



PENNSYLVANIA WRITING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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FALL 1983

First Annual Writing Project Dinner On December 9

Readers — please mark Friday, December 9, 1983 on your calendar. You are cordially invited to the first dinner meeting of the Pennsylvania Writing Project. Donald Langlois, Superintendent, West Chester Area School District, and Nancy Nelson, Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, will address the topic, "Effective Collaboration between Schools and Universities" — of which PAWP is a prime example.

Prime — rib, that is — is also what we'll be serving. Included in the cost per person of \$25.00 is a donation to support PAWP's summer programs. The dinner will be held at WCU's Lawrence Center Dining Hall at 7:00 p.m. Please call the Project Office (215-436-2281) if you have not received an invitation and would like to attend.

PAWP Honored

PAWP has been selected as one of the top educational projects in Pennsylvania. A presentation describing PAWP was given at a conference on school-university partnerships held October 4 and 5 at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Sponsored by the Commission for the Universities of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, the conference was attended by presidents and provosts of the state universities, deans of education, and superintendents and principals from across Pennsylvania. The presentation was made by Bob Weiss and Hubert Seemann, a principal in the Upper Perkiomen School District.

Writing to Learn

by Angela Dorenkamp

In September, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published a study entitled *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*. Written by Ernest Boyer, President of the Foundation and former U.S. Commissioner of Education, the report is more optimistic than *A Nation at Risk*, which was issued earlier this year by the National Commission on Excellence in Education.

In addition to its greater measure of hope, however, *High School* also includes some recommendations designed to improve teaching and learning. Among these is the establishment of literacy as the schools' highest priority.

In calling for increased attention to the goal of enabling students to develop "the capacity to think critically and communicate effectively through the written and spoken word," the report in effect calls for writing in all disciplines. No one learns to write without practice, and the amount of writing which high school students are now asked to do is small and sporadic, tending to "bunch up" at assignments such as term papers or book reports. In her keynote address to the *Conference on College Composition and Communication* (San Francisco, March 1982), Janet Emig (Rutgers) cited studies which indicated that high school students spend less than ten minutes a day writing and that most of this writing consists of answering questions at the ends of chapters or filling in blanks. "I would cite equally alarming statistics on how little writing goes on in colleges and universities," she said, "but we have carefully thus far made no such wide and systematic study of ourselves."

In many colleges and universities across the country, however, faculty members and students are striving to make any such statistics, if and when they are compiled, less "alarming." Engaged in an enterprise called Writing Across the Curriculum, they have come to recognize writing as a central learning activity of their courses. But in spite of some general agreement in theory, these programs often vary widely in practice.

Some, for instance, have settled for the perception of writing as correctness in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and citation. Others have used writing to illuminate the differences between and among disciplinary perspectives, especially in the kinds of questions which particular disciplines pose. Many have succeeded in shifting their focus from writing as product to writing as process. But those which reflect most fully the original premise of the enterprise have capitalized on the pedagogical value of writing as a mode of learning.

For these programs, writing is a means of learning more about a subject — any subject. Because the act of writing requires the writer to engage ideas and feelings, to determine patterns of knowledge, to imagine other worlds, it

can help her to learn: to understand is to invent. But it is the search for language, the struggle to name, which often leads to discovery of new ideas, new relationships, new patterns. It is still uncommon, even on the college level, however, for instructors and students to recognize and make use of this heuristic power of language. Many WAC faculty thus remain preoccupied with the search for mechanical errors and with the grading of more written assignments.

In a recent article, "Writing as Learning Through the Curriculum" (*College English*, September 1983), C. H. Knoblauch (SUNY/Albany) and Lil Brannon (NYU) distinguish between WAC programs which deal primarily with writing as product and those which view writing as learning. "How can we encourage teachers to keep students writing throughout the curriculum," they ask, "without engendering the impression that we wish to place an English teacher's responsibilities on the shoulders of those whose interests, commitments, and competence lie elsewhere?" Their answer, that we must affirm "the heuristic value of composing," is accompanied by suggestions for practices which make writing an integral part of learning both within and outside the classroom.

