

# book break

## Victoria Diaz

### Writers show winning style

IF YOU seek a writer, look about you. There are no next door or down the street or just around the corner.

From Birmingham, where Elmore Leonard pens those hot-selling suspense thrillers, to Manaclova, where Gloria Whelan crafts her prize-winning short stories, to the campus at East Lansing, where Diane Wakoski puts together her artful poetry, to a secluded spot near Lake Leelanau, where Jim Harrison creates his gritty, no-holds-barred prose — in Michigan, there's a whole lot of writing going on.

And it's not just name writers like Leonard and Whelan and Wakoski and Harrison who are involved. Listen, and you'll hear the sounds of scribbling pencils and clacking typewriters, as hundreds in this pleasant peninsula apply themselves to the serious business of putting words to paper.

Fortunately, many Michigan writers have been recognized for their efforts recently, and awarded prizes for their well-crafted prose and poetry. The following is a partial listing of those writers. While some names are familiar, most are not. Congratulations to all.

• Approximately 1,600 short stories by almost 800 authors were entered in this year's prestigious PEN Syndicated Fiction Project contest.

When authors Alan Chase and Laura Furman, and Simon and Schuster editor Leslie Wells, had compiled the final judging, Michigan writers Charles Baxter and Nicholas Delbanco of Ann Arbor, Janet Dybek of Kalamazoo and Janet Kauffman of Hudson were among the 55 winners from the United States and Canada.

Winning authors receive an initial \$500 for the right to circulate their work to participating newspaper markets, and to make an audio tape of their story for broadcasting on National Public Radio, as well as additional payment each time the story is published or broadcast.

• Winners of the 1989 University of Michigan Hopwood Award for excellence in writing included Gregory Loselle of Wyandotte, Loselle

won both a major drama/screenplay and poetry award, and also received the highest award — \$2,000 in the major drama/screenplay category.

Other Michigan winners were Daniel Pille of Ann Arbor (major drama/screenplay), Brett Stevenson, Adrian (major essay), Lee Stapleton, East Lansing (minor fiction), Charles Fogel, Ann Arbor (minor fiction); Amos Aue, Ypsilanti (minor fiction); Kasha Fluegge, Manitou Beach (minor poetry); Stephanie Ivonoff, Dearborn Heights (minor poetry); Larissa Sporink, Ann Arbor (minor poetry); and Robert Sayre Cox and John Reinhard, Ann Arbor (major poetry).

• Reinhard was also a winner in the New Voices poetry competition — conducted by the Poetry Resource Center of Michigan — along with Gail Griffin of Kalamazoo and Barbara Robbeck of Farmington Hills. A cash prize of \$100 was awarded.

All three poets read from their work at this year's 15th annual Michigan Michigan Poetry Festival, held at the St. Regis Hotel in Detroit on May 5 and 6.

• The game was afoot recently when the "Murder in the Library" Writing Contest, sponsored by the Livonia Public Library, got under way.

Selected as the first place winner in the mystery short story competition was William Neusser of West Bloomfield. Bob Loomis of Livonia took home the second place award, and Robert Friar of Livonia, third prize.

Judges for the contest were author Thomas Sullivan, author William Kienzle, former editor Javan Kienzle, and Free Press book editor Linnea Lannoo. Winners received cash prizes.

• Also in Livonia, Phillip Sterling of Big Rapids has won the \$100 first prize in the 1989 Post Hunt contest, conducted through Schoolcraft College. Second and third place winners respectively were Jan Mordenski of Dearborn Heights and Ed Hoepfer of Rochester Hills.

# Zipper

## Closing the gap for young readers

By Victoria Diaz  
special writer

CAN YOU make an amazing Moebius strip? Do you know that your car can fly? Did you know that it is against the law to sing out of tune in North Carolina, and to grow dandelions in Washington, D.C.? Are you aware Abner Doubleday invented baseball when he was only 16?

If you read Zipper, you'll know all of the above, plus a lot more. Zipper is a new newspaper especially for children — although it's reported that parents like to read it, too.

The publisher is Diane Lewis of Livonia, mother of three, who also edits, writes, creates the original illustrations, typesets and does all layout on the fledgling periodical. In addition, she's the marketing and distribution department.

While she does have some experience in marketing and typesetting because of part-time work in the family's manufacturing business, she doesn't have a smidgen of newspapering in her background.

She is simply a concerned parent with a strong creative streak who saw a real need for something like Zipper in the marketplace, and has set out to do something about that need.

