

REACHING TOWARDS EMBRACE

BY DEBORAH QUAILLE
ARTS EDITOR

Irene Guilford, a Rockwood resident, has published her first novel entitled *The Embrace*.

The Embrace is a story of politics and war, the fierce ties one family has to the past and each other, and the cultures that continued to divide them. In World War II, when the Communists invaded Lithuania, 21-year-old Edvardas fled but his brother, 18-year-old Pranas, stayed. At the end of the war, each brother married and raised a family, one in the free West, and the other in the Communist East. Forty years later, when the two brothers and their grown children met, they reached out to each other, craving connection and forgiveness to ease the pain of preceding time.

While relating an eye-opening visit to Lithuania with her father, the author skillfully recounts the deep sense of loss she felt over her wonderful heritage, and how the beauty was stolen from the lives of innocent people, subjecting them to poverty and quiet despair.

"... I think of the Toronto neighbourhood where," she recalls, "after the war, my parents and grandparents settled. Roncesvalles Avenue, a street of immigrants, its meat shops crammed with kolbassa and sauerkraut, its bakeries sweet with poppy seed cake. Where is the country that gave rise to these people who, in exile, set up such

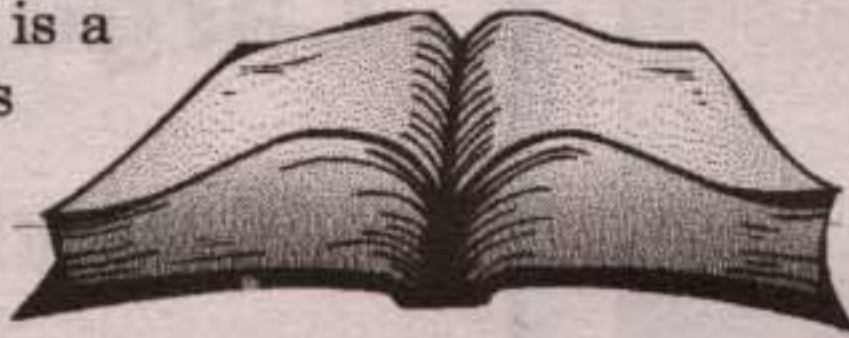
shops, stuffed with the food of memory? My cousins have bland, unforgiving faces, careful faces they turn to the world."

The reader can sense the author's feelings of bewilderment and dismay, living in two cultures but not entirely belonging to either. She questions what life would have been like if she had been born in the homeland, or if her uncle had followed her father out and his family had been born Canadian.

While telling the tale, Irene uses a skillful change of voice, shifting from first person to her cousins' points of views and back again, allowing us insight to their feelings. Eventually, after her father's brother and some cousins fly to Canada to visit, the narrator comes to realize that they are all fools to try to bridge 40 years of silence with just two visits, which will take the next generation to span the gap.

"Home," she concludes, "...is an imaginary place. A time before our births. A place we can never visit. A land where we wait, arms reaching towards embrace."

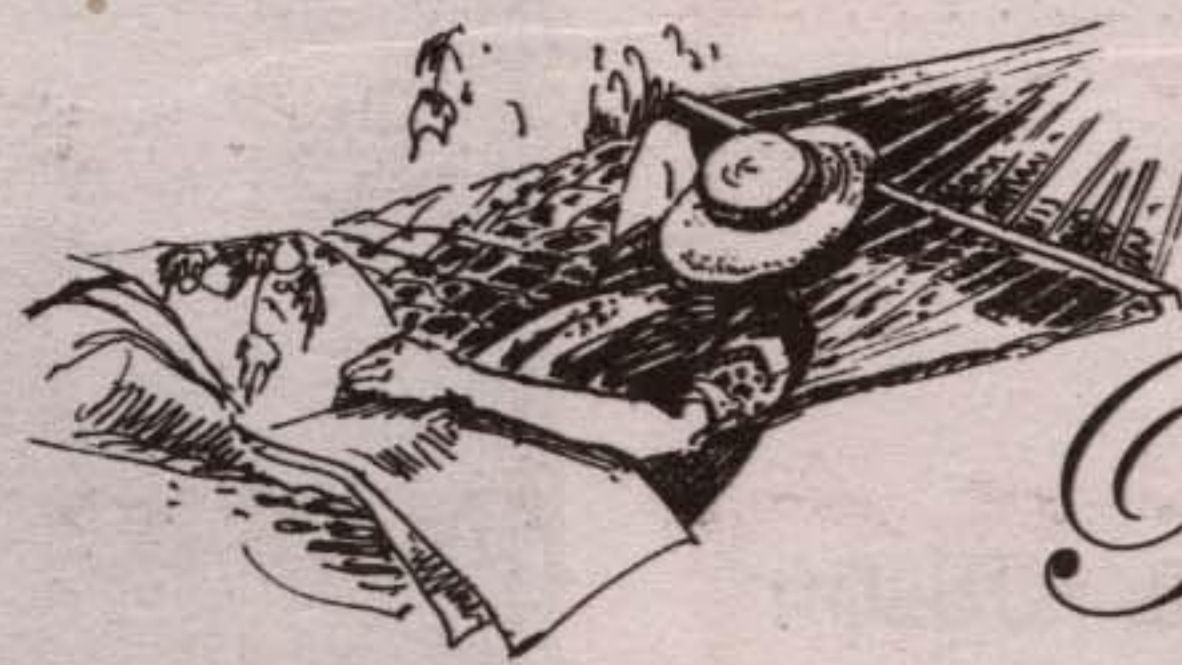
Irene Guilford has a degree in Mathematics and Computer Science. Her work has appeared in various journals and anthologies, and has been short-listed in both the CBC Literary Competition and the Event Creative Non-Fiction Contest. She will be reading at the Eden Mills Writers' Festival on Sunday, September 12.