This kind of attention to teaching and learning, as well as that provided by the Carnegie report, should help us all — teachers and students alike — to consider our respective responsibilities regarding the pursuit of literacy. I. A. Richards says that language is "the supreme organ of the mind's self-ordering growth" and that "there is no study which is not a language study, concerned with the speculative instruments it employs." That growth and that study, it seems to me, are what education in any form is all about.

Angela G. Dorenkamp teaches at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts and publishes The Comp Post newsletter, from which this article is taken.

Carnegie Foundation Report Also Recommends College-School Partnerships

In addition to its recommendations on how writing should be taught, the Carnegie Foundation has urged improvements in the schooling of prospective teachers through four years of core curriculum, solid concentration in one's major, and a "fifth-year" of instructional and apprenticeship experience. Among the core of courses to meet the special needs of all teachers, no matter what subject or level, is one entitled "The Teaching of Writing." According to the Foundation's report, "writing is an essential skill for self expression and the means by which critical thinking also will be taught. Every teacher should be prepared to help students write better. The skills involved in the teaching of writing should be well understood by all teachers."

The Foundation has also recommended that colleges and universities form "comprehensive partnerships" with secondary schools. In order to establish this, educators on both levels must agree that they share common interests and goals. Secondly, the traditional pecking order must be overcome: teachers and administrators in the public schools must be full partners in the process. Third, cooperative projects must be sharply focused with only a few specific goals: everything cannot be done at once. Fourth, if cooperation is to occur, the participants in the program must be recognized. Finally, programs must focus on action: if they are to be truly successful, they must operate with little red tape.

That is what the Pennsylvania Writing Project is about.

"To See Ourselves"

by Dian S. Margolies

Okay, we're ready to begin. I want everybody to relax now. We're going to engage in a little exercise together; I'm going to lead you in a guided fantasy experience. Some people feel more comfortable in keeping their eyes open while others like to keep them closed, shutting out all the distractions surrounding them. The choice is yours. Concentrate on your breathing for a few minutes. Breathing is very important in doing directed daydreaming. Remember the Zen attitude toward breathing . . . the intake breath is associated with rational thinking and logic, the outtake breath is associated with creativity and intuition. Can you hear your breathing, the regular flow of air in and out? Do you feel relaxed?

I want you to imagine yourself in a classroom. There are several bulletin boards covered with typed notices, dated attendance sheets, a faded athletic calendar, directions as to routines to be followed in case of a fire drill. An old E.T. poster is dangling at an angle near the American flag. Stacks of basal readers, in orange, green, purple and bright blue covers, a classroom quantity of dictionaries, and a carton full of paperback books labeled S.S.R. are all arranged neatly on the book shelves near the windows. One of those windows is badly cracked, and a few hanging plants defiantly struggle for light and air above the counter-tops. In the front of the room facing the six rows of desks stands the teacher's desk. You know it belongs to a teacher because it is larger, has drawers, and because of the materials stacked neatly on the top. You can see the orderly but ordinary array of books, mostly Teacher's Editions of reading texts and dog-eared short story collections bristling with bookmarks. There are one or two somber grammar texts mixed in with the others and all are lined up across the width of the desk, like some sort of protective barrier between the teacher and students. About four Teacher Editions of the workbooks that accompany those hardback basal texts are stacked up along one side of the teacher's blotter. An intake file box is filled with class sets of spelling tests waiting to be returned to reluctant students.

Seated in those six rows of seats are seventh grade students, twenty-five of them in all. Nothing out of the ordinary here, either. Some of the girls are chewing on long strands of hair, others are methodically chewing on pink wads of gum, and bubbles occasionally rise to the surface, pop softly, and disappear again. Three students stare out the window with sleepy, unseeing eyes. One boy in a Led Zeppelin T-shirt lounges all the way back in his seat, arms crossed in front. His seat teeters precariously, but he seems completely unaware of where he is, and what he is doing. There is a boy seated in front of him with the faint beginnings of a moustache darkening his face. This young man is reading a book and combing his hair thoughtfully. Most of the students are also reading in the Holt Basal Reader opened on their desks, a few are even engrossed in the story. The orange-covered book is ironically titled, "To See Ourselves".

