



Carindale Writers Group newsletter

16 June 2011

Present were Hazel, Jeff P., Wendy, Ed, Hilary, Leslee-Anne, Shirley, Rolando, Brian, Rebecca, Len, Maria S., Jeff M., Maria G., Dorothy, Annette, Beverley, Debby.

We also welcomed three new members to our group - Kerry, Ian and Karen.

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Today saw the annual general election of position holders for our esteemed Carindale Writers' Group. I am humbled to say that I, Debby Raymond, was elected to the role of chair/facilitator in place of the outgoing member and writer Beverley Asmus. Beverley served in this role for nigh on eleven years. She'll be a hard act to follow keeping, as she did, a gentle hand on the tiller, steering us forward and encouraging with her wisdom all the members of this group. We wish her well in her future endeavours and look forward to her continued association with the Carindale Writers' Group.

Jeff Matheson was once again elected to serve as treasurer and Leslee-Anne Hewson as librarian.

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Today's featured reader was Dorothy Vicary.

Dorothy read for us two further chapters from her book *The Byrd's Nest*, the first of which is called *A New Season in Bloom Street*. The narrator is young Deelie, through whose eyes we see the ups and downs in the daily life of the Byrd family.

The children's mother has been away for a few months. The unspoken suggestion is that she suffered a nervous breakdown. The family is a little apprehensive upon her return. Mother exhibits lively and caring behaviour, at odds with her previous habit of lying in bed all day. The children and their father are pleased with the new version they see of their mother, but don't quite know what to make of her yet.

Mother decides there will be big changes at the home in Bloom Street and announces that the children are to get out more. The very next Saturday she gives them the exact bus fare and sends them off for the day to a nearby town, in charge of their eldest sister Pauline. The kindness of the bus conductress in refusing to accept the proffered fares on the outbound trip allowed the children to have something special to eat when they arrived.

Regrettably, there is very little to do in the town. Rather than the adventure the children were hoping for, it turns out to be a dull day for most of them. Pauline, who is fourteen, drags her siblings

Providing encouragement through sharing and discussion

into a café to buy ice cream and chips because she has spotted a promising youth serving behind the counter. Before doing so, she quickly lets down her hair from her pony-tail. The apparently wise observation by twelve year-old sister Deelie, who mutters ‘loose hair, loose morals’, is an echo from the nuns at school and one which brought a smile to the listening audience of Carindale Writers’ Group members.

Dorothy writes some keenly evocative expressions for her characters to use. Enjoying their unaccustomed treats for instance, Deelie describes ‘gliding our tongues through our ice creams,’ before leaving for home ‘when the afternoon sky hazed’. The author has a deft hand with creating life-like and believable characters. She invokes very realistic imagery. Dorothy also creates good scene-setting with fluid movement from one scene to the next, combined with a good balance of narrative and description.

Some of our members suggested she could perhaps try to create a little more tension in her current story, to show how much the children are puzzled by their mother’s unusually bright behaviour.

At the end of the current reading a change of pace occurs. As the children make their way home from their outing, the bus driver tells them they must tell their mother as soon as they get home their little brother is sick. Some listeners felt this was an abrupt interruption to the otherwise gentle flow of the day’s observation by the young narrator. Other listeners felt it created a ‘page-turning’ moment, to find out what will happen.

Some of Dorothy’s audience were unsure as to the era when the story was set. Mentioning the price of the bus fare paid (or saved) by the children might help, as would a reference to what film was playing at the local cinema at the time. If it was Tarzan for instance, which actor played the lead?

Back home with meals being prepared in the Byrd family kitchen, the scene was so clearly described it caused rumbles of hunger for one of our members!

One suggestion made to the author was to reduce her use of what might be called ‘stage directions’ in describing the voice of the speaker. For instance ‘she gasped’ or ‘she murmured’ is perhaps not so often necessary. If there are only two or at most three people involved in the dialogue, it’s usually quite clear from the writing what the emotion of the speaker is.

A good picture was painted and an equally clear sense of place was established in Dorothy’s work, even for listeners unfamiliar with earlier chapters of her story. Keep up the good work, Dorothy!

Our **featured reader** for the next meeting on Thursday 7th July will be Judith Rostedt, then Leslee-Anne Hewson at the following meeting.

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Before we got onto reading the suggested exercise for today we went around the table to gain a quick insight into the preferred writing genres of the members present. In brief, then -

Leslee-Anne likes to write stories for children, also poetry. Annette described her own writing as dabbling. Maria G. writes short and long stories and features. Bev has written 3 novels mostly with a psychological angle to them. Karen H. writes fiction and short stories. Hazel does biography, fiction and non-fiction. Jeff P. does short stories. Ed writes historical fiction (with “international accreditation and authority” he wryly told us – a desire dear to his heart).

Wendy writes speculative non-fiction. Hilary is a dabbler, writing humour and biography. Rolando writes motivational books. Brian told us he writes “in idleness with dignity” (which he does extremely well). Maria S. likes playing with words when she writes. Len uses his science background as the basis for his fiction writing. Kerry writes children’s picture books. Shirley is a dabbler. Ian, setting out on his writing path, has written some poetry and wants to do travel writing. Rebecca W. writes adult fantasy. Dorothy writes Australian history from a personal perspective. Jeff M. writes historical fiction, about the Napoleonic wars. He wants to move on to another ‘powder and smoke epic’, the English civil war. Debby writes memoir and the occasional apt ditty.

And that was from the writers present at our meeting today. There are members of the Carindale Writers’ Group who write in other genres as well. What a lively cross-section of interests we display.

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Next it was onto our suggested exercise topic, **Riding Home**.

