

Writing painful: author

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he didn't know how it would work out.

DIDN'T KNOW
"I couldn't give the story away accidentally because I didn't know myself who was guilty," he says. "I read it as I wrote it so I saw it unfolding the way the reader would. I knew if I let it gestate long enough I'd figure out who it was. Eventually I saw it had to be X and then I figured out the reason why he had to be the guilty one."
He speculates that several things combine to account for

why so few seek writing as a career. To begin with, writing is a very lonely occupation. Or at least it appears that way from the outside.

"You need that sort of personality that doesn't mind being lonely," he says. "Or at least, what other people see as lonely. You know you aren't lonely. You're too busy to be lonely."

Another problem with writing is that it produces no immediate product except a lot of words. While a cabinet-maker can go down to his basement and work away on a

piece of furniture and have something to show for his work it takes a great deal of time to produce a finished product and no one can admire a writer's abilities part way through a piece of writing. Even when the work is complete no one can tell how crude or skilled a craftsman the writer is unless he takes the time to stop and read the poem or story.

"Writing requires characteristics most people don't have," he says. "Most writers are very inward looking. I think, and selfish too, in a way. Writing is a craft that requires more discipline and more time and more pain than most crafts. You really have to work at it. As Thomas Wolfe says, 'It's like arthritis. There's a little bit of pain every morning.'"

He feels writers tend to be very analytical and also that many writers write because they are unable to do anything else.

WRITING ITCH

"Writing is like having an itch," he chuckles. "If you itch long enough eventually you're going to scratch. Writers seem to have a compulsion to write. Potters and carvers and other crafts people may enjoy their hobby but if they can't get at it for a while I don't know if it worries them too much. But for writers it's like a compulsion they can't ignore."

Mr. Henderson doesn't belong to either of the Canadian writers' unions. While he agrees that they have served useful purposes in certain things like improving standard contracts the groups have a "certain nationalistic over-tone" which he finds "depressing."

Nor does he believe in courses for would-be authors.

"I wouldn't dream of taking a course in creative writing," he says. "It's slightly beyond being silly. You know what you want to say and you know the way you want to say it. I suppose it could be useful to have someone to show a manuscript to who could help in the polishing up, but you have to write it yourself. A good editor

can do that. Once a good idea has been recognized a really creative editor can help enormously. The editor and author have to agree on what the story is the author wants to tell but then a precise, blunt editor can do so much to improve a piece."

Mr. Henderson feels that writers fall into two groups, the type who writes short poems in slim magazines that no one reads and the type who writes for public consumption. "The first duty of a writer is to be read," he says firmly

"and I despise people who say they don't care whether or not they're read. The ones who pour abuse on the heads of writers like Arthur Haley or Harold Robbins because they're churning out so much garbage are usually just sour grapes. People like Robbins don't pretend to have any

special angle or particular message for people. They just have a good story and they tell it well. You hear people say they're just as good as these popular writers but they aren't recognized yet. I doubt if Shakespeare or Dickens ever thought of themselves as producing great literature. But they were very popular in their day. People recognized their

ability to tell a story well and ignored what future generations might think of it. They read or watched the plays to enjoy them. Don't ever kid yourself that these fellows weren't in it for the money. They had to be just as commercial as today's writers to make a living."

SCHOOL TEXTS

At the moment Mr. Henderson is working on a series of four literature texts for Grades seven to 10 with a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Apart from the odd anthology all his texts have had to do with grammar, he says, and are aimed for the Grade 4 to 13 level.

He feels texts must be very entertaining.

"You have to get them into the tent before you start preaching," he says. "That's why I don't work with kids under the fourth grade. They're too smart. They can spot a phony at half a mile."

Mr. Henderson firmly believes that television should be used in the classroom although he feels that it is not being used effectively now. He says it is totally immaterial what a child watches. The very fact he watches the set will change the way he absorbs information. Before long

teachers will be arriving in the classrooms who were raised with television as today's children are and then the attitude will change. They will understand how to use it better and bring in the changes present educators won't accept, he says.

