Unassuming and candid poet laureate charms audience

By JENNIFER MCFEE

Staff Writer

Peals of laughter and appreciative applause filled ArtSpring’s theatre Saturday night as first-ever Canadian Poet Laureate George Bowering shared his words at Festival ArtSpring’s only literary event.

Brian Brett of Theatre Alive introduced Bowering as one of the country’s most celebrated and controversial authors who has amassed a remarkable variety and volume of published works, including over 80 books.

Bowering began his reading with a short poem called Composition.

"I’ll tell it twice so that the people who don’t get it the first time, including me, can have a chance. It’s about putting things side by side, which is what poets and composers do," said the two-time winner of the Governor General’s Literary Award.

Bowering continued with a poem called She Carries, about the help he received from his "dear darling sweet-heart" after an accident last fall that left him temporarily confined to a wheelchair.

Next, the retired Simon Fraser University professor read a two-stanza poem called A Small Hand.

"I wrote that poem three or four years ago. I’ve been trying to figure out what’s going on with all of us and even what the something there which I hope to live long enough to get," Bowering revealed to the crowd.

Visiting Salt Spring for the third time, Bowering said he was intrigued by the island’s traffic situation.

"It’s interesting to see how the traffic works, how the cars go. Nobody uses turn signals. Everybody knows where everybody else is going to drive so," he said.

Using his local observations as a segue, the writer moved into his next set of readings from Cars, a book he co-wrote with poet Ryan Knighton through e-mail exchanges.

"These are all true stories, by the way. I guess they’re poems. I don’t know what to call them. We just call them panels." The book was categorized under many different genres and even reviewed in the automotive section of one newspaper.

"That was the most pleasurable of all," said Bowering. "I was told once when I was young to try to do writing on a high social and behavioral scale," he said, leading into comical readings about excessive vomiting and sweaty rides on stationary bikes.

Bowering said that the governor general once asked him to write a poem and he didn’t do it. He did, however, write anti-logging poems, a New Year’s poem for the Vancouver Sun and a poem for the Canadian Junior and Senior Little League Tournaments.

WAXING POETIC: Poet Laureate George Bowering takes the stage at ArtSpring, delighting the crowd that gathered to hear him Saturday night.

He also wrote a rhythmic poem entitled Lost in the Library for Freedom to Read Week. The witty rhymes and steady beats of the poem provided a great closing piece that sounded similar to a spoken song.

Following the reading, the author candidly answered several questions from inquisitive audience members.

"I was probably 14 when I started because I was writing poems in high school, and luckily none of them survived. But when I was in high school, my ambition was to be a sports writer," said Bowering, whose first publication was a 26-verse poem in Hockey Pictorial called The ABC’s of the NHL.

He explained to the audience how he gets his varied ideas and inspirations.

"This haunting rhythmic thing would often happen in Montreal when I was walking towards the subway. And the lyric poems usually just come as a surprise. Sometimes you just have to open yourself up completely. What I do is always try to write something that I’ve never done before or maybe build up on something I have done before," said Bowering, who has undertaken new ventures such as writing spy fiction and a young person’s novel.

"What often happens is you mess up. Most experiments don’t work. Sometimes they fail and somebody publishes them anyway. Sometimes they fail and nobody publishes them and you’re glad." He said he doesn’t understand when people talk about taking risks in their writing.

"Writing is only a risk if you are in a dictatorship country and you are insulting the army. It’s not a risk if you just open yourself up and tell embarrassing things.

"You could get into a lot of serious trouble in some parts of the world for being a writer. I think Canadians sometimes get a little jealous of that because no matter what we say, we won’t get in trouble.”

Bowering believes that Quebecois writer Nicole Brossard is the ideal candidate for the next poet laureate.

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After an hour and a half of entertaining the audi­ ence with punchy poems and amusing anecdotes, the unassuming author stepped down from the stage, leaned back and chatted with indi­ viduals as they filed out of the theatre.

Programs continue with proceeds benefitting that group.

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Did you know?

Retail sales in BC grew at the second highest rate in the country in May compared with May 2003. BC's 7.4% increase was well ahead of the 4.6% national average.

(Sources: Catalogue, July 27, 2004)

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Minimal detail speaks volumes

Visual artists see the world differently than you and I. Positive and negative space defines shapes so that form becomes all.

