

# 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 Kingswood School at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. We stayed through Sunday — writers in pursuit of quality — to become, we hoped, better.

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

Joan Rosen has been conference director for the past two years. Sometime 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, playwrighting.

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 or on 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 shards."

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 props," 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, 1979) 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 imaginings 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 use of craft, "It's better to be a little dumb. Writing is an organic process and a writer should listen to his (her) own words, let the story decide where it's going to go."

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 in 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 36,000 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 writers' 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 16th annual homes tour of the Old West Side Association of Ann Arbor includes several homes still in the process of being renovated, such as the Wilson home, 589 Liberty, which is being converted from duplex to its original condition as a single-family home.

At the Hath/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 buggy factory, it has been transformed into a light, airy space for 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 at the tour.

played the day of the tour at four headquarters, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, corner of Liberty and Third. Afterwards, it will be exhibited at the Ann Arbor Public Library for the rest of September.

The quilt will be raffled off in October. Tickets for the quilt raffle may be purchased for \$2 each or three for \$5 at four headquarters of the tour or by calling 665-5616 or 662-2707 after Sept. 19.

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

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

## Horse and buggy trip repeats surprise

Fifty years ago, newly married Dominic and Elizabeth Leonatti traveled by horse and buggy from the Detroit church where they had exchanged vows to the photographer's studio where the event was recorded for posterity.

One of the members of their wedding party had arranged the ride as his surprise gift to the couple.

Last weekend Dominic and Elizabeth, better known as Tina, took time from still-busy lives to celebrate 50 years of marriage.

And when they left their Livonia home Friday to go to the Farmington home of their son Michael, scene of the first of two evenings of festivities, there was another horse and buggy waiting. Two nephews and a niece and their spouses had decided to duplicate the remembered moment as their 50th anniversary gift to the couple.

"And they were just as surprised this time," said their daughter-in-law, Sharon Leonatti. "They had a big sign on the back of the buggy, and they were driven around their neighborhood before being brought out to our house."

THE EVENT at the home of the younger Leonattis was a Mass concelebrated by the Rev. Robert Bretz, a family friend, and the Rev. Arthur Krawczak, bishop of Detroit.

Seventy-four family members were on hand, including Dominic's 93-year-old mother, Frances Seracio, who makes her home with a daughter in Detroit.

The couple's two grandsons came for the occasion, Michael Leonatti from Omaha and Gregory from San Diego. Both are college students. Other relatives arrived from California, Arizona and Pennsylvania.

A catered dinner and reception followed the religious service. On Saturday night, 149 friends and relatives honored the couple at a Detroit Athletic Club party.

That group included 13 of the 16 attendants who were with them when they married in St. Luke Catholic Church in Detroit, and one of the 13 was Peter Blando of Plymouth, whom the Leonattis had not seen since he served as their ringbearer.

Also present for the DAC party was an uncle now 92.

THE COUPLE, born in Italy, grew up in the Detroit area and lived there most of their married life, moving to Livonia 14 years ago.

Dominic is retired from the Ford Motor Co. and now works as a designer for Precision Instrument Co., a firm owned by his son. Tina is employed by Raimi's in the Westland shopping center.

Both, said their daughter-in-law, are "in super good health and always on the go."

They enjoy their work and visiting family members and wintering in Arizona.

And traveling by horse and buggy.



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Tina and Dominic Leonatti of Livonia smile from the horse and buggy conveyance that took them to a Mass marking their 50th wedding anniversary.

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