Mrs. Henderson is a teacher with the Halton board of education. The couple have no children.

When asked if he is working on a second novel Mr. Henderson just shook his head.

"I wouldn't tell you if I was," he says. "But novels aren't nearly as satisfying as textbooks. Now THEY are interesting."

Boat people may arrive any time

The Operation Lifeline sponsors of Vietnamese refugees are working steadily in preparation for the arrival of their families in Halton Hills, but the exact arrival date remains unknown.

Brenda Gogan, one of the spokesmen for the Halton Hills branch of Operation Lifeline, said there are six groups in Halton Hills which have been approved and are waiting for their families. The groups have been told it could be within six weeks, "but we've been told that before, so it's hard to say when it will be," she said.

Tom Whitlam is organizing a crash course in English for the refugees. Mrs. Gogan said, and the teachers of the course and some of the sponsors are taking a crash course to learn some useful phrases in Chinese so they can communicate with the families. Mrs. Gogan said

Mr. Whitlam and others involved with the language program are working hard on it, but they can't book space for classrooms for the program until they have some idea of how many students they'll have.

FORMER STORE
Operation Lifeline is using the former Homestead store in the Guelphview Square as a depot for clothing and furniture. Mrs. Gogan said. More items of clothing and furniture are needed, she said, although the response from the community has been good.

The sponsors still haven't met their quota for accommodation but the situation is difficult when they don't know how large the family will be,

Mrs. Gogan said. Sponsors are telling people not to hold the space open until the refugees arrive if they don't want to, because there is no way of knowing how long that may take.

"We're not asking for free accommodation," Mrs. Gogan emphasized. "The sponsors will be paying rent."

Howard McLean, who has been acting as the liaison between the sponsor groups here in Halton Hills and the ministry of immigration, says the ministry hasn't given him any definite times for arrival, and "it looks like we'll be bringing people in in the snow."

"People are maintaining their commitment to a remarkable extent," he said. "The main thing now is acquiring the material requirements."

One of the fund-raising activities being promoted to help the sponsors is a Vietnamese feast, which will feature native food from Viet Nam. The feast will be held October 12 at St. Alban's Church in Glen Williams from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The menu will feature fishball soup, chicken curry, barbecue pork in peanut sauce, raw vegetables with hot sauce and tropical fruit. The cost will be \$7.50 for adults and \$3.00 for children.

Tickets are available from the Book Shop on Main Street South, Nature's Emporium in Glen Williams and the Mac's Milk store in the Mountainview Plaza, at the corner of Mountainview Road and Guelph Street.