One blackboard section is covered with a vocabulary list, words culled from the story they are reading, "Miyax and the Wolves" by the teacher. The homework assignment from the day before was to look up definitions for each of these words and write them down in a straw-colored composition book. The room is quiet except for the turning of pages, the scuffing of shoes on the floor, the faintly heard rumble from some empty teen-age stomach. The teacher breaks the silence with the familiar words, "Before the bell rings I want to go over your homework assignments for the next few days. For tomorrow do the workbook

pages associated with this story; they are on pages 40-42. For Thursday, I will want to see written answers to the Reflection Questions, numbers 1-5, on page 166. And those answers better be in complete sentences if you want credit for the assignment. Finally, on Monday, I expect you to hand in a two-page essay comparing the wolf signals for aggression, dominance, affection, friendship, 'come here' and 'lie down' with the human gestures that express the same things. We'll be talking more about the wolves tomorrow. Any questions?"

As the teacher repeats the assignments a second time, the door to the classroom opens quietly. (Take a minute to concentrate on your breathing, the steady rhythm, to feel the air coming in and going out. Can you feel the rush of air in your chest, in your lungs?) The teacher is also breathing in and out as she faces the opened door. As she breathes she begins to bounce, slowly at first, then higher and higher in the air. Before long she is bouncing in long, easy jumps almost to the ceiling. One jump follows another, and another, and she seems to be jumping right out of her skin . . . now there are two of her floating up and down in the classroom. The two images jump and shake hands, bounce up and down. You can see now that they are exact duplicates in dress, in shape, in hair color. As they float and bounce you can also see that they are both faceless, no features breaking the smooth expanse of skin from hairline to chin. One of the figures floats and bounces her way to the door, out the door into the adjoining classroom. Breathing deeply we float, too, and follow her. Floating slowly, bouncing lightly up and down, we turn to face the class.

This class is noisier, in truth it appears disorderly, a bit more confusing to observe. Chairs and desks are pulled together in casual groupings of two, three, and sometimes four or more around the room. About half-dozen students are sitting off by themselves in different parts of the room, writing in composition books or reading silently from pages they have already written. One young man is sitting on the bookshelf counter copying something from a dictionary, another sits cross-legged on the floor hunched over some lined papers spread out before him. One group of chairs is filled with students; one is reading aloud from sheets of paper filled with scribbled and crossed out writings while the others listen. A red-haired, freckle-faced seventh grade boy who looks like a hellion is staring off into space, anticipating the arrival of his muse; a grubby-looking classmate laboriously fills out a reaction sheet. Two giggling girls are sitting close to the teacher's desk and with scissors, tape, and lots of conversation, are cutting, rearranging, and pasting together scraps of paper. Way in the back of the room is a table holding several cardboard liquor boxes filled with manila folders. Two students stand by the box talking about their folders, while a sleepy-eyed third sits nearby listing subjects for writing on the inside cover of his folder. The teacher floats up to a group of students who are listening to a nervous classmate read aloud from her folder. The teacher pauses, listens to their voices, nods, and finally settles down gently and begins to conference with another young man waiting warily on the edge of the circle. Their heads draw together as they examine the young man's paper.

Don't forget to breathe deeply, in and out, in and out. Now you can see both classrooms side by side, both teachers, both sets of students, absorbed in their work. One of the students disengages herself from her cluster of classmates and comes toward you, holding out something in her hand. As she draws near you can make out what it is she is holding out to you. It's a magic marker. She's asking you to do something with it. Can you understand what

she's asking you to do? Lean closer. She's asking you to draw something. Take the marker from her hands and draw a face . . . your face. She's asking you to draw a face on the blank, featureless head of one of the teachers. Which teacher will wear your face? Which classroom is yours?

Dian Margolies was a Fellow in the 1983 Summer Institute. She teaches reading in the William Penn School District.

