

# Writers pick up tips for success from the pros

By Rebecca Roberts  
special writer

On a Thursday afternoon last month, 47 of us lugged baggage and expectations to Cranbrook School at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. We stayed through Sunday — writers in pursuit of quality — to be better, we hoped.

For 18 years, Cranbrook Writers' Guild has sponsored the Cranbrook Writers' Conference, providing scholarships for a handful of writers — all students at Michigan college and universities.

Jean Rosen has been conference director for the past two years. Some time next month Rosen and her assistant, Roberta Herter, will begin combining the literary streets for professional writers to serve as the 1983 conference faculty-in-residence for poetry, fiction,

feature writing, and in years past, playwriting.

Rosen said the scholarships, averaging about \$450 per student, are awarded each year on a competitive basis, "to give Michigan college students who write the opportunity to meet with other writers in a workshop setting."

The workshops are informal, held for two hours, morning and afternoon, in various rooms at Kingswood. At the sessions people stretch comfortably on the floor in chairs and couches.

COLETTE INEZ was the conference poet-in-residence this year. Inez is from New York City and her published works include two poetry collections, "Alive and Taking Names" and "The Woman Who Loved Worms" (Ohio University Press).

Inez urged students to keep a journal. She called it "keeping track of

your spirit life." Also, she said, dreams are a rich source for poetry. "I like to put down my dream shreds."

A journal needn't be written in every day, she added, but perhaps every other day — or when something significant occurs in your life. Later, these writings can be a source for poetry.

One of the "poet's pros" said Inez, is a small spiral pad to jot down thoughts during "those many periods of waiting" that occur in everyone's life, such as waiting for the doctor or waiting in line at the grocery store.

STEPHEN GOODWIN is a Washington D.C.-based novelist with two published novels, "Kin" (Harper & Row, 1975) and "The Blood of Paradise" (Dutton, 1979). He has a novella in the works and writes for the Washington Post.

One of his tasks in the workshops

was to guide writers through their raw imaginations to the finished manuscript using the manuscripts submitted by the students as teaching tools.

He said structure, especially in fiction, should never be obvious and students should avoid using structural devices as substitutes for strong writing.

Writers, he explained, can be "too ingenious" in the use of craft. It's better to be a little less brilliant and organic, he said. "When a writer submits a manuscript to a publisher, the writer should listen to his (her) own words, let the story decide where it's going to."

HIS ADVICE "Always do things the simplest way first, then, if that doesn't work, do it the complicated way."

Mimi Jones is associate editor of fiction at "Redbook" magazine in Manhattan. She told her listeners that in 1976 while working at Viking Press, she discovered a stack of unsolicited manu-

scripts called the "slush pile," a story by then unknown writer, Judith Guest. The manuscript? "Ordinary People."

But, said Jones, out of the more than 38,000 unsolicited manuscripts submitted to "Redbook" every year, the magazine buys only 15-20.

She said "Redbook" editors look for "writers who write with conviction."

She said she believes writers should draw on their imagination when writing fiction. Writing too directly from one's own experience might not enable the writer to gain the objectivity so necessary to good writing, she explained.

But, that doesn't mean experience can't be used in one's writing, she said.

"Often the emotional context of what you know can be transposed into the imaginary context."

Jones said she often participates in writer conferences like the one at Cranbrook.

"After sitting behind my desk, behind piles of manuscripts, it's good to come to a writers' conference and meet the people. It keeps my hands human."

## Historical homes open doors for tour

Lovers of old homes can tour some examples of historic architecture on Ann Arbor's west side 1-6 p.m. Sept. 19.

The 10th annual homes tour of the Old West Side Association of Ann Arbor includes several homes still in the process of being restored, such as the Wilson home, 509 Liberty, which is being converted from duplex to its original condition as a single-family home.

At the Huth/Ryder home, 319 S. Seventh, skylights and a greenhouse are being added to brighten a dark interior, and a wood burning stove has been installed to combat high fuel costs.

The South Main Market is also on the tour. A former pottery factory, it has been transformed into a light, airy space with several small shops.

Special attractions include horse-and-buggy rides, demonstrations of turn-of-the-century bicycles and a display of a queen-size friendship quilt which was hand made by west-side residents in honor of the 15th anniversary of the association. The quilt will be displayed the day of the tour at tour headquarters, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, corner of Liberty and Third. Afterwards, it will be raffled off in October. Tickets for the quilt raffle may be purchased for \$2 each or three for \$5 at tour headquarters the day of the tour or by calling 665-5516 or 662-2707 after Sept. 19.

Tickets for the seven-house tour will be available on the day of the tour for \$4.50 at tour headquarters, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, corner of Liberty and Third.

Advance tickets for \$3.50 are available from the following Ann Arbor merchants: Delf's Paints, Little Professor Book Centre, Wild West, Treasure Mart, Peaceable Kingdom, Artisans, Crown House of Gifts, Plymouth Mall, Washenaw Dairy, Anderson's Paints, Complete Cuisine and Border's Bookstore. Senior citizens' tickets are \$2.50.

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