Welcome Home

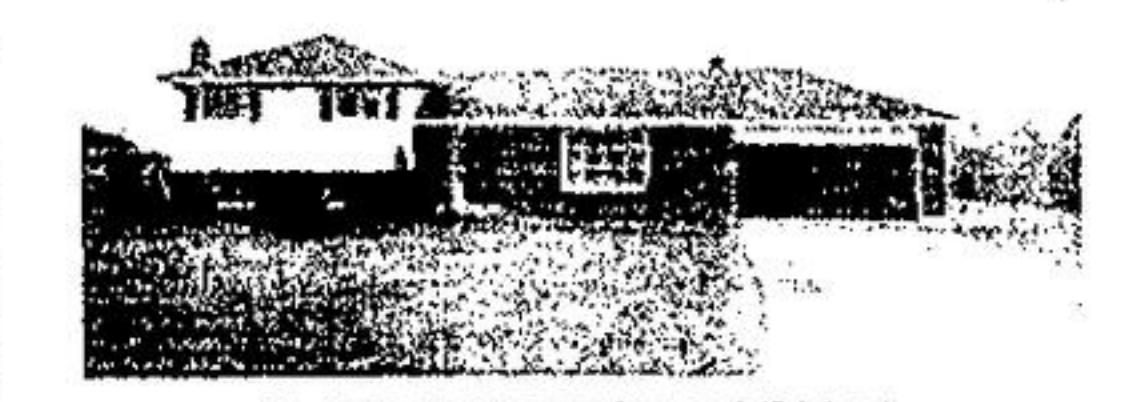


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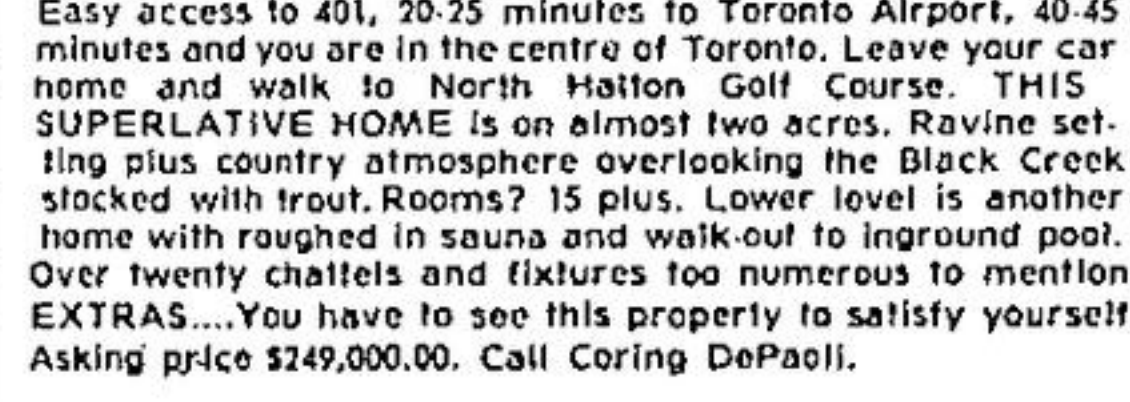
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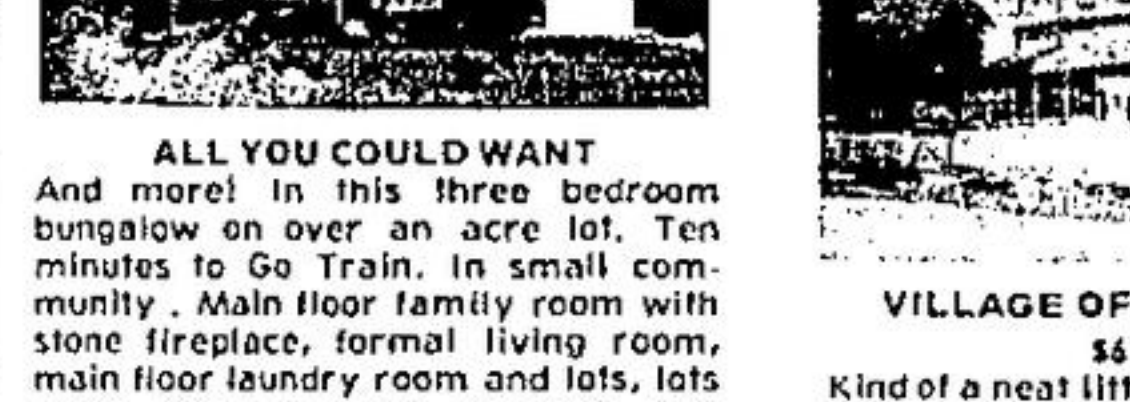
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