Brian began with a story of a somewhat bellicose character constantly travelling and searching for the elusive South Riding, a geographical division of Yorkshire in England which has never existed. His closing line made a superb ending to his short story.

Maria G. wrote Musings on a Ferry about passengers on their way home, caught up watching and listening to the city and its residents passing by.

Hilary’s story was about what happened when their caravan became detached from the car towing it. Several ‘supermen’ appeared right on cue to save the day. Musing over the things that can go wrong as you’re ‘riding home’ can lead you to become a philosopher.

Hazel described a train trip when she was a small child when her family were fleeing the Japanese occupation of Burma. Their goal of getting to Mandalay pre-occupied them, spurred by the fear they experienced as they learnt of towns they had passed through only hours before being overrun.

Len and Maria S. together read A Tense Ride Home; driving when directions were not understood or followed, which meant that a ten minute ride took an hour and a half.

Rolando wrote about being escorted home by police from the pub, on his trusty horse. You can be fined for being drunk in charge of a vehicle – even a bicycle it seems – but not if you’re on horseback, or so the rider would have you believe!

Bev read to us a longer piece on the nostalgia of returning to the former family home. The poignancy of finding it dilapidated led to an acute sense of dispossession. There were no longer any of the people around who had known her as a child. But she called to mind a wonderfully vivid moment, seeing her childhood self once again riding home.

Others wrote on themes off the suggested topic so their turn came up next.

Jeff M. wrote The Emperor’s Address, in which Napoleon had the daring to divulge his battle tactics to his men in a pamphlet that was passed around from one soldier to the next. The pamphlet could have fallen into enemy hands but that made the declaration of his plans seem all the more courageous. The soldiers raised their pannikins and drank “to the Emperor!”

Providing encouragement through sharing and discussion

Jeff P. wrote *That Bike* about the trouble he got into when learning to ride a bike. When his brother gave him a push, the learner cyclist ended up knocking over his dad's banana trees, resulting in a belting for his trouble. One day dad gave in to the inevitable and brought home a new bike for the boys, this time one with brakes that worked.

Suggested exercise for next time is '**A day in the life of a council bus driver**'.

A useful word count to note here is the preferred number of around 500 – 600 for the exercise. This is sometimes the number recommended for short story entries to competitions. That makes it good practice to confine writing your subject matter for the exercise to about this number of words, both for certain types of competitions and for reading aloud at our meetings. This brevity for the exercise gives every member a chance to read their work aloud.

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Free editing available for a limited time only for Carindale Writers' Group members.

This kind offer is made by Rebecca Wuth. Please email the word count of the story/article and a brief description of the work before sending your story to Rebecca. She will then advise you whether or not she is able to take it on yet. It's important to note that only final versions - on the point of submission to an agent, publisher or competition, for instance – can be dealt with for this editing. No early drafts, please.

Rebecca asks that you give her either a double-spaced hard copy or an emailed MSWord or RTF (Rich Text Format) document. If the work is emailed Rebecca will edit using 'track changes' in Word. On a hard copy the changes will be marked up in red pen. Rebecca's email address is emaleis@yahoo.com.au

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There are some new courses available from the Queensland Writers Centre and The Australian Writer's Marketplace Online Learning Centre (OLC) in which some members may be interested. Visit <http://www.awmonlinelearn.com.au> for more information.

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Writers Websites.

Author Louise Voss is quoted saying "I was published a few years ago. I had a publishing deal and one of the things that was very distressing was how out of your own hands your destiny is." Would-be authors might therefore be interested to take a look at the following link about independent publishing: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-13853728>

And here's one from Jane:

<http://bubblecow.co.uk/blog/2010/03/25/how-to-write-a-novel-in-a-month/>

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We are pleased to make the following announcement in relation to competition success.

Beverley's short story "Sticks and Stones" is a finalist in the Redlitzer Competition. This announcement was also made in the Bayside Bulletin. There is another stage to go to decide the outright winner for the cash prize but Bev is pleased at having got this far, as the stories from all ten finalists will be published in an anthology funded by Redland City Council. Congratulations, Bev!

Eleven finalists have been announced for the Peter Cowan 600 Short Story Competition, to which some of the members of the Carindale Writers Group submitted entries. For a short biography of the finalists see: www.pcwc.org.au

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Authors' Month is being promoted by Brisbane City Council. The aim is to support writers' groups and individuals. There are close to 50 events being offered across the city for *Authors Month in July*. For more information about the talks please contact Caz Osborne, Senior Coordinator - Community Reading Strategy, Library Services, Brisbane City Council.
Caz.Osborne@brisbane.qld.gov.au

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Chip's Computer Tips

By FN KARMATZ

Chip suggests you take a look at this Windows8 video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p92QfWOW88I>

Convert Word to a PDF format or PDF to Word

The following came from a tech forum: You've got a lot of options out there, but I'm going to recommend Nitro PDF to Word. They sell a professional converter program, but their free web service works very well if you don't have a massive number of documents to convert.

Go to the web page, tell it what file you want to convert, select the format you want it converted to (.doc or .rtf), and to what email address you want it mailed.

You'll soon get two emails. One will try to convince you to subscribe (you don't have to). The other is your pdf.

I tried it with some pretty complicated .pdfs. The formatting, while not always perfect, was always close. More important for editing purposes, the text flowed properly in the correct order.

And if the fact that they require your email address bothers you, their [privacy policy](#) is short, simple, and promises that they will behave.

You can also go to www.download.com. Search for Convert .pdf to Word or Word to .pdf. There you will find several free converters that will let you convert either way. Take your choice.

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