THE EMBRACE
IRENE GUILFORD
GUERNICA EDITIONS INC., TORONTO, 1999.
PAPERBACK, \$15.00
ISBN 1-55071-086-9

Quaille
Reviews

Idle



Pursuits

NEW DIRECTION FOR SPEEDSIDE FESTIVAL

Music at Speedside has a new home, a new name - The Speedside Festival - and the enthusiasm and commitment of members of Ebenezer United Church, where its future may indeed outshine its past. Ebenezer United Church, the new location of the highly successful chamber music festival, is located on Guelph Line a few kilometers north of the 401.

"The demand for tickets simply outgrew the size of our former venue," said Speedside's Artistic Director Simon Wynberg. "Issues from fire regulations to parking needs compelled us to seek a new home for the Festival. In meeting the challenge, we needed a location that offered the necessary seating without any loss of the wonderful intimacy and superior acoustics we've enjoyed since our inaugural season. Ebenezer United Church

SPECIAL TO THE COMPASS

surpassed all of our expectations and has many engaging qualities of its own that are sure to enhance the Speedside Festival. In addition, the congregation has just initiated the building of a large and permanent stage and this year's Festival will be the first arts event to appreciate its spacious quality."

The Speedside Festival's history of offering performances by internationally recognized artists has always been supported by a yearly ability to meet its financial commitments. As with past seasons, the 1999 program can only be accomplished through the generosity of corporate and private sponsorship to augment revenues from affordable ticket prices. There is a current and urgent need for private and corporate sponsorship.

Interested individuals or companies are invited to contact Debbie Stanson at (519) 258-7015 to discuss their pledge to the success and survival of the 1999 Speedside Festival.

A second and equally important early requirement is to find the enormous number of volunteers necessary to undertake a four-day festival of this size. If you wish to be a part of the volunteer experience at Speedside Festival this year, please contact Alan Argue at (519) 787-7441.

The 1999 Speedside Festival will take place at Ebenezer United Church, Thursday through Sunday beginning on October 21 to October 24, 1999. Another exciting roster of artists and the 1999 program of music will be announced on September 8, 1999 by the Festival's Artistic Director, Simon Wynberg.

POETRY READING SERIES WITH INTERNATIONAL FLAIR

The Take-a-Break Poetry Reading Series is pleased to announce that the featured readers at 8 p.m. on Friday, September 10 will be two talented local writers with international roots, Georgina Wilks and Beryl Baigent.

Georgina Wilks moved to Canada from The Royal Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, England in 1982 and lived in Milton, Toronto and Atlanta before succumbing to the charms of Rockwood. Her writing was spurred initially by a chance e-mail reunion with an old high school friend. The discovery of her kindred spirit has led to a work in progress that has evolved from letters to a darkly erotic Epic tale of medieval fancy inspired by Wilks' love of Tennyson and Shakespeare. On the lighter side, Wilks writes charming children's verse and a number of pointed works on the subject of relationships.

Beryl Baigent was raised on Hope, North Wales and returns there once a year from her current home in Thamesford, Ontario. Baigent has just published her tenth book of poetry, *The Celtic Tree Calendar: Poem Cycle*, which combines her Celtic heritage with people to whom she is close. Each of the 25 poems focuses on a certain person whom she knows and their relationship to one of the trees on the Celtic Calendar. Baigent's work has gathered awards from, among others, the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council. Her reading will also include works from her earlier books.

As usual, there will be an "open mike" portion of the program that is intended to encourage newer writers to share their work. Everyone is welcome, the coffee is superb, the desserts decadent and there is no cover charge. For more information contact Gordon Gilhuly at 519-856-9534.

The Eleventh Annual Eden Mills Writers' Festival

Sunday, September 12, 1999
rain or shine, noon 'til six

Dozens of authors, illustrators, poets and publishers

Festival Information Phone

(519) 826-0876

www.sentex.net/~pql

Tickets

General admission \$8; Students and children \$5. Advance tickets available at The Bookshelf Café and Macondo in Guelph, University of Toronto Bookstore, This Ain't the Rosedale Library and elsewhere.