When I look at a group of vegetables painted in blue, I think sugar. Not that artists don’t eat, but their eye is trained to see the shape the vegetables displace. The blue tablecloth is as important as the objects that are placed on them.

For Stefanie Denz, the owner of August Gallery at 111 Morningside Road in Fulford, her interest lies in the form and the colour—not so much in the details. Not unlike Monet, who painted his water lilies in an impressionistic blur because he was losing his eyesight and that’s what he saw, Denz tends to see the world in terms of shape.

Not surprisingly, architecture interests her. Her present show includes architectural paintings, buildings painted on rough-hewn wood, and most of her work uses pieces of architecture to juxtapose the figurative shapes in front.

She delineates the shapes further by using bright plastic to “integrate the paint with the surface.”

Her “In the Kitchen” painting includes a man’s intensely yellow short cut out of plastic, making one of the few distinct lines in the painting.

He’s listening to the woman beside him who’s speaking. Their features are blurred though their intentions are clear.

That’s a true gift on Denz’s part; with little detail, we understand the emotion and the time and place of the people in the painting. Their lives are recognizable, affirming our own humanity.

Much of Denz’s work includes paintings on found surfaces. “Swing,” an image of a woman swinging through the air with abdon, is oil on fiberglass fencing and wood.

The surfaces dictate the texture and suggest a metaphor for the object of the painting. Using found materials also makes for an accessible painting as everyone can recognize a worn wood door or see through wavy fencing.

On Friday, August 13 from 7 to 9 p.m., there will be an opening at August Gallery also featuring Nancy Van Patten’s sculpture, Rani Worotny’s specialty hats, Barbara D. Clarke’s leather jackets, Beate Denz’s clay figures and Laura Keil’s pots.

While shaking it up at the opening, nip around the back to the new gallery next door: Copperwood Gallery where Luke Weller, Jeremiah and Josh Hart are joined by sister/wife Jamil Hart Weller to showcase their unique home and garden cedar furniture.

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Valdy, Courtney Wing on Tree House roster

Additional shows have been added to the daily music roster at the Tree House Cafe in Ganges, with Courtney Wing playing afternoon shows on August 13 and 14 and a special Labour Day show with Valdy on September 6.

“We’re extremely pleased to be able to announce these additional shows that will make this summer of music Under the Stars even more spectacular,” said Jill Thomas, Tree House owner.

“Valdy’s spring show was an evening of magic and we feel very lucky to end the season as it began.”

Salt Spring’s own award-winning Canadian folk music legend is well known internationally for his decades of compelling performances and acclaimed albums. With 14 albums, 22 singles, four gold records, seven Juno nominations and two Juno awards, Valdy’s performance accomplishments are complemented by his status as one of Canada’s most influential songwriters.

Wing graced the stage at Tree House South earlier this year when he played with Bob Wiseman and Jim Guthrie. This summer’s tour brings the Montreal-based singer/songwriter back to the beautiful island in the West Coast and is keen to include Salt Spring again in his travels.

Original guitar work accompanying a relaxed and understated vocal style characterizes Wing. His compositions move characteristically between progressive folk, alternative country and pop rock. Drawing material from his diverse experiences, including playing reggae in Belize, flamenco in the South of France, Latin American folk music in Mexico and Guatemala, and busking in New Orleans, Wing’s nylon string guitar afternoons show soulful lyrics and original musical style. He appears at the Tree House in Ganges at 4 p.m. on August 13 and 14.

The Tree House offers a full dinner menu and live music without a cover charge every night of the summer.
Heart of classical and popular music captured at piano recital

Supporters of Music and Munch will be treated to the fluid and elegant playing of pianist Graeme Wilkinson on Wednesday, August 18. His fourth concert for the lunchtime series will offer an eclectic program that captures the heart of classical and popular music for piano.

Producers of Music and Munch are delighted that Wilkinson supports the music series so generously by including the event as part of his holiday music plans. He currently resides in Montreal but maintains a home and a 1927 Hamburg Steinway on Salt Spring. Travel is a very much part of his life both professionally as a flight attendant and in his pursuit of musical excellence.

Wilkinson was born in Vancouver and first studied music in earnest while completing a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and French Literature at UBC. Further studies in Switzerland included piano instruction at the conservatories of Neuchatel and Lausanne. He currently studies piano with Professor Pierre Jasmin at the University of Quebec, while including regular recital work and accompanying to his busy schedule.

