

particular interest in church broadcasting. He began teaching broadcasting skills to United Church ministers. Eventually he was hired as director of broadcasting for the United Church in British Columbia, where he began a program called *Checkpoint*. But he wanted to broaden his work in religious broadcasting. "Religious broadcasting should not be denominational," Bonisteel pointed out in a banquet speech after becoming director of broadcasting for Canada (representing the United, Anglican, and Roman Catholic denominations). "It should be dealing with social issues, compassion, things we all have in common, things we can all talk about."

It was for exactly this kind of broadcasting that he was hired by the CBC to host *Man Alive*.

Bonisteel is the author of three books. *In Search of Man Alive* (1980) recalls a number of the most memorable personalities he interviewed. *Man Alive: The Human Journey* (1983) is largely a continuation of the first book, although stories and experiences have been combined in a thematic approach to social issues. *There Was A Time* (1991) is Bonisteel's memoir of growing up in a rural community within the changing seasons, and has proven immensely popular (with sales of almost 50,000). Bonisteel was also co-author of *Themes For All Times*, a Grade 12 literature book. Over the years he has written articles and columns for various publications. He currently writes a column for the *United Church Observer* and articles for other media on request.

"I'm not a very disciplined person in my writing," he smiles. "I need deadlines for discipline. If I get up early and the birds are singing, I'll go for a walk in the woods."

With his wife Jane, a TV production teacher at Loyalist College, Bonisteel lives an idyllic life in a circa 1920 farm home on 50 acres near Trenton, Ontario. Some of the land is leased to a farmer but the woods are a private conservation area, complete with a beaver dam in a place where it can't do any harm. "My grandchildren love it," he says, "and the animals in there know they are safe. They don't even run away when I walk in the woods."

Bonisteel is currently working on two more books: a follow up to *There Was A Time*, and a novel told from the viewpoint of a fifteen-year-old boy. The novel is based on the true story of the time Bonisteel lived and worked on a wealthy farm while attending his last two years in high school. The farm was operated by two brothers who were married to the two sisters who had inherited the place. "I recall the eerie feeling created by strange family secrets and tragedies. Unexplained deaths. Bad fires without reasons." The novel has been brewing in Bonisteel's mind for several years.

"Writing a novel is not more difficult than journalism. But it is entirely different. You just let your mind go, and then the characters and emotions write the story. In journalism I can leave what I'm writing, do something else, then go back and carry on where I left off. Not so with the novel. For that I need larger chunks of time to get re-immersed in the plot."

"One never stops learning about writing. What I still need to learn, I will learn by doing, and by trusting editors to show me anything wrong with my work."

Bonisteel hesitates about giving advice to aspiring writers, but says simply, "Write about what you know. Write anything ... a diary, letters, blank verse, perhaps. But write — and rewrite. Something I learned from broadcast writing is that all writing benefits from judicious editing."

In addition to writing, Bonisteel has many other demands on his time. He expends a great deal of energy on humanitarian works. For several years he has been active with the Mus-

cular Dystrophy Association. One of his favourite charities is Inter Pares which assists Third World countries with agriculture, cottage industries, and setting up much needed health clinics. Another is Horizons Unlimited which assists with health and agriculture concerns in South America.

"For every speech I get paid for," he says, "I give one for charity."

A special project of Bonisteel's has been his renovation of the old Johnstown Church, just around the corner from his home. It is now a very attractive place for special community events. "There is often an attitude now that old things don't matter any more," he says, "and that saddens me. We can't know where we're going until we know where we've been."

Bonisteel knows exactly where he is going. He laughs about people asking him: "Are you enjoying your retirement?" His 22 years on *Man*

*Alive* were an enriching experience, but now, he says, "It's time to write and write. I'm very busy now, but I can choose. So many people can't. I can set my own schedule. I can wake up in the morning and say, 'I think I will write today.'"

### Works by Roy Bonisteel

*In Search of Man Alive* (Collins, 1980)

*Man Alive: The Human Journey* (Collins, 1983; second edition by Totem Books, 1986)

*There Was a Time* (Doubleday Canada, 1991)



Ruth HOWARD is a freelance writer who enjoys writing for magazines. She co-wrote an autobiographical book about a new Canadian and most recently was editor (and one of the writers) of a book of war stories, a Canada Remembers project for 1995.

Cover photo of Roy Bonisteel is by Rene Ruyg, Belleville

## Attention:

# MAGAZINE JUNKIES

Announcing our 1995 Canadian Magazines for Everyone Catalogue, with more than 250 magazines to choose from.

### Ecstasy.

To get your copy, fill in the coupon and mail it today with \$5 (including GST, shipping, and handling). We are also happy to take VISA or Mastercard orders by fax or phone.

### CMPA

2 Stewart St. Toronto, Ontario M5V 1H6  
Tel (416) 362-2546 Fax (416) 362-2547

Yes!

SEND ME THE NEW 1995 CMPA CATALOGUE. I ENCLOSE MY CHEQUE FOR \$5 (GST, POSTAGE AND HANDLING ARE COVERED IN THIS AMOUNT).

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

PROVINCE \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

8A