Directions

Highway 401, exit 312 (Guelph Line), north 17 km to the stopsign at Townline, then turn west (left) and follow signs to parking.

Free bus shuttle from the River Run Centre and the University Centre, Guelph, every 40 minutes from 11 a.m.



The Lawn Chair Gardeners

THE BROTHERS VON CUBE
1ST LINE HOMECARE GURUS



Things are piling up

If there is one thing for certain, weather was not a factor when planning this year's activities. The BBQ you planned wasn't cancelled due to rain, the bonfire you wanted to invite the neighbours to wasn't cancelled due to wind. So you better do some fence mending before the school routine takes over. Invite some friends over for a beverage, cook up those last few cobs of corn, and send them on their way with all those extra cucumbers, tomatoes and zucchini that you'll never have time to preserve anyway.

Once you have harvested the last of the beans, peas, radishes and spinach, how do you stack that mound of waste on your property? Don't dump it over the fence, or out onto town property for them to deal with. They get enough garbage from you. All the humus in the world's topsoil is merely a byproduct of God's garden. Layer the different plant waste with topsoil and kitchen scraps to give the earth-

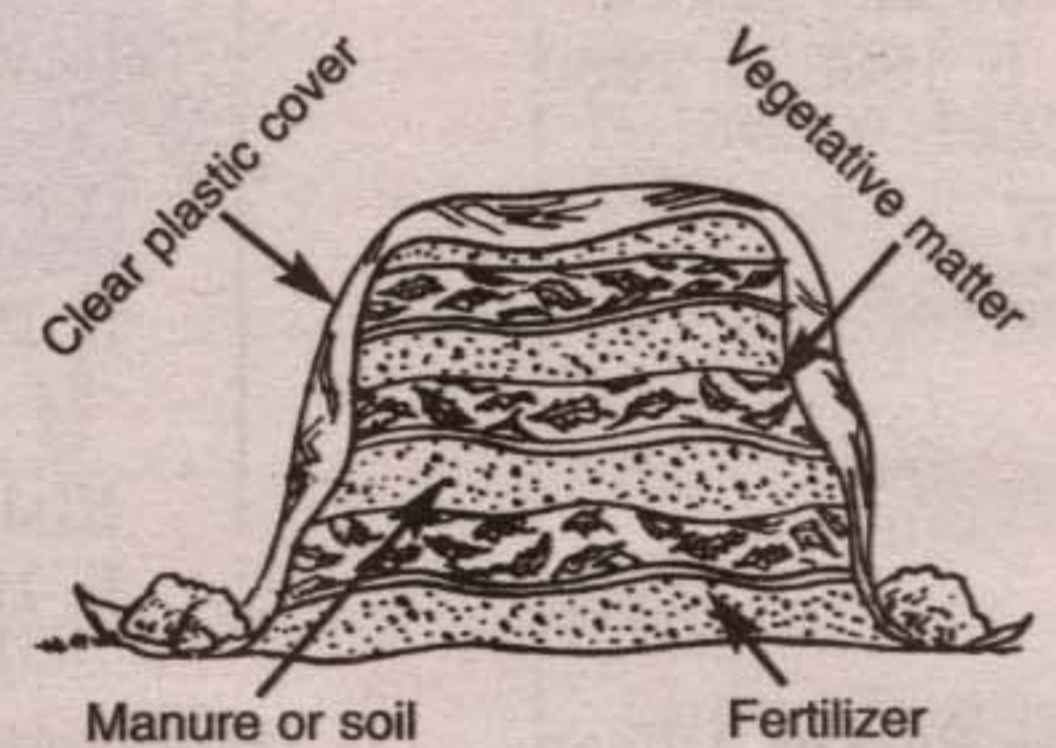
worms and soil microbes the balanced diet they deserve, but remember, those critters need sunshine and the occasional drink to be at their best. Next spring you can send it all back to the garden and you will even save a few shekles on fertilizer. If you really want to impress your spouse, plant the left-over radish and lettuce seed in the open rows and prepare yourself for fresh lettuce and radish salad just in time for Thanksgiving. That will put you about one year ahead in the competition for the earliest garden!

If pruning maple and birch trees was on the work agenda this year, do them now and add the brush to the fire after that last corn roast of the season. Pruning them now will give the tree time to heal so they don't "bleed" during the spring sap run.

During the last few days we have experienced some nice rains and cool nights. If your lawn hasn't greened up from its summer dor-

mancy you better peel some turf back on the dead areas and see if there aren't some uninvited guests around. Hopefully those pesky grubs stopped off at the neighbours, but you never can tell. And if the thought of winter really gets you down, maybe you should take a picture of that beautiful barrel of geraniums, or the gorgeous Hibiscus on the deck to show yourself and your relatives what your place really looks like when they come home for Christmas.

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