Competitions and workshops have taken him to Washington, Texas, Colorado, Paris, and, most recently, the Czech Republic.

Free music begins at 12:10 p.m. at All Saints Church, followed by a delicious optional lunch for $5.50.

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**IN FINE FORM:** Award-winning Salt Spring Trumpet player Simon Millerd, 16, performed with Planet Music members, including Jordy Sharp (in the background), at the Tree House Cafe last week. Millerd has earned national attention and festival acclaim for his jazz performances in the past few years. 

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- **KEN LISTER**
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- **PATT COLEMAN**
  - JAZZ GUITAR & THEORY

- **PAUL MOWBRAY**
  - GUITAR (FINGER STYLE)

- **PETER TASCHUK**
  - GUITAR (CLASSICAL)

- **MITCH HOWARD**
  - TRUMPET

- **BOB DELION**
  - BASS GUITAR

- **GREG ESPOSITO**
  - GUITAR

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**CURRENCY CORNER**

**CED principles + SSIMF reserve fund = Opportunity**

by Jim Scott

Apart from being a member of the Salt Spring Island Monetary Foundation (SSIMF), I am not involved in their activities. This column recognizes the role of local currencies within a Community Economic Development (CED) perspective. CED has emerged globally as an alternative to conventional economic development. In contrast to the prevailing economic culture’s ethos of selfishness, materialism, and cynicism, CED is based on the principles of fairness, and the belief that community members should have equitable access to community decision-making processes, resources and benefits.

Spending Salt Spring Dollars ($) at home helps to restore community self-reliance and to bring economic and social activities back to a more human scale. Keeping $5 in circulation—not depositing them—creates a pool of otherwise not available community capital to be used at our discretion. The SSIMF reserve fund thus promotes creates opportunity and adds financial weight to homegrown, responsible decision making.

As our community seeks to control and shape its future, the most fruitful possibility rests in a form of self-government coupled with our local currency. From a CED point of view, that coupling is an undiluted common sense. The shape of governance and the utilization of the reserve fund require imaginative, sophisticated examination.

Whether a municipality (a primarily urban political unit having corporate status) or another form more suited to a rural island community, finding the means to make our decisions on Island is an option that should be explored in our current superheated socio-economic climate. CED principles require (and offer) a credible, fully-developed option to the present reality.

Once accomplished (or not), we can explore mechanisms to utilize the reserve fund that will most benefit the greater community. The fund—created simply by spending $5 at home—could, as a first step, offset the additional costs of self-government. Beyond that, as a community, we can explore ways for our economic reality to embody our social and spiritual values.

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**GUILD GUYS HANG AT ARTSPRING**

ArtSpring’s open space gallery is hosting “the guild guys” this month, with 58 works by five Salt Spring painters.

Jack Avison, Dan Hodgins, Dennis O’Connor, Milan Stevulak and Kees Wooters have joined forces to mount the August show.

Avison is a long-time Salt Spring resident who has concentrated his work on watercolour landscapes and seascapes.

Hodgins creates primarily portrait and figurative paintings in oil and acrylics.

O’Connor has pursued painting for the past 30 years, with interest sparked after joining the Salt Spring Island Painters Guild and helping set up portrait and life painting groups.

Stevulak recently retired and moved to Salt Spring and is devoting more time to his art practice. Landscapes, seascapes and still life paintings in watercolour and acrylics are Stevulak’s focus.

A Vancouver teacher of art and physical geography until retiring to Salt Spring in 2002, Wooters has expanded his subject matter and media over the years.

Guild Guys 2004 shows daily at ArtSpring through August 31 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Scholarship-winning island artist recognized for exceptional ability

Local teenage talent Aja Robb is heading to Vancouver to further her artistic endeavors at Emily Carr after spending a year pursuing her passion in Victoria.

The creative 17-year-old finished grades 10 and 11 in one year at Phoenix Alternative High School, and then moved to Victoria last fall to finish her final year at Victoria High.

"I found everyone at Vic High to be really supportive," said Robb, who enjoys creating multimedia modern art and acrylic paintings.

"I took English, science and history to complete my academic requirements, and five art courses in photography, pottery, painting, drawing and sculpture. If they didn’t have the course I wanted, they developed one. They even created a silk screening facility for me to use," said Robb.

Robb rented a two-bedroom apartment three blocks from the school, and she shared the rent with her mother Donna Johnstone, who visited each week from Monday to Friday until the end of March.