First Advanced Institute a Success: Second Advanced Institute Coming

This past summer, ten teachers met with Bob Weiss in an Advanced Institute on Revision. It was so exciting that they have since met two times — once in August and once in September. At the November 12th meeting, these teachers presented some of the issues dealt with at the Institute. Debbie Roselle began the presentation with an overview on revision. Ed Martin then discussed teacher comments on student papers. Next, Guy MacCloskey and Janet Smith explained student-teacher conferences. The fourth presentation was on revision workshops (a term borrowed from Marion Mohr) given by Georgette Salidis, Doris Kahley, and Judy Yunginger. Judy then continued with the subject of peer conferences. Teacher support groups were discussed by Gloria Outlaw, and Judy Fisher concluded with staff development and leadership. This group has developed a series of articles which are being compiled into a publication to be entitled "Working Papers on Revision." Any feedback on the presentations would be greatly appreciated.

Plans are underway for a second Advanced Institute. Anyone with suggestions on themes or topics should contact Bob Weiss.

Computer Course Planned for Summer 1984

A summer course planned by PAWP for 1984 deals with computers and composition. Details will be available at a later date. Anyone interested should send a note to Bob Weiss.

Sky Diving (for Marian Mohr)

by John King

Will my classroom next October
be much different from September?
Will the cresting wave of PAWP
push me far enough, I wonder?
I'm a trembling parachutist
shoved, reluctant, out the hatch.

I've been taught aerodynamics
and the physics of the process.

Do I have the right equipment—
tools
ideas
answers
research
to make a parachute
that's wide and soft
yet firm enough
to drift along till June?

John King, a 1983 PAWP Fellow, teaches in the Hatboro-Horsham School District.

PROJECT NEWS

PAWP courses have begun in the following areas: the Cheltenham School District (coordinated by Audrey Badger), the Downingtown School District (coordinated by Doris Kirk), and the Philadelphia School District (coordinated by Chris Kane).

In the Philadelphia School District, in-service credit will be given, while the courses for the Cheltenham and Downingtown teachers carry graduate credit through West Chester University.

PAWP in-service programs have been held or have begun in the Southeast Delco School District, the Unionville-Chadds Ford School District, the William Penn School District, the Friends' Select School in Philadelphia, and the Methacton School District.

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On Saturday, September 24 John Meehan of the Pennsylvania Department of Education presented some of the results of a videotaping project on children's writing he has directed with Donald Graves, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, and several Pennsylvania elementary school teachers. One PAWP Fellow involved with the Project is Joan Flynn of the West Chester Area School District. The PDE Writing Project Tapes, which include interviews with Graves and Giacobbe, cover the major aspects of the writing process.

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On October 14, the Project held a fall reunion meeting at the Towne Hall Restaurant in West Chester. In a lovely Victorian setting, 35 Fellows and friends gathered for good conversation, hors d'oeuvres, and drink. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of *Writing for Reading*, by Joan Duvall-Flynn, a 1980 Fellow and a 5th grade teacher in the West Chester Area School District. Subtitled *Will Resistant Readers Teach Each Other?*, the monograph is the 7th in a series of classroom research studies published by the National Writing Project, University of California-Berkeley. Flynn studies four fifth-grade boys who had been defeated by the basal reader but who become involved in her writing program, learn to produce multiple drafts and to read their own stories, and thus gain confidence as readers and writers. The publication is available through the Pennsylvania Writing Project office for \$2.00 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

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New Editor Named

This year's editor of the *PAWP Newsletter* is Martha Menz of the Upper Darby School District. She will be assisted by Becky King, graduate assistant in English at West Chester University. The Project is grateful to Doris Gabel of the Octorara School District, and Jim Trotman of West Chester University for their past work on the *Newsletter*.

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PAWP Director Appointed

Congratulations to Bob Weiss, who has recently been appointed to the Advisory Board of the National Writing Project. The ten-person board is the administrative unit governing the 116-site project and its national networking activities under grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Carnegie Corporation.

