

***Carindale Writers' Group Meeting***

**10 June 2010**

Start 9:30

**Present:** Beverley, Rolando, Lydia, Dorothy, Judy, Nick, Marjory, Brian, Wendy, Dawn, Pam, Naomi, Jeff, Debby, Rebekah, Shirley, Sandy, Gary, Amy.

**Apologies:** Don, Len, Heather, Leslee-Anne, Chip, Karen

**News/ challenges/ discussions/correspondence:**

1. We started with some more discussion about how to best utilise our additional funds. All agreed that a collection of short stories, in book form this time, would be a good idea. Bev suggested that due to the short time frame for a launch coinciding with Queensland Writers Week, we would need a task force to oversee the process. Happily, after the meeting, Rebekah and Lydia put their hands up, thanks girls! And along with Bev, they've asked that everyone comes along to the next meeting with ideas as to the budget, title as well as whether we would like to donate any funds raised from sales to charity.

2. Our next meeting is also our AGM. A busy meeting! Anyone who would like to nominate themselves for a position in the coming year, please let Bev know. Positions include: Co-ordinator (currently held by Bev), Treasurer (currently held by Jeff), Meeting Reporter (currently held by Naomi), Librarian (currently held by Leslee-Anne) and not to forget Morning Tea (currently held by Dorothy).

3. Nick's book titled "Three Small Suspects" has been selling well and he's now contemplating writing a sequel. We have a copy in our library if anyone would like to find out more. He also has a radio interview coming up on Bris31 this Saturday (26<sup>th</sup> June) at 8:30pm. All the best Nick!

4. Pam is bringing along a copy of her self-published book entitled "Too Fussy" to add to our library next meeting. Good to see so many of our own members books making their way into the collection.

## **Feature Reader:**

### **Beverley: From her Novel “A Matter of Trust”**

#### **Overview:**

Bev read to us from her Novel in progress “A Matter of Trust” which follows the life of psychologist, Erica Nolan, as she finds love, loses love, is stalked and goes through a number of trials in her life. The excerpt this meeting was towards the end of the novel. After Erica discovers her boyfriend is having an affair with her best friend, they are both found dead following a terrible car accident. But who did it? Was it indeed Erica? You would certainly think she had motive. Bev led us through a series of false leads, mysteries and shady characters which concluded at a family wedding. I’ll stop at this point so I don’t ruin the ending for those of you who weren’t there.

#### **Critique:**

Bev decided to keep the critique fairly open to see what comments came out of a more general discussion. Comments included that the plot was very strong, holding interest by entwining a number of situations, characters and events to keep the reader guessing. The tension this created leading into the fight scene towards the end was the highlight of the reading according to quite a few members. It was felt that Erica was a credible character and it was easy to feel empathy for her as well as anger towards the killer. One reader even went so far as to say she wanted to ‘punch him in the face’. I’m sure is the feeling Bev wanted to evoke here! There was some feeling that there were quite a few cliché’s included, but whether that is something that needs to change we’ll leave up to Bev. The story is also written in first person, which as we know can be tricky, but everyone thought it was handled very well. I think we were all delighted to see some role play as together we tried to figure out how best to describe the scene of one character glassing another. Thanks goodness Bev didn’t have to resort to heading down to the local bar to see how it might be done for real. I think that may be taking your love for your craft just a little too far!

#### **Additional Readers:**

This week’s exercise was a ‘flash fiction’ allowing us only 100 words to create a story that had to include the words: bottle, cruel, Sunday, temptation and breakfast.

Quite a lot of people gave it a go, and there were some interesting interpretations. Characters who enjoyed a tippie did seem to feature a lot; perhaps it was the words ‘bottle’ and ‘temptation’ that inspired us.

However, even those stories with a similar theme, still varied in plot. We started with a reading about the pain a Mother felt after losing her daughter. A good lesson that it doesn’t require a novel to create a beautiful, moving piece. Thanks Lydia. Next Pam and Richard showed the struggle of alcoholism and Sandy followed with a text message with a twist. Bev treated us with two alternate titles for her piece: ‘Recipe for Murder’ or ‘Escape Plan’ which was written as a recipe. What a clever idea to get a lot of meaning out of very few words. Then we heard from Gary who created temptation in a post apocalyptic world, Liam who told the tale of a helpless 5 year old who had his breakfast taken away from him by an abusive

father and then Debby showed us all how it's really done by using only 15 words. What an effort. Rolando continued on with his chauvinistic tongue in cheek theme from last week and finally Len created a fatal love triangle. Well done to everyone who gave it a go. It certainly does show how even a small piece can be so original.

As the name suggests, our flash fiction was quite quick, so we had time for a few more additional readers this week....

**Marjory: 'What can I write?'**

We can always count on Marjory for her social commentary. As she tells us of her struggle to find something to write about, she finds she has more than she expected. From politics to infrastructure, Aussie culture and even little Bindi Irwin growing up she had a take on all the up and coming current affairs. If you happened to have missed the news, be sure to stop by to catch up on current events with Marjory.

**Dorothy: From "The Birds"**

A passage about an early morning visitor that doesn't turn out as planned as our favourite's; Deelie and Pauline go to work preparing for the visit of Uncle Max. A seemingly standard event, but so much is revealed as next door's dog, Stinky, is killed and uncle Max is taken off to the hospital. As if that isn't enough, we then see Mrs Miller next door, trying to cover up her blackened face full of bruises. Dorothy always manages to cram in so much action into such a short few pages, and in an understated way that makes it so moving. Perhaps it's that she doesn't make a 'to do' of, it just seems to naturally happen.