To maintain her unique living situation, Robb had several criteria she had to meet. She had to pay a portion of the rent, be a responsible tenant, prepare healthy meals and stay on the honour roll. Robb accomplished it all.

To cover her expenses, Robb did contract sewing for her mother and others, and she worked for the apartment owner as a part-time cleaner of the 20-unit apartment building.

The recent graduate also developed her own line of clothing, which features screen printing on T-shirts and handmade garments.

"I sold in Victoria for a while at some markets. I now build my own frames and stretch my own canvas, but paint and brushes are always in short supply. I’m currently looking for an easel and am always searching out recyclables for my work.

Throughout the year, Robb participated in five art shows on Salt Spring Island and in Victoria. Her Grade 12 art class worked on an environmental installation art project called Blossoms for Baghdad, for which they placed flower blossoms in a field in a shape of a dove. The event was photographed by skyscrapers and funds were raised for a hospital in Baghdad.

During the school year, the honour student created a portfolio of self-directed work that included photography, screen printing, sculpture, multimedia paintings, a sketch book and an ideas design book.

She submitted her portfolio for the University of Victoria Scholarship for the Visual Arts, a Community Arts Council scholarship and a British Columbia Arts Council scholarship to help fund her studies.

"VEAC scholarships aren’t given out until September, but my teachers have been hinting at something," she said.

In addition to these accomplishments, Robb was chosen to have her work exhibited at the Victoria Art Gallery in May. Two graduating students from each school in the Greater Victoria School District were selected to display their work, and her teachers requested that Robb be one of Vic High’s representatives.

"It’s been an interesting evolution to watch what she’s been doing over the past year," said her mother.

Robb added that her artwork has improved during her year in Victoria.

"I got much more into my own thing. I learned a lot of new techniques and applied them to what I was doing. I got some of my ideas from history, some from the present. A lot of my work is collage on canvas where I incorporate my own photographic images. The ideas start in my head. I use them over and over as I refine my technique.

Robb plans to continue a career in the art field after she completes her four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

"After Emily Carr, I’m going to try to get into art restoration so I have something to fall back on," she said.

For now, Robb is spending her summer painting and is excited about moving into her own apartment overlooking the mountains and downtown Vancouver.
Mining the video store employee relationship is worth weight in gold

Individual and heartfelt interpretations of a Between the Sea and the Sky theme will characterize the next ArtCraft Showcase, which opens Thursday, August 12 at Mahon Hall.

Members of the Salt Spring Island Potters’ Guild have created both theme pieces and new work, with guest artist Jackie Meredith providing an exciting counterpoint with a new series of paintings called Radiant Reflections. Melissa Steury says of her work, “My preoccupation with the heart symbol, which is a very ancient symbol, has led to a series of wall pieces called The Natural Language of the Heart.”

Pat Wobber feels, “My inspiration is gained from observing the animals and plants that surround us. I use animal imagery to reflect relationships between and within species and to tell stories about these.”

Merle Box’s hand-built and wheel-thrown functional pottery uses textures from nature — seashells, leaves, branches, and flowers. Her new work includes vases and decorative serving pieces in a new “Blue indigo” glaze.

Joan Warren’s crystalline glazed forms reflect the beach her studio overlooks; a beach teaming with bird and sea life, tidal pools travelling the tides of time, and the endless expressions of an ever-changing sea and sky.

Other contributing potters include Demy James, Lois Beatrice, Ann Byrne, Mark Meredith, Karen Gray, Mark Hand, Valiente Katz Lhabique and Hal Stone.

The public is invited to a celebratory reception at which the artists will be present on Thursday evening, August 12, from 7 to 9 p.m. in Mahon Hall. Between the Sea and the Sky will continue daily at ArtCraft through Tuesday, August 24.