NWP Fellow Writes a Teaching Aid Book

Developed from a writing project institute, *Sentence Combining Rock Groups* by Roy E. Hughes helps students to create interesting sentences. Here is what Hughes wrote to all NWP sites last June:

Veni, vidi, scribi; I came, I saw, I wrote that summer of 1979 during the Puget Sound Writing Program. Write, they said, and I wrote. Research, they urged. And I did. Publish, they encouraged. And I . . . well, I tried. Fiction, narrative, rejection slips. Keep trying, they said. I looked for someone who would be a sympathetic publisher and found only me.

For years now I have researched and written. And now I publish. Me. The joy, the anguish, the expense, the risk, the challenge, the exhilaration has become one. The product has evolved from processes experienced in the Puget Sound program, London in 1981—Writing and Learning in the Humanities, and last summer at a Boulder conference. Real form for the endeavor came from modeling activities like these in over a hundred classrooms.

It is, very simply, a book on sentence combining. It is useful and needed, I feel. It is not a Strong nor an O'Hare. This book contains twenty-five easy-to-use ditto masters. It is for the classroom teacher in grades 4 through 12 who recognizes that sentence combining is an effective element in a total writing program, not a panacea.

If anyone is interested in purchasing this book, send \$8.95 to: Words Caller Press, Box 284, Lynnwood, WA 98036.

PAWP on Radio

The radio show done by Bob Weiss, *Education Update*, has been moved a little bit out of the twilight zone. The show will now air twice on one Sunday a month, first at 7:30 a.m. and repeated at 1:00 a.m.

The September 18th show offered a discussion of high school students' preparation for college. Participants were the Director of Admissions from West Chester University and Dean of Admissions from the University of Delaware.

The show on October 23 featured the topic, "Educating the Blind," with speakers Celia Dougherty of the Chester County Association of the Blind, and Beth Levenbach from the Delaware County Intermediate Unit.

Further shows are to be aired on November 20 and December 18.

NCTE 1984 Convention

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) will be holding its 1984 annual convention in Philadelphia. Everyone who has participated in any PAWP programs should not only plan to attend, but should also offer to help with local arrangements or submit a proposal to be part of the NCTE program sessions.

PAWP should really be a presence at this important convention. The local arrangements chairperson is Tobye Polk from the Germantown High School English Department, Philadelphia, Pa. 19144. Let us know if you have volunteered. Program proposal forms for 1984 will be available after the 1983 meeting. If you don't have a form, or if you want help developing a program, please contact the Project office.

Written June 18, 1983

by Virginia Conover

Dear Sharron,

Well, I certainly appreciated your telephone call the other night. Yes, I'm alive and well and writing or trying to write my fool head off for one more week of the institute. It has certainly been an eye opening experience for me in so many respects . . . new acquaintances, new appreciation for the talent that is out there on the front lines these days, teaching, theory, theory, theory, new research, and certainly new ideas . . . and even some of our good old tried and true tactics.

In fact, everytime I sit down and try to write my position paper I get a bit nostalgic for our good old days in that crazy school . . . my coffee pot, your herbal tea, my cigarette breaks and your allergies . . . How did we ever stand each other?

Well, you know I'd write and tell you more about the writing project but the truth of the matter is I'm supposed to be writing a position paper instead of a letter. What I really believe to be my position on the writing process is . . . hmmm? Since you are an old Moffett fan, what can I say? In many ways you and I discovered a lot of it for ourselves. I guess the most important thing for me, my position on the process, itself, is one has to trust it and understand all its components. The summer institute, therefore, has proven to be a time of renewal for me.

I know quite honestly when I go back to work in September, I'll be raring to go but I have no intention of cramming any new ideas down anybody else's throat in my good old, teach'em, torture'em with frags, awks, and "ss" English department. I say I won't and I don't care, but I do . . . it gets hard being known as the weird teacher, or the noisiest room on the first floor, or better yet when the kids give you the reputation of being "easy" because you don't give grammar tests. "All you have to do in Conover's room is read, talk, and write . . . and she laughs and smiles a lot too."