**Gary: "Time to Kill"**

Gary delved into the complexities of time travel telling of the curse of a dishonest man as he goes back in time to try and fix the mistakes of his past. But will a dishonest man be fated to continue repeating those mistakes? I won't go into too much detail as there were quite a few calls for this story to end up in our newly proposed book, but let me just say that Gary builds suspense and twist upon twist to create a futuristic sci-fi that must certainly be worthy of a full novel mustn't it? Well Gary, I certainly do hope this one ends up in the book; I'd love to read it for myself.

**Rebekah: "The pressure to be funny"**

An internal monologue (I hope not from personal experience!) about the struggle to be funny. A young girl, or perhaps someone not so young? is confronted with her own beast within as she performs on stage at the direction of her mother. Some exceptional metaphors and a unique interpretation of what, I must think, could be a common feeling and event. Thanks Rebekah.

**Judy: "Ransom"**

Using the task from the last meeting (in which we were challenged to tell a story in the first person) Judy created a kidnapping scenario from the perspective of the ringleader of a gang of kidnappers. As the gang leader is faced with the pressure of demanding ransom, managing the child and the rest of the gang, he gets an unexpected surprise as his crew rebel against him deciding to return the child they kidnapped. Crime thwarted by itself!

**Feature Reader/s for next meeting: Rolando**

**Exercise to work on if you have time:** Bev sent this out in an email last week. If you didn't receive it, please let her know.

**Happy Writing Everyone!**

## Chip's Computer Tips

### Website Watch

Legally, whatever information you put on a website no longer belongs to you. It belongs to the company that owns that website. This means that any social networking site owns the information you put on it. It has the right to make it public or pass it on to authorities. Thus, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Skype, and your own Internet Service Provider's website own the personal information you provided when you joined these website organisations. If you quit Facebook, it keeps your personal information on file. If you use G-Mail, Hotmail or Yahoo Mail, although they may not release any of the data you put on it, the information you upload to them belongs to them.

Here's a case in point: When Disa Powell's husband and brother were badly burned in an electrical explosion while conducting maintenance at a Wal-Mart store, a US discount chain similar to K-Mart, and the family sued, the defense went after something she never expected: her online life.

Through a subpoena seeking information about the men's injuries, Wal-Mart was able to gain full access to her Facebook and MySpace social-networking accounts -- every public and private message, contact and photo for the previous 2 1/2 years.

There were the pictures of Powell's newborn baby lying in a hospital bed after heart surgery (Label: "The hardest day of Mommy and Daddy's life"). The messages detailing problems with her pregnancy ("I got a bladder infection, which has moved to my kidneys"). And the messages dissing on friends ("Brad is a big fat BABY, and can't do anything by himself. The whole issue is that he's lazy").

The case, which was settled out of court in January 2010, offers a window into an issue that in recent weeks has riled members of the US Congress, consumer advocacy groups and tens of thousands of account holders: what your social-networking sites know about you and whom they share it with.

### Open Sites and Service Providers

Many online service providers over the past few years have been building huge dossiers with minute details of each user's online activities -- a practice that isn't usually mentioned in privacy policies. Some companies anonymise the data, while others do not. Some store detailed data for a month, while others keep it for years.

Companies are loath to talk about what information they track, but internal compliance manuals for law enforcement for Facebook, Yahoo and [Microsoft](#) reviewed by The Washington Post

show that their data collection is much more extensive than users might believe based on what they themselves can access.

For example: Microsoft tracks the Xbox LIVE start and end dates and times for game-playing and notes the game played, such as "SW: Jedi Academy." Yahoo keeps chat and instant messenger logs for 45 to 60 days and notes the time/date and IP address for when content is added or deleted to someone's profile or to its Flickr photo service.

Facebook's data collection is among the most detailed.

For every user ID, Facebook keeps a log of the IP address that accessed the account, the date and time, and what exactly the user did -- clicking on an advertisement, looking at someone else's profile, posting a photo or sending a message to a friend, etc.

Facebook spokesman Andrew Noyes declined to comment on specific data-gathering and retention policies but said the privacy policy makes clear that the company may disclose information pursuant to subpoenas, court orders or other requests.

However, Noyes said, "We scrutinize every single information request; require a detailed description of why the request is being made; and, if it is deemed appropriate, share only the minimum amount of information."

Facebook says in its compliance manual that it generally retains information about activity by IP address for 90 days, but in the Ledbetter-Powell case it's clear that other information, such as her private messages to and from friends, had been kept since her account was opened in 2007.

Eben Moglen, a Columbia University law professor and director of Software Freedom Law Center, calls Facebook "one big database of hundreds of millions of people containing the kind of information far beyond what the secret police in 20th-century totalitarian regimes had."

The company knows which social contacts are closest to you and can guess your moods, he said. And if you're obsessively checking another person's profile at the same time he or she is doing the same with yours, Moglen claims, "Facebook can even tell you're going to have an affair before you do."

As for myself, I won't use Facebook. However, if you do, make sure you do not leave yourself open to 'all' contacts. Keep all the privacy settings. If you already have a Facebook account, go back and recheck your privacy settings. These will not only deter hackers, but also malware purveyors.

Happy surfing!