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J. D. Evans new paintings
Low mortgage rates are just the beginning...
What’s on

GULF ISLANDS DRIFTWOOD PAGE 87 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2004

THREE WEEK’S MOVIES

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 11

10:00 PM Friends, Lovers and Lunatics (1992, Crime) A comedy about a singleton who enters into a triangular relationship with a woman and her fiancé. Martin Short, Steve Martin, Gérard Depardieu. [2h]

11:00 PM **The Lost Boys (1987, Horror) A group of teens try to survive the night as they enter a pact to lose their virginity before graduation. David Paley, Corey Haim, Kiefer Sutherland. [2h]

10:00 PM **Human Cargo (2003, Action) A complex tale of immigration and modern-day slavery in Australia. Guy Pearce, Rachael Taylor. [2h]

1:00 AM **Edge of Tomorrow (2014, Action) A man enters a strange reality where his past college boyfriend’s death is repeatedly reset. Tom Cruise, Emily Blunt. [2h]

THURSDAY, AUG. 12

7:00 PM The Paper (1994, Comedy) A newspaper reporter’s personal and professional lives collide when he can’t seem to keep his lips shut. Cary Elwes, Sigourney Weaver. [2h]

8:00 PM **Good Will Hunting (1997, Drama) A young janitor discovers he has a natural gift for mathematics. Matt Damon, Minnie Driver. [2h]

10:00 PM **The Da Vinci Code (2006, Mystery) A Hidden RFID card is inserted into the chest of a woman found as aIso in a priceless painting. Tom Hanks, Audrey Tautou. [2h]

10:00 PM **Working Together (2004, Comedy) Two bosses try to live together in a shared apartment to save on rent. Seth Green, Corinne Foxx. [2h]

FRIDAY, AUG. 13

7:00 PM The Age of Inconvenience (2010, Documentary) A look at the impact of climate change on the world of supermodels. Dan Askey, Jessica Askey. [2h]
Free activities and fun for kids abound on island

Salt Spring Island can’t boast about whiz-bang family theme parks, but it does offer an impressive line-up of admission-free fun for kids of all ages. Nature naturally provides star-studded entertainment for visiting youngsters, with beaches, trails and lakes accessible all over the island. Low tides reveal all: from “colonies” of sea anemones at Ruckle Park, to crabs under rocks at Hudson Point off North Beach Road, to feather dusters at on the pilings at the Ganges harbour or Fulford dock. (See Page 2 of the Driftwood for the week’s tides)

Nature naturally provides star-studded entertainment for visiting youngsters.

Touch First Nations heritage by finding the petroglyph in a boulder at Drummond Park off Isabella Point Road, or paddle out into Vesuvius Bay on one of the shared community surf boards. Several hiking spots are ideal for legs of all endurance levels. Try the shady, 1.5-kilometre Duck Creek Park trail located on Sunset Drive, not far from the Vesuvius Bay Road turn-off. Mount Park is the closest-to-Ganges spot for a mini hike. Just go to the end of McPhillips Avenue, past ArtSpring, and you’ll be on the trail. Disc golf can be played for free in Mount Park — after you’ve acquired the disc or a Frisbee. The well-used course winds through tall trees and former campsite areas.

While a trek up Mount Erskine is too strenuous for unenthusiastic walkers, it does yield rewards ranging from fabulous views of Vancouver Island and beyond, and, if you’re lucky, to the magical fairy doors created by an anonymous islander. The outdoor Shelby Pool, operated by Leisure Recreation Group in Portlock Park at Central, has free Saturday afternoon swims (1:30-5 p.m.) on occasion, and in any event the cost for kids is only a couple of bucks. Public swims also run weekdays from 3-5 p.m.

Salt Spring’s library and book stores are friendly places, where browsers and young readers are welcomed. Fables Cottage on Hereford Avenue also hosts Storytime on Saturdays at 11 a.m. An enduring appreciation for art can be nurtured by strolling through island galleries, ArtCraft in Mahon Hall and the public gallery spaces at ArtSpring, the arts centre on Jackson Avenue. Outdoor playground equipment can be found in several locations: from Ganges-central Centennial Park (with its notoriously squeaky rocking horse) to Drummond Park and Portlock Park. School playgrounds also have swings and other equipment. They are Fernwood Elementary on Fernwood Road, Salt Spring Elementary next to Mahon Hall on Rainbow Road and Fulford Elementary on South Ridge Road.
**What's On This Week**

**wed.** August 11

- **Live entertainment**
  - Rory McLeod: All Sails by the Sea, 8 p.m. Info: 537-4167.
  - Wednesday Night Live! Open stage at Moby's, 9 p.m.
  - A Portrait in Jazz: Bill Evans. Festival ArtSpring, 9 p.m.

- **Kids’ workshops at Fables Cottage**
  - Make Soap, 11 a.m.

**thurs.** August 12

- **Live entertainment**
  - Paul Morey, Tree House Cafe.
  - Planet Music: Anthony, 9 p.m.
  - other activities
    - Bingo: Mead Hall, 7 p.m.
    - Poetry Reading: Chamber of Commerce, 8 p.m.
  - other activities
    - Beeswax candles, 1 p.m.