But as I was reading Cott's book the other night, I copied down this quote because I really liked it.

"The poet Kenneth Rexroth once commented: 'There are two ways of knowing, under standing and over bearing. The first is called wisdom. The second is called winning arguments.'"

The rest of the passage continued with a discussion of the original old English meaning of the word "understand". Apparently it meant just that, to stand under (knowledge, intuition, information) until one feels one has truly mastered something. So hopefully, after all these years of teaching, struggling, groping, and yes, standing under, I have no wish to win arguments by being overbearing but leave the summer writing project renewed and with a sense of wisdom and further understanding.

As we discussed on the phone (Steve is going to kill you when he sees the bill) when you look at the components of the writing process (prewriting, writing, sharing and response time, conferencing, revision, editing and finally publishing) . . . we did all that!

There we were, strangers thrown together in a strange school . . . a private school for kids labeled socially and emotionally disturbed and learning disabled . . . what a mouthful . . . what a handful! No curriculum, no guidance, except keep them contained, few supplies, and a weird portable classroom to teach in . . . we had ourselves some deal!

You were so young, fresh from your MAT in reading, clutching Moffett's book, and I, the former high school English teacher, was just too dumb to know any better when we both arrived on the job that first week. We opened the doors between our respective rooms, broke down the artificial barriers of teaching reading, writing and English and we went to work. We started with SSR. Remember the first time we did it using your kitchen timer? We started with three minutes, soft-boiled eggs and worked our way past hardboiled. We carefully stapled a journal for each student and remember the fun we had thinking up topics and reading and responding to each student's journal. You got me writing one myself and even now when I glance back at it, it is so rich with episodes from that year and some mundane ones too. Remember I was always fighting with Martha? Daughters thankfully do grow up as now we fight on a different or should I say "higher level".

We not only read silently but we read orally to the kids. If a child is not able to read on a so-called grade level, it doesn't necessarily mean she/he couldn't understand and should be forced into reading "insulting baby books". Remember the day I had to leave the room when you read the last chapter of *I'll Get There, It'd Better Be Worth the Trip*. I was crying. This past year, I cried while reading the end of a novel to my 7th graders . . . it was okay. They showed a lot of emotion too and also respect for my feelings. Trust, another element in the writing process that I guess you can't put into a textbook.

Then there were our learning centers. "Making Things Strange," word puzzles, picture story starters, whitened out cartoon balloons, and of course we had our phonics and grammar sheets too.

We didn't expect good copies. We got excited if there was some copy. Those kids were supposed to be crazy and learning disabled so I guess every little bit of progress to us was worthy of applause and they really were encouraged to go on. Encouragement, another part of the writing process.

The books . . . I'll never forget the look on Walt's face when you told him he was going to have to sew his own book! Sew . . . well, the binding, anyway. We were probably nuts just for having scissors in the same room with some of those kids.

Those wonderful books . . . everybody made a copy, *Tales from the Trailer*. Do you still have a copy? Reads like I've painted a very rosy picture, but I know it wasn't all like that. There were some pretty discouraging and rough times in those days. Remember when Billy overdosed and besides vomiting all over the trailer, we were sure that the ambulance wouldn't get him to the emergency room on time.

I sure know I wasn't perfect. I used to get infuriated with Eric. He just wouldn't do any work for me but he opened up and worked for you. We even got on each other's nerves too. We closed our doors on each other for a week and didn't speak. I think I made the kids do some stupid vocabulary exercise all week and gave them a test on Friday.

Boy, am I running on. What happened? To you? To me? Well, sure, you moved after Steve finished school and stopped teaching to raise a family, but what happened to me? I think I reached a point where I just couldn't bear the politics of special education, private schools, public funding and three and a half years in that type of position. I left teaching, depressed and angry. I felt just like Nora and I sure did slam the door the day I left, but it really never proved a thing at all.

