PAWP) is an affiliate of the National Writing Project and is recognized as an Exemplary Program by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. PAWP was created under grants from the William Penn Foundation and the University of California at Berkeley, with the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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