**fri.** August 13

- **Live entertainment**
  - Sunniva: Tree House Cafe.
  - Harry Warner: Festival ArtSpring, 11-3:30 p.m.
  - other activities
    - Rug Huggers: Moby's Bar, 7 p.m.

**sat.** August 14

- **Live entertainment**
  - Harry Warner: All Sails by the Sea, 8 p.m.
  - other activities
    - Open Stage with Tara Hollingsworth. Tree House Cafe.

**sun.** August 15

- **Live entertainment**
  - Rory McLeod: All Sails by the Sea, 8 p.m. Info: 537-4167.
  - other activities
    - Bingo: Mead Hall, 7 p.m.
    - Poetry Reading: Chamber of Commerce, 8 p.m.

**mon.** August 16

- **Live entertainment**
  - Mike & Simone: Tree House Cafe.

**tues.** August 17

- **Live entertainment**
  - Open Stage with Tara Hollingsworth. Tree House Cafe.

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Enjoy international fare at Anise

Anise is Salt Spring Island’s friendliest restaurant. From the moment you step through the door, you can be sure of a warm welcome and courteous, cheerful service—it’s the sort of attention to customers’ comfort and enjoyment that makes the dining experience at Anise second to none.

Anise prides itself on its amiable, relaxed atmosphere. The staff are local people, and they care about making sure that your time in the restaurant is a genuine pleasure. You’ll never feel rushed-through your meal, neglected by servers, or that your time and investment in dining out aren’t important. What you will feel is valued, appreciated, and extremely well-fed.

Catering to all ages, the restaurant is child-friendly and a fun place to bring the whole family. It’s also a great spot for couples and friends to unwind and treat themselves to a wonderful meal. Since it’s located in the heart of Ganges village, Anise has prime position for those who like to watch the world go by from their window. The restaurant is open from early morning—when it serves a slap-up breakfast—to late evening—when the entertainment is in swing—so there’s always something worth stopping in for.

Of course, all of this assumes that you already know and love Anise’s fabulous menu! Where else on Salt Spring will you find foods from the Caribbean, Thailand, and India? There are gorgeous steaks, an amazing Lamb Osso Bucco, and some terrific seafood dishes. There’s something for everyone, and everything is lovingly prepared and beautifully presented. Don’t forget that Anise is licensed. There are great wines and a selection of local and international beers at the bar.

As for entertainment, every weekend Anise brings in the best from local, national and world-travelling musicians and artists. The setting is intimate and the atmosphere fun and energizing. For a fun place to enjoy a good meal with great staff, great entertainment, and the warmest, friendliest of welcomes, Anise can’t be beaten.
Looking to honour the divine in all things

By MARY FOWLES
Special to the Driftwood

The timeless adage “know thy self” perfectly describes Carol Spencer’s journey as medium, healer, ordained minister and founder of Salt Spring’s only Spiritualist congregation, Continuous Light Sanctuary.

“Spiritualism is about finding your own spirituality, opening yourself to possibilities and taking responsibilities for your own life,” said Spencer, a born-and-raised third-generation islander.

The Spiritualist tradition, which has its roots in 19th-century England, emphasizes a belief in God and spirit communication.

“In 1848 scientists began investigating and documenting their findings on the intelligence that survives death,” said Spencer.

On a typical Sunday morning in the basement of Spencer’s home, a small congregation gathered around a circle. Together they pray and sing songs of love, light and peace. A medium, usually one of her mentors, sits with her eyes closed, in absolute focus, preparing to become the message bearer for the Medium, the Secreteria, the Angel, and other spirits that have entered the room.

In a demonstration of life after death, one or two of the devotees is addressed by a deceased relative or loved one. The medium relays the message and the devotee engages in the spirit’s thoughtful guidance, observations or encouragement.

Needless to say, it is not an average church service.

Spencer first became interested in Spiritualism when an elderly woman invited her to a service in 1991 and she experienced for the first time what she describes as the presence of spirit.

“My belief in life after death was reinforced when the spirit of my father visited me in a clairvoyance,” she said. “In describing my father, the medium gave evidence that only I could know about. It was totally accurate information.”

“After this experience, there was no doubt that this was what I wanted to do,” said Spencer.