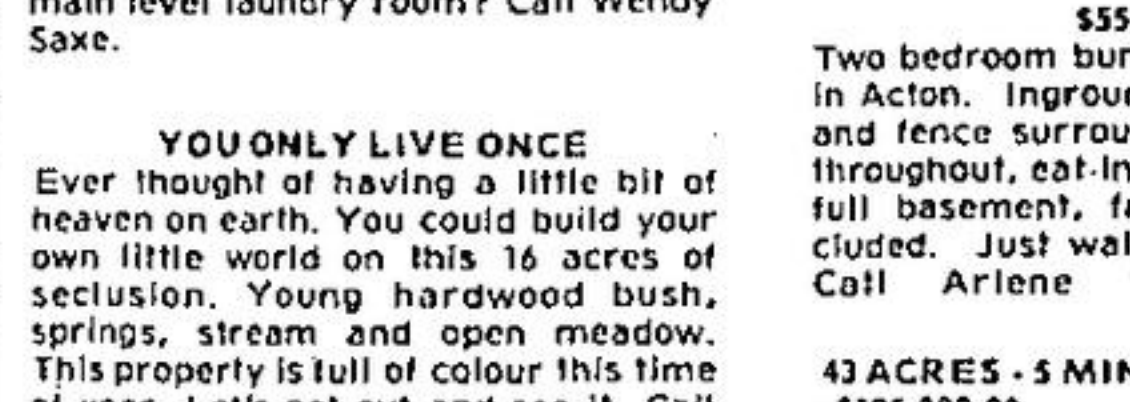
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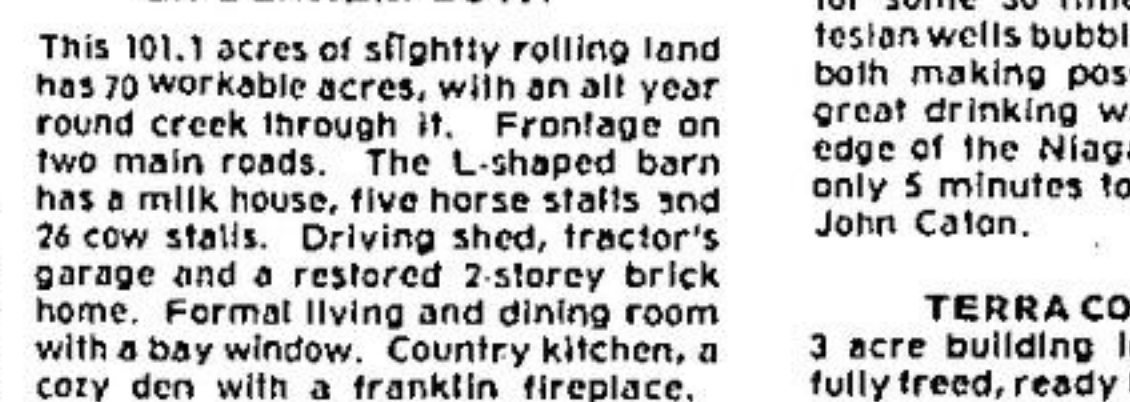
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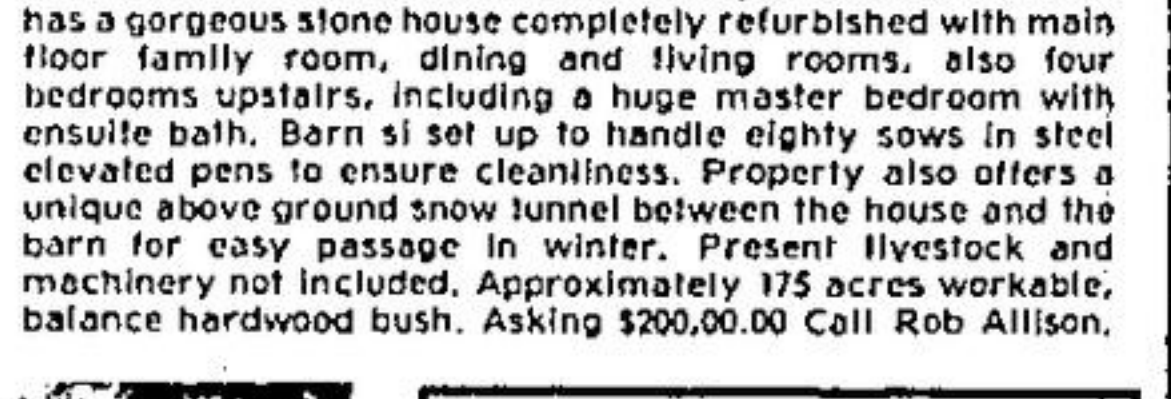
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