

A wish come true

Entertainment

Bob Spence
Thomson News Service

Even if everything goes smoothly, it usually takes many a month to get a book published.

A number of people moved quickly, however, to help a 16-year-old boy who had a special wish.

Patrick Seguin, of Lachute, Que., is terminally ill with a form of muscular dystrophy.

After working on a comic book for more than two years, he told the Muscular Dystrophy Association about his dream to have "his life's work" published "to leave behind after he is gone."

The association approached A World of Dream Foundation, which, in turn, contacted The Young Naturalist Foundation, publisher of children's magazines (Owl and Chickadee) and producer of OWL/TV.

The YNF responded quickly. Seguin's text for The Crime Busters was quickly translated into English from French and everything from cover art to printing was completed in record time. From start to finish, the project took less than a month.

The Crime Busters is now available at Coles stores across Canada and by mailorder from the YNF.

Seguin receives royalties on all copies sold. The remaining proceeds will be divided between A World of Dreams Foundation and the YNF.

Some of the young Canadian entertainers looking for a "break" are being given a chance to step onto centre stage.

CTV Presents New Faces, a prime-time special showcasing new professional talent from across Canada, will be telecast early in the new year.

Victoria native David Foster, a five-time Grammy and four-time Juno Award winner, is the host. The veteran producer, songwriter, arranger, recording artist and performer is also serving as co-producer.

Among the performers are: George Fox, Michelle Wright, Diamond in the Rough, Tim Feehan and Sue Medley.

Grant Chorley, a 34-year-old Toronto native, became the first Canadian to conduct a world opera premiere in Vienna when Carmen Negra was introduced to Austria's capital in May.

Now, the producers want him back.

The opera returns to Vienna in January. And, Chorley has been asked to conduct it again.

Carmen Negra, which has been showered in accolades, is a modern, English-language version of Bizet's Carmen.

After its encore in Vienna, the production (the story of a black man who is struggling through problems with his village priest) will move on to five other countries.

Ballerina Karen Kain has a Christmas present for Canadians. Christmas night, Kain and actor husband Russ Petty offer a colorful and zany version of Cinderella.

St. Xavier rocks on

Local rock band St. Xavier are enjoying a short break from the club circuit, until Dec. 29 and 30 when they will return to the Mustang Bar in Brampton to play a double bill with Dirty Deeds, a tribute to AC/DC.

The last few weeks the band had been asked to play in Chatham, Scarborough, Lindsay and the Hi Life in Brampton.

During this short break the band is finishing three or four new original songs to be recorded during the first part of January. Then it's back to Willy Woess's in Hamilton on Jan. 18, 20 and 21. Then, a weekend in St. Catharines has been provisionally booked.

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At the Gallery

An exhibition of oil paintings and sculptures officially opened at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre Gallery Dec. 14. The two artists, Raimond Rikevicius of Georgetown, and Linda Taras of Acton, were there for the opening wine and cheese party. Here, the artists stand beside an oil painting by Mr. Rikevicius called "February Carnival" and a porcelain sculpture by Ms. Taras called "Tranquility." The show will run during library hours until Jan. 8. (Herald photo)

Bird watchers can start early

By MARION STREBIG
For the Federation of Ontario Naturalists

For many readers an interest in natural history begins with observation of birds in their own backyard, perhaps at a bird feeder. An adult interested in finding out more about birds can turn to several good field guides. There are also books available providing more specialized and specific information about species like the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario.

But for younger family members with questions about birds there is limited information aimed at readers between the ages of eight and 12. This is the age at which an interest in nature fostered in the right way, may start children on a fascinating hobby which they may pursue with pleasure all their adult lives. Also, at a time when so much of the natural world is threatened, an interest in nature can lead to a concern for protecting and conserving what is left of our natural heritage.

When I was young my father, who had been raised in the country near Uxbridge, taught me what he knew about nature without my realizing I was being taught. For instance, every May we went looking for moths in my grandfather's woodlot, and, as we hiked, I learned the names of most of the spring wildflowers and began to recognize birds by sight and song. Since not every child is lucky enough to have such a resident resource, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, in co-operation with Kids Can Press Ltd., has produced a book about birds which recalls the pleasurable learning I experienced as a child.

The project has been a joint product of writer and artist, and is as entertaining to look at as to read. The writer is Pamela Hickman,

FON education projects coordinator. She has already produced a variety of educational material including kits on endangered species and acid rain. Working with her is freelance artist, Judie Shore, whose whimsical drawings grace the FON's 1989 Conservation Calendar.

