

Coffs Harbour Writers' Group



Established September 1986

Affiliated with the Northern Rivers Writers Centre

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NEWSLETTER

May 2013

Announcements

Thursday 2nd May Meeting: after the business meeting we will get on with readings until 11.45 am to hear guest speaker Vincent Butcher, Senior Lawyer of Slater & Gordon, to talk about copyright in relation to members works posted on the group's website (see page 2 in April newsletter for details) until 12.30 pm when we break for lunch in the club's cafe. And on the same day ... a **workshop presented by Rosalie Skinner on 'Structuring World'**. This will start at 1.30 pm until around 3.30 pm. So we have an interesting day arranged for you.

Last Social: eleven members enjoyed some interesting readings and discussion in the Coffs Harbour Botanic Garden's meeting room on Thursday 18th April. There were four apologies from members who could not make it.

Next Social: will be held at Ron and Danielle's home in Boggy Creek from 10 am to 12 noon. For instructions on how to get there see recent email message or at forthcoming Thursday meeting.

New Member: Welcome Leon Stokes. Leon read part one of his story, *Gino's Job*, at the last social meeting and received, we think, some encouraging feedback from members. We do hope you'll enjoy our company and that we can learn more about writing with each other.

First Chats Short Story Slam: Don't forget this event — Saturday 4th May, 1.30 pm at Mud Hut, Duke Street, Coffs Harbour. For more information call Penny on 0407 396038 or pendennis@bigpond.com

Coober Pedy Trip

Danielle Babb and Rena Briand have recently completed a trip to Coober Pedy in South Australia to launch the third revised addition of Rena's book *A White Man In A Hole*. We are looking forward to reading about the book launch and the trip by Danielle in the June newsletter.

***First Born* by Rhonda Rand**

When I was sixteen. I opened my eyes and standing against the far wall were nineteen angels all in bright white coats.

They had halos around their hair, reflecting from the brilliant fluorescent light fixed in the ceiling above them.

They were all smiling at me. I could hear a chicken chirping in the background and mouthed the words, "Doesn't that sound like a chook".

My doctor looked across my bed and said to his training students, "Hasn't she got a vivid imagination?" The students replied, "We think you've given her too much gas". All the angels laughed. I had given permission for a full training class to watch the birth of my first child.

I have told my daughter that she was born in heaven and the angels smiled when she arrived.

Zoe's Story

8th December 2001 age 8 years

Dear Saturday Disney,

I have a kitten. Its name is Tiger. It chases flies and tries to catch spiders. It has a collar to stop any fleas and a little gold bell to warn birds up in the trees. He sneaks through the grass like a cunning cat pretending to see mice or a rat. He chases Nan's dogs around the garden all day, paws at their tails in a playful way. At the end of the day he is all worn out, he climbs on to my lap for a kitty catnap.

Sent to Saturday Disney

**FOR BIDDY
FROM "Beachcomber" in
THE DAILY EXPRESS, July 19, 2012
95 Years Old and *Still Punctuated...***

"The Apostropher Royal, Sir D'Anville O'M'Darlin', faces calls for his resignation following the release of the biennial audit of punctuation marks by the International Punctuation Foundation (IPF). In sharp contrast to the 2010 report, in which Sir D'Anville was congratulated for his campaign of semi-colonic irrigation, which has resulted in the removal of the semi-colon from the list of endangered punctuation marks, the new audit blames him for a worldwide slump in the use of good punctuation. In particular, it accuses him of failing to fulfil his mandate to ensure the correct use of apostrophes in the UK. Most damning of all, he is accused of "bringing the Law of Conservation of Apostrophe into disrepute", a charge that has never before been levelled at an Apostropher Royal.

The Conservation of Apostrophes Law is a fundamental principle of punctuation and maintains that a balance must exist between the apostrophes omitted in error and the number inserted in error. Crudely speaking, this is often expressed by saying that for every "it's" that should be "its", there is an "its" that should be "it's". However, by keeping his attention on the it'ses and it'ses, D'Anville stands accused of

taking his eye off the more general picture. In particular, the number of apostrophes used incorrectly in plurals has risen dramatically.

The Apostropher Royal is, of course, responsible for presiding over a team of Apostrophic Delegates who carry out the monthly delivery of royal apostrophes to greengrocers, who are permitted to use them "whensoever and wheresoever they please", under an ordinance of Queen Elizabeth 1. We have long been used to seeing their stalls festooned with signs advertising "apple's", "pear's", and, more recently, "pomegranate's" and "avocado's", yet now the glut of wrongly apostrophised plurals has spread to tradesmen who have no legal right to use them at all.