She was introduced to the practice by one of her mentors, who had studied with a famous medium in a circle. Together they prayed and sang songs of love, light and peace.

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COMMUNICATING WITH SPIRIT: Salt Spring’s Carol Spencer is seen at her home on Park Drive in Ganges.

This ideal became a hard reality for Spencer when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1999.

“Instead of the usual advice to pray or meditate, I didn’t believe in that,” she said. “I only believed in the power of the person and I knew this was something that I could do.”

She decided to become a medium and started having private readings, which led to her founding Continuous Light Sanctuary.

“My calling is to help others,” said Spencer. “I have a sense that I am a medium because I can contact the spirit world, and I can help others in touching base with their loved ones.”

Spencer feels that she has learned most from her deepening devotion to Spiritualism as she can connect honestly with what she calls spirit, or God, and she must truly know herself.

“I’ve had a hard time understanding why I am who I am,” she explained. “I need to know my own emotions and attitudes so that I can differentiate them from those of the spirit world they have drawn close to me.”

This self-knowledge ensures that messages from the spirits are more accurate and not clouded by what the medium personally thinks or feels, she added.

“For example,” she said, “I’ve discovered I’m a very literal person. So if I receive a vision of a straight road in a reading, I don’t try to interpret its meaning. I would simply say ‘I see a straight road’ and let the person decide for himself what the meaning is.”

“Communicating with spirit must be absolutely definitive,” she said, adding that the downfall of many mediums has been egotism that caused them to fabricate things.

“There is an absolute need to emphasize integrity, health and honesty,” said Spencer, who has worked as an ambulance paramedic, in extended care geriatrics and as a nurse’s aide for nearly 20 years.

“I’ve been healing in one way or another for a long time. I’ve found that the first step on the spiritual path is to do service to the self. Only then can you be strong enough to help others,” said Spencer.

“Perhaps the most important thing is that you really must begin with the self.”

This authorization permits her to legally perform wedding, funerals and naming ceremonies.

Today she incorporates different healing services, such as therapeutic touch, into her congregation.

Spencer believes, Jim Spencer, of the First Nations Tlingit tribe, also incorporates some of the medicine in the healing services.

“A lot of what we do seems very similar to the nature spirituality that is found in the First Nations,” said Spencer, whose own mother was of the First Nations West Coast.

“Spiritualism is an earth-based, holistic religion, so we are in tune with the earth and aware of nature and the influence that nature has,” she explained.

When asked what Spiritualism most has to offer to the 21st century, Spencer replied, “Rather than say ‘love’ — a word that has lost meaning in many ways — I would say Spiritualism can show us how to honor our spirits and connect to the universe. We’re all of that spiritual consciousness that is of the universe.”

Continuous Light church services are held on the second and fourth Sunday of each month from 10:30-2:30 at 212 Park Drive.

Healing meditation is offered on the first and third Saturday of each month.

Spencer also offers private readings by appointment.

Editor’s note: Writer Mary Fowles grew up on Salt Spring and is pursuing a graduate degree in journalism at Concordia University in Montreal. At present she is working at Le Journal Hebdomadaire in Casino Canadien-Montreal. She writes a column for Lifeline from the International Development Research Centre of Canada.

Snakes, butterflies, singers and more top conservancy line-up of activities

From co-sponsoring a forum with First Nations elders to a Salt Spring Folk Club fundraiser, the Salt Spring Island Conservancy offers seven events between this weekend and mid-November.

They are:

• August 14: Protecting Sacredness, a forum with the elders: 13:00 to 3:30 p.m. at Gulf Islands Secondary School’s multipurpose room.

Co-sponsored by Salt Spring Residents for Responsible Land Use.

• August 19: Butterflies at Risk on Salt Spring: Slide show and talk by Jennifer Heron, B.C. invertebrate species at risk biologist. 7 p.m. at Lions Hall.

This free event is sponsored by the Stewardship Project 2004.

• September 3: National Wildlife Federation Nutrient Program.

Call Debbie Wiebe, who will bring gifts & greetings along with helpful information about your own community.
Another successful Fulford Day raises over $14,000

The festivities of Fulford Day have come and gone for another year, but the benefits of the fundraising event will be evident in the community in the months to come. "Fulford Day graced in the neighbourhood of $14,700, which is including the quilts, all the ticket sales, the barbecue and all the kids' games," said festival organizer Stew Rimmer.