Birdwise deals with all aspects of a bird's life. One section called Feet Are Neat points out the variety of uses different species of birds have for feet, and the adaptations of a bird's feet for specific purposes. The illustrations show how an osprey grasps a slippery fish and how a woodpecker is equipped to cling to a tree.

As a writer Pamela Hickman has the knack of luring young readers into learning without pain. For instance what child could resist finishing a page on nests which begins with the fact that the largest known nest in North America belonged to a Florida Bald Eagle and "weighed the same as two compact cars and it was bigger than a hot tub." The section of feet begins with the sentence "Imagine what it would be like if you walked around on your tiptoes all day. That's what birds do."

There are other sections on flight, feathers, how to get started bird watching, how to feed birds and how to plant to attract birds to your garden. Interspersed throughout the book are suggestions for complementary activities, like how to fix gourmet bird food, or instructions for constructing a birdfeeder out of material likely to be around the house.

But the written word by itself would hardly hold a child's attention

unless the page was visually irresistible. And it is - starting with the cover by Ron Berg in which motifs repeated inside the book twice about the title. An owl perches on the "D", and a birdhouse dots the "I". Inside interesting and humorous illustrations erupt from every page. In the section entitled How Birds Live the tiny hieroglyphs of bird tracks wander across the page from a broken eggshell. The section begins with the question, "What will happen to the baby bird that hatched out of this shell?"

The sketches of birds will fascinate the young reader. There is a Nuthatch clinging to the edge of a page, a wild-eyed mother bird flattened on a nest brooding young, a wren singing so that one can almost see the throat vibrate and a Ring-billed gull scavenging french fries.

In this book young readers will be introduced to a new and fascinating world in which they will learn how different species of birds are suited to different environments, and how they may best observe birds and entice them to stay around. The book conveys to the reader the author's enjoyment of the natural world.

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the HERALD Entertainment

Cocoon crew returns but not for the better

By DIAHANN NADEAU
Herald Special

If you really enjoyed the original Cocoon and were looking forward to the sequel I have bad news for you. Cocoon: The Return is a terrible movie and a complete disappointment.

It is sometimes ridiculous, seldom funny, and always boring. I must have checked my watch every 15 minutes, the surest sign of a bad movie.

On the surface, Cocoon II looks like it has all the ingredients for a successful sequel to a charming and popular movie. (Six seniors move to another planet where no one ever gets sick, no one grows old, and no one ever dies - just in case you missed the original.) All the major actors are back to reprise their roles, although Brian Dennehy makes only a brief appearance at the end. (Sensible man; he probably realized this film was going to be a dud.) But this is just a superficial resemblance. The director is not Ron Howard, it is Daniel Petrie. This is a crucial change, and I think it's the reason the film is so completely lifeless.

The gang has returned to beam up some remaining pods, only to find that the Oceanographic Institute has picked up one of the cocoons. For some reason it takes the aliens five days to break into the place and rescue their sick comrade. This is completely implausible - and the idea of the movie was never realistic to begin with.

There is no build-up to the return of the senior six; five minutes into the film they're there. Then all they do is putter around, swimming and dancing, soon becoming ill and old. Amazing how much can go wrong in five days. The film has a lot of depressing moments, with too few uplifting scenes.

AT THE MOVIES

Tahnee Welch and Steve Guttenberg return as the young lovers, and are they tedious. This is the second weekend running I've had to watch Guttenberg play a character named Jack and I can't take it anymore. I am coming to hate his acting, let alone his boyish face. Welch is pretty and that's all there is to be said about her.

How about the real actors, the old pros? I don't even want to talk about it, it's so bad. Hume Cronyn's character manages to die and a good thing too - at least he won't have to do Cocoon III. It's pathetic to see such stalwarts as Don Ameche and Maureen Stapleton wandering aimlessly through the script, trying to do something worthwhile. I hope they made a lot of money, because they aren't going to win any awards this time out.

Cocoon II is just so bad that I could go on forever enumerating the flaws. What sticks out most is the meandering script with no plot line to speak of. Honestly, I just can't describe how scattered and uncentered the story is. The directing stinks; the film moves at a snail's pace, only slower. There is a degree of cynicism in the movie that is a product of the wish to produce a hit without bothering to work at it. Guttenberg is the best illustration of this: he sleepwalks through his part. You know he's only in it for the money, as is the director. If ever a sequel deserved to bomb it is this one. What a pity that such a lot of talent was so completely wasted. This is one of the worst films I've seen this year.

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