Well, what a sucker I am. Flatter me a little bit and I'm yours, lured right back into another can of worms or classroom setting if you prefer jargon. The academically talented classroom . . . no curriculum, no guidance, no supplies . . . here we go again. So I came bouncing back with free writing, journals, projects, integrating reading and writing (it was core curriculum, social studies and English) even if "they" wanted to call it "Humanities".

There were some very bright kids in those classes and some were ready and some had even found their voice. They wrote, they wrote and they still write. I daresay, some have surprised me with their wonderful progress as writers. Some simply weren't ready and in eighth grade there are many distractions. I still didn't understand the entire writing process at that time and I began to get caught up in the faculty room follies, brag and tell and most of all the belittlement game, "Do you wanna hear how dumb my students are?" or "Lemme tell ya what the idiots wrote on their tests this morning."

Arguments ensued and personalities rubbed up against one another in that faculty room and even though I tried to play cool, I went home and cried one night because in front of everyone a certain English teacher turned on me and in front of everyone said, "Well, I'm glad they had fun in your class last year because you sure didn't teach them anything. I asked them just to name the most common prepositions and they looked at me like I was from Mars."

The worst was two years ago when my so-called regular class produced a book of poetry. They had spent so much time groping for subjects, words, sharing and reading out loud to each other. I did the typing and as time was running short, I admit it, I did the editing but only for spelling, nothing else. The students received their copies, elated they showed them to other teachers but by the end of the day half the class came running back into my room, crestfallen. "Mrs. Conover, Mrs. W. says we didn't write this book. She says we're too dumb to write poetry and we can't spell so that proves we didn't write it. She claims you wrote the whole thing! It's our book, isn't it?" Ironically, the title of their book was *Read Our Minds*.

So what have I been doing, Sharron, for the past few years? I think I have just been going through a lot of the motions . . . succumbing to spelling lists, and tests on Fridays, journals have become just a way to communicate with the kids, writing has been for topic sentences, and using the damn parts of speech as a way to explain and test them on "THEIR LANGUAGE".

No, I don't plan on going back in September to win any arguments. I do plan, however, as Theodore Roethke wrote in a poem, to try and teach them that "You learn by going where you have to go." My students and I are going to write. I am going to force myself not to pick up their papers, mark them up, spell words for them, make them turn a fragment into a sentence, add more words because I decree it too short, etc. I do not own their work or their papers any more than I own the entire faculty's problems. I own only my own. I must remember why I give them time to write journals. I must lead them with encouragement to play and experiment with language. I must model what a response group or revision truly is. I have to build trust . . . not because the process or institute says so, but I know that without it, the process won't work. I must give them guidance with mechanics, but only a little at a time. I must give them lots and lots of time to find their topics, voices and revise and rewrite and rewrite again. Then, if it is their best effort and they want me to

read it and give it a grade, I'll read it and try to grade fairly. Then all we'll do is start to write again and again and again.

I hope I can do all this and secretly I hope that the teacher next door does question me so I can begin sharing some of the process with him. For tonight, I'm afraid it is very late and I've got to go work on that position paper. Keep well, write when you have a chance . . . Love to all.

Ginny

Virginia Conover was a Fellow in the 1983 Summer Institute and teaches in the Wm. Penn School District.

I'm Fine, How Are You?

by Jim C. Beaver

It started tentatively, two days ago. I stayed home. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. Now it was beyond human endurance. The pain claimed me. My mind and my body were out of control. Inquisition-like pains pressed my arms and abdomen until my sphere of awareness narrowed to the space within my skin, tingling with a deep alien sensation. No mere surface discomfort this, but a centimeters-thick crawling, as though maggots were moving inside my tortured flesh.

I stalked the thirty feet of living room, knelt to ease the pain, lay prostrate like a supplicant, rolled over, anything to propitiate the pain demons. I knelt stung by a fusilade of Indian arrows and lowered my chest to the seat of a wooden chair. My arms dangled, I crouched, an obeisance to the conqueror.

A shadow crossed my pain-blanked eyes. I willed awareness of her standing there, my pain reflecting fright from her face. She helped me rise. My body hunched as if to maintain the kneeling position on straightened legs. We walked to the car. I lowered my body to the seat, protecting the pain area patiently, as if any change would bring on the demons.