"MY HUSBAND and I read a lot, and as we watched kids (read), we came up with this theory," Lewis said.

"For kids who are not great readers, books are really struggles. We thought that, if a kid had something that was more 'bite-sized,' they could enjoy and learn, too. It would build up their reading skills, and sort of get them going."

But there just didn't appear to be anything on the newsstands or in the bookstores that really filled that bill, she felt, especially in the 8-12 age group.

SOMETIMES, SHE put together "bite-sized" books for her sons, to help them with school assignments.

"When my two youngest would

bring their vocabulary words (assignment) home, I'd write these little stories and illustrate them, and run them off on the Xerox machine. I'd use their names and their vocabulary words in the stories and they thought it was great. They'd get so excited about it, and would read those little books a thousand times and, consequently, learn their vocabulary words."

"So, finally one day I just sat down and started putting my stories together and I started really looking at things, seeing what my kids especially liked," she said.

"I TALKED A lot with teachers," she said, "and I began hearing the same things over and over again from them — that there was this 'gap' that existed. There were no educational tools that really fit kids in the 8-12 age range in 1989. Although there are lots of things out there for very young children, when you get the 8-12 group, something happens."

"I also looked around some at what was on the market which, generally, just seemed 'fluffy' to me," she said. "We took Children's Highlights for the boys and, when they'd get it, they'd do that 'What's Wrong with This Picture?' section, and that would be the end of that."

Eventually, Lewis said she decided to stop talking about it, and to "just do something."

Almost before she knew it, she found herself in the midst of creating the first issue of Zipper.

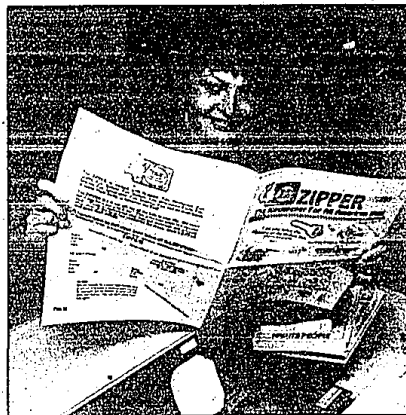
"We were looking for words that were fun when you say them, and 'zipper' seemed like one of those words. When you say it, it's funny."

THE 20-PAGE first issue — from conception to printer — took her approximately three months to complete.

Most of the work was done at home, with husband Craig serving as sounding board for Lewis' ideas and sons Matthew, 12, Chad, 10, and Ryan, 8, contributing ideas and suggestions along the way.

"The boys contributed quite a bit themselves, both directly and indirectly," Lewis said.

"All of us would sit around get



Diane Lewis, publisher of Zipper

on a kind of brainstorming thing for ideas. One night, I just said, 'Did you ever wonder what it was like before Newton discovered gravity?' As stupid as that is, somehow, when you sit and talk about what you said, it opens them up, gets them thinking. I've relied on them a lot."

SHORTLY AFTER that first issue — printed at Newsprinting Inc. in Northville — appeared in March, Lewis found out her work had just begun. Zipper had to have some readers, of course, and soon she was out on the streets trying to find those readers.

"Once we'd published an issue, I started going out with it, seeing what kind of reaction I'd get," she said.

"I think our timing was good. Michigan had just changed all their reading programs in the schools — no one could read books on a certain reading list. They were telling kids to just read, whether it

was a comic book or a cereal box or whatever it was."

"Also, Barbara Bush had just come out with the literacy campaign. So I think people tended to be just a little more receptive to something, geared in that direction."

"We just went around to schools, libraries, parents, saying 'Take a look at this. Give one to your child.' I left some off at doctors' and dentists' offices, in the waiting rooms."

"Educators and parents and some of the people who are in charge of the reading program in the state were very supportive. In fact, we've had nothing but good reaction," Lewis said.

One-year subscriptions are \$19.95, or 75 cents per copy. Write to Zipper, 17387 Franca-cilla, Livonia 48152, or call 261-2469.

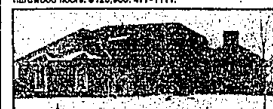
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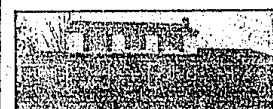
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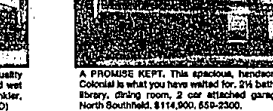
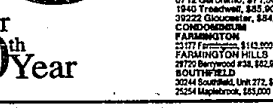
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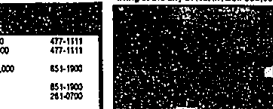
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