

Festival showcases our rich culture

The Telegram
Saturday, August 24, 2013
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The 2013 Winterset in Summer Literary Festival, held for the 12th year on the Eastport Peninsula, began as a commemoration of the late Sandra Fraser Gwyn, the Newfoundland-born, award-winning author and journalist who spent her summers in Eastport and was married to Richard Gwyn. She died in 2000.

The BMO Annual Winterset Award that Richard established in her memory has become an annual important event in our literary and cultural world.

CBC Radio's Michael Enright, the Sunday morning sage, has chaired his unique event for all the years since it started, with the exception of this year, when he took a sabbatical. His replacement as chair, Kathy Hodder, worked tirelessly for this year's success.

The festival is an important annual event, attracting stars of drama, music, writing and visual arts, both nationally and internationally.

Richard Gwyn came to Newfoundland after moving from the United Kingdom to Canada to pursue a journalistic career.

He was the first mainland journalist to bother to look into and examine what was happening in the new 10th province with respect to our politics and government, and he wrote the first scholarly book on the topic, in 1968. Entitled "Smallwood the Unlikely Revolutionary," it was an instant success.

He has written many scholarly works on Canadian history since, including the two-volume outstanding biography, "John A. — The Man Who Made Us" and "Nation Maker



John Crosbie

— Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times." He is also a celebrated political columnist for The Toronto Star and The Telegram and is known and read in many countries.

Richard could not attend this year since he was looking after his longtime pet — his dog is severely ill — but he was replaced by his wife, Carol Bishop-Gwyn, an accomplished writer in her own right.

Enright was replaced as host by our own Newfoundland TV star, Seamus O'Regan, who most capably interviewed the three Winterset Award finalists. Two of these excellent finalists were well-known actors, comedians and writers: Andy Jones — who was the winner of the BMO Winterset Award this year — and Greg Malone. Russell Wangersky, the well-known novelist, short-story writer and Telegram pundit, was the third.

The Telegram's op/ed editor, Russell provided interesting opinions on politics and issues that he feels should be challenged.

The festival is very popular, and attracts hundreds every year.

I have come across some interesting opinions on writers, artists and books.

Sam Johnson, for example, wrote in 1755, "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." God-

frey Kneller, writing in 1710, noted, "Only God Almighty makes painters." While Hippocrates, the Roman, observed in Latin, "ars longo, vita brevis" — which is translated as "Art is long and life short."

Space does not permit me to name all the luminaries present at Winterset, but I have to mention such fine writers as Lisa Moore and Kevin Major, filmmaker, scriptwriter and producer Rosemary House, and painter Jean Claude Roy and his wife Christina.

One of the most interesting events at the festival was Adele Poynter's interview with Roy, a wonderful French painter who has been visiting Newfoundland for 45 years. He and Christina recently published their marvelous book, "Fluctuat Nec Mergitur" (in English, "Bent But Not Broken"), which contains hundreds of paintings of our communities.

Jean Claude and Christina are also the artists who produced the astounding masterpiece, the French Shore tapestry. The wool-on-linen embroidery designed by Jean Claude and Christina and embroidered by 12 women from Conche outlines the history of the French Shore imposed on Newfoundland during our long history.

This is a cultural masterpiece that the provincial government should support financially and assist wherever necessary to see that it is preserved and cared for, so that it can be seen by visitors and livyers for years to come. It should be kept in proper conditions so that it can be exchanged with other museums and cultural institutions when it is not at its home base in

Conche. I hope it survives for as long as the famous French Bayeau tapestry, which has existed for 1,000 years.

This Eastport festival has honoured many of our writers, painters, artists, historians, actors, comedians and those interested in our history.

We should all do what we can to see that Newfoundlanders continue to read Cassie Brown's iconic book, "Death on the Ice," which told of the tragedy that occurred in March 1914 with the loss of the SS Newfoundland, when 78 men froze to death on the ice. The same year, we endured the loss of the Southern Cross, with 173 men and boys aboard, which disappeared coming in from the Gulf to St. John's with a heavy load of seals.

There are others who should be thanked for participating in this wonderful literary festival, including dean Noreen Golfman and archivist Bert Riggs of Memorial University, and all those friends and supporters who contribute by making monetary contributions each year.

It's worth noting that this festival originated with Richard Gwyn, who is what we call in this province a "come-from-away."

I should also note that on March 31, 1949, all 350,000 of us then living here became CFAs among the millions of Canadians we had joined.

As Bernard Baruch once wisely said, "We didn't all come over on the same boat, but we are all in the same ship now."

John Crosbie welcomes your feedback by email at telegram@thetelegram.com.