I remember the bumps as shocks, as jolts, as stabs. Each movement hurt. Each motion registered new shock waves on my private Richter scale. I remembered Prometheus and the futility of Sisyphus.

The doctor made a swift diagnosis, an ambulance was called, swift hands touched me, moved me, and some of the tension left me.

"No pain killers," I said, "I want to be able to tell them where it hurts."

Now a stranger entered the ambulance. Another man, pale, staring, breathing in short gasps through collapsed lungs, was placed on the cot on the other side. My nurse moved to his side and the quick dispatch of trained minds and hands worked to save him.

"Dying," I thought, and strangely I was reassured. I wasn't pale. I wasn't staring. I was alive. I would make it.

I felt the bump of the ambulance as it stopped. "Emergency Entrance" the sign announced. Nurses met the attendants who wheeled us into the corridor.

"Oxygen!" said the nurse who ran to the pale man.

"ICU!" said the nurse who moved quickly to my side. I knew being second put me ahead on this ride.

"It's a game," I thought, "a children's game with wagons and riders and those who push. It's a race to see who wins."

Now the smell of the hospital surrounded me. Games don't have smells. Not needed. Lots of things aren't needed

here. Not small talk, not clean clothes, not pleasant smiles. Action is needed. Speed is needed. Skill, know-how, they are needed. What about a clean shave, a new shirt and tie, clean underwear that should be worn 'in case you have to go to the hospital'? Not needed.

My wagon was pushed into a large white circle.

"Circle the wagons," I thought, "here come the Indians." Bright white light focused on the station in the center. The rooms, like segments of the rim of a wagon wheel, ringed the station, white. Some doors were opened. Some were shut. A scout, watchful, aware, turned her uniformed body toward my wagon.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Heart attack," came the answer.

That was it.

The name of the game.

I had been tagged.

And I was it.

Jim Beaver was a Fellow in the 1983 Summer Institute and teaches in the Avon Grove School District.

When I Write Poems

by Connie Smith, Age 11

My name is Connie, and I write poems. But that's not all I do, I am a runner too. Someday I hope to help people who cannot do all the things that I can do well. I would like you to know about me. When you're sitting and rocking, I am thinking to myself. When you're talking, I am walking still thinking just what I should write just to be sure I don't forget what I write. I might miss a word or so, but still I am thinking and writing poems. Writing is very easy, like trying to ride a horse, but of course, a horse can be too much to handle at times just like writing can be. Writing poems are very nice to do just because you can write about the craziest things. You can do and say what you mean if you use your own words. Some way other people could know part of what you're thinking of so they could try harder in their own writing.

Connie Smith was a student of Adrienne Jacobi in the Philadelphia School District.

SCHEDULE OF PROJECT MEETINGS, 1983-1984

<u>When</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>
Friday, December 9	Lawrence Dining Hall West Chester University	Dinner meeting (See opening article)
Saturday, January 14 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Snow Date: Jan. 21)	West Chester University	Computers in the Writing Process
Saturday, February 11 (Snow Date: Feb. 18)	Northwest Library Philadelphia, Pa.	Presentations by Philadelphia School District teachers.
Saturday, March 10	West Chester University	How English is Taught in England. Heather Jarvis teaches in London's public schools and is an exchange teacher at the M. L. King High School for one year. She will talk about how children learn when grammar and usage are not directly taught and under an entirely different system of evaluation.
Saturday, April 7	West Chester University	Beverly Bimes, director of the Lancaster School District program for the gifted, will present on teaching writing to gifted students. Bimes is a former Gateway (Mo.) Writing Project Fellow and 1980 Teacher of the Year.
Saturday, May 19	Lawrence Center West Chester University	Luncheon for Fellows
Monday, June 25	West Chester University	Institute begins
Friday, July 10	West Chester University	Institute ends

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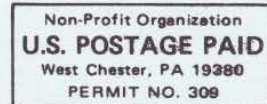
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THIRD CLASS