He added that the total does not include the generous donations of prizes and volunteer hours.

"We had a great day with a steady stream of people. The weather was fine. They did a fabulous job on the layout and setting up of the site. We tried to rearrange the booths and it really seemed to open up the space," said Rimmer.

Rimmer extends his thanks to the event's volunteers, including several members of Freedom Camp, whose efforts helped to make the day a success.

"I would like to thank all those who were able to contribute. We're very happy with everyone who helped out," he said.

"We were so totally successful," added Fulford Day Challenge Quilt organizer Carron Carson.

At $1 per ticket, quilt ticket sales brought in $1,476 for the annual fundraiser. Carrie Paterson of Ladner won the harvest-themed wall hanging.

All profits made at Saturday's event will be donated to Salt Spring community projects.

Gulf Island Driftwood Contributor

By Rob Wiltzen

Driftwood Contributor

A major intro to cob building on Salt Spring has been made possible by the granting of the first building permit for a cob dwelling.

Although building permits have been issued for cob dwellings in other B.C. locations, Becky and Paul Niedziela are building the first on Salt Spring on their front yard.

The structure is taking shape this week as 10 people from as far away as Kelowna gather to raise the walls in a cob building workshop. Cob is an ancient form of earth architecture that has enjoyed a renaissance in recent years as people searching for non-toxic building methods and materials have discovered its many virtues.

Cob building has its own unique set of building techniques and the workshop run by experienced instructors is a modern-day equivalent. The Niedzielas are hosting a workshop run by an instructor from Cobworks on Mayne Island for two days. Participants in the workshop get instruction and gain experience for their own projects as the host's building is raised.

Some space available in marine studies camp

Kids wanting to spend a week in beach mode this month can do it in style with the Summer Ecological Exploration Program (SEEK) program. There's still some spaces left in the August 16-20 program led by a group of keen Salt Spring teachers and community resource people. Organized for kids six to 12 years old, the marine studies sessions will include hands-on investigation activities, art, music, storytelling, team-building exercises and games. It runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day and costs $175. For more information, call Sarah Noyes at 247-0157 (beaver) or Dr. Rhonda Stofflem and Robyn Huntley Smith.

The program is a collaboration between the Fulford Community Nature School and the Gulf Islands Centre for Ecological Learning.

Garlic festival cancelled

A lack of vendor participation has led to cancellation of this year's garlic festival on Salt Spring.

According to organizer Karen Stefaniak of Garlic Gourmet Garlic, only eight vendors signed up for the event, which had been set for August 21-22.

At least 30 vendors were required to make the event viable, he noted.

"If we had a couple of vendors we've set up for 2005 and perhaps we will have better participation at that time," he said.

Anyone interested in next year's festival can contact Stefaniak at (250) 247-0132 or garlickoogourmetgarlic@shaw.ca.

CHURCH BIRTHDAY: Helping St. Mary's Anglican Church celebrate its 110th birthday at an open house Saturday were, from left: Nancy Wigren, Helen Bruce, Joyce James, Terri Manuck and Patricia Gibson.

The cost is projected to be the building site after August 31 at$1,357-

Garlic's resistance to rain and cold makes it ideally suited to cold climates like the Pacific Northwest, and to desert conditions, according to the Cob Cottage Company in Oregon.

The Niedzielas first started thinking about cob when facing the growing local problem of finding housing that was affordable and suitable.

"Turning to alternative building methods and materials was motivated by our principles about creating a non-toxic environment for our family and keeping the environmental impact to a minimum," said Becky.

The Niedzielas are building a three-bedroom, 1,900-square-foot structure that includes a separate design studio for Rebecca Groves, Becky's home-based business. The cost is projected to be under $100 per square foot for the two-story structure that incorporates a variety of alternative building methods including cob, light clay and cordwood construction. Light clay is another type of earth mixture usually built with bricks.

Cob is a labour-intensive building method and traditionally has been built with a building bee approach. Cob workshops run by experienced instructors are a modern-day equivalent.

The Niedzielas are hosting a workshop run by an instructor from Cobworks on Mayne Island for two days. Participants in the workshop get instruction and gain experience for their own projects as the host's building is raised. The workshop concludes with an open house for the public on Friday, August 13 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Anyone interested in getting their hands dirty while learning about and gaining experience in the alternative building methods employed can arrange to spend time on the building site after August 13 by calling the Niedzielas at 517-9442.