

Acton is an 'emotional wellspring' for former Acton author

"When you're separated from the town by language and by culture, you're, in many ways, invisible." Judy Fong Bates in *The Year of Finding Memories*.

With knowing smiles, chuckles of recognition and an appreciation of evocative writing, a crowd of approximately 70 people were enthralled as former Acton resident, author Judy Fong Bates, read from two of her three books – inspired by her Acton childhood – outside at the Acton library terrace last Wednesday night.

Introducing Fong Bates, a retired Toronto elementary teacher, Acton Librarian Mary Land noted it was World Teachers' Day, fitting as teachers, books and the love of learning play large roles in Fong Bates' work, which includes a collection of short stories called *China Dog and Other Stories*, a novel, *Midnight at the Dragon Café*, and a family memoir, *The Year of Finding Memories*.

Fong Bates said a walk around the new library and Robert Little School reminded her how blessed she was to have gone to Robert Little School, and how far the library has come since her childhood in the baby-boomer 1950s when the library was in one room in the former YMCA building on Mill Street.

"The head of the three women (who ran the library) was Isabel Watson – remember the Watsons? They used to own Watson's Dairy Bar...she had a little dog, a Chihuahua that she kept in her purse," Fong Bates said, adding the dog kept everybody in line with its "fierce piercing yap."

Fong Bates said her trip to Acton was very emotional because it's a place that brings back so many good memories which are the "source for much of my writing," she said, adding Acton is the "emotional wellspring of so much that I know, and what I draw from."

Reading from *Midnight at the Dragon Café*, Fong Bates evoked the Acton of her youth with its treeless, grey main street, and constant stench from the tannery. In real life her immigrant parents owned a hand laundry on Church Street.

Inviting questions from the crowd, Fong Bates revealed the raging creek,



Judy Fong-Bates

which "absolutely terrified" the narrator in *Dragon Café* was the quiet creek, which meanders in front of the library. She said while the work is fictional, she and the narrator "share a heart."

Fong Bates said her memoir, *The Year of Finding Memories*, was sparked by two trips to China where she saw her parents' unhappy marriage in a new light, through the eyes of her half-sister who spoke of romance

and passion.

"The things I found about my parents truly broke my heart. So, *The Year of Finding Memories* ended up being the story of my parents, but told between the lens of these two trips to China," Fong Bates said, adding she folded her Acton childhood into the story.

The group moved into the library, where warmed by the fire, Fong Bates signed copies of her books and posed for pictures with childhood friends.

OPP Report



Drunk driver

A 47-year-old Dundalk man was charged with numerous alcohol and driving offences after he was pulled over by Wellington OPP on Main Street in Erin at 1:56 p.m. on Saturday.

Police found that the driver, whose licence had been suspended, had been drinking – he failed a

roadside screening test – and there was open beer inside his pickup truck. He was charged with having over 80-milligrams of alcohol in 100-millilitres of blood, driving while suspended, and driving with open liquor. He appears in a Guelph court on November 22.

Speeder now walking

The driver of a 2005

Audi that was clocked at 143 km/h in a 60 zone was charged with Race a Motor Vehicle after being stopped by the OPP on Highway 7 near Skyway Drive in Guelph/Eramosa Township on Saturday morning.

His vehicle was seized for a week, and he appears in a Guelph court on December 7.

Mark your calendar

Church anniversary

The Everton Community Church marks its 150th anniversary this month with two special services of remembrance and celebration on October

22 and 23. Former pastors and members are invited to enjoy a reunion with friends and neighbours of the church.

Book sale

Books, CDs, DVDs,

old-school vinyl records, and related electronics will be on sale at the Book Sale with a Difference on October 22 at the Eden Mills Community Hall, from 9 a.m. to noon

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