The IPF report lists numerous cases of ironmongers offering to cut "key's"; dry-cleaners who have a special deal on "suit's and short's" and even an email stemming from Sir D'Anville's own office quoting "bargain price's for semicolon's. It was the last of these that has attracted greatest interest from the Forensic Punctuation Unit at Interpol, whose close examination of the supposed apostrophes has revealed that they are not apostrophes at all, and neither are the vast majority of those being used outside the confines of the greengrocery profession.

Analysis has, in fact, identified them as coming from the UK semi-colon mountain, caused by over-production resulting from Sir D'Anville's semi-colonic irrigation scheme. These excess semi-colons found their way on to the punctuational black market, where they have been split into their separate components of full stop and comma, with the full stops on as dots in web addresses, and the commas lifted above the line to serve as apostrophes. Sir D'Anville will have a lot to explain to the Commons Punctuational Committee, when he appears before it next week."

In bringing you the above article, I should point out that it is Beachcomber, and not Bidy, who is 95 years old – although Bidy is still apostrophising daily. How else would the finer points of our language be preserved? It's also nice to note that there's a newspaper, which still has room for such light-hearted writing.

What part do schools play in the blatant degradation of our lovely language? We have a language like no other in the world, a language with a store of words so vast that the choice of a single word can make all the difference to the precise meaning of a message.

On the subject of the apostrophe, how many of our children grow up not knowing its purpose? Are they not told the simple fact that an apostrophe indicates the omission of words – or part thereof – to make reading or speaking smoother? The apostrophe irons out the worst wrinkles, for example, "where's" = where is: "John's" = John (his) = belonging to John. What's so difficult about that? It's merely an abbreviation, after all. – Mary Warwick.

[Reprinted from Tenterfield Writers' Ink newsletter dated March 2013. Mary Warwick is the editor. If interested in making contact, write to PO Box 135, Tenterfield, NSW 2372. Tel: 02 6736 2444. I had a lovely conversation with Mary on the telephone on Wednesday 24 April and she said some of her members are looking forward to visiting some of our members in Coffs Harbour, maybe in a few months time, when arrangements are finally made. Our Social Secretary, Karolyn Gibson, is co-ordinating this event with Mary. – Editor]

Don Diespecker the indefatigable writer by Ron Marke

Some members will remember Don Diespecker, who was a member of our group for a number of years, and presented free writing workshops. A notable one he presented was called 'How to present a workshop' – on any subject – love, faith, bereavement, tragedy, favourite author, humour, words, theatre, and so on. He suggested that members ought to try conducting their own workshops, say, 30 minutes or more and encourage audience participation.

When Don left us, we decided to put his ideas into practise, and it was surprising to see some fruitful results emerge. Don was much against paying 'high profile' persons lots of dollars to do a one or two day writing workshops. Rather he emphasised that a group of writers and budding writers should try to do their own thing and get friendly, professional advice when necessary.

However, Don is a little bit unorthodox. He writes some pieces without using any punctuation. He says he likes to write that way because it's fun. I suspect he is rebelling against orthodoxy. Mind you, I

find reading his 'mischievous style' interesting: somehow it seems to flow a little bit like some poetry, and I rather like it, although I would not attempt what Don is doing.

All the same, Don is an excellent writer; he mainly writes novels and, it seems, never stops writing them. He regularly – monthly in fact – puts out online his *The Earthrise Diaries*, which are worth reading if only to study his beautiful style. If you wish to know more about Don and his literary works, go to: <http://earthrisediaries.blogspot.com.au>

Writing Poetry Competition

The Blake poetry Prize challenges Australian poets to explore the spiritual and religious in a new work of 100 lines or less. **Prize money: \$5000. Closing Date for Entries: 14th June 2013.** For more information contact: (02) 8230 4228. Email: info@blakeprize.com.au www.blakeprize.com.au.

The Blake poetry prize is made possible by the support of Leichhardt Municipal Council, which has a strong commitment to the arts. About the Blake Society, named after the visionary artist and poet William Blake, aims to stimulate the interaction of ideas and spiritual thought across all artistic media in Australia. The Society is a registered charity with DGR status.

Quote

There is something delicious about writing the first words of a story.

You never quite know where they'll take you.

— *Beatrix Potter*
