

New crop of talented writers hails from rural routes

Rural Routers take a look way back to your public school years. The teachers called it public speaking. I called it hell.

The worst moment was when you made your way to the front of the class. Your heart would race

and your palms would sweat, the words locked in your throat.

Only the coolest of the cool managed to look relaxed and detached. During the eighth grade, my schoolmates, especially the males, smiled and laughed at the right

spots in my speech. Feeling a bit cool myself I made my way back to my desk.

My bliss ended when my friend informed me my blouse had been unbuttoned. That they saw my bra haunted me for weeks!

Since then, I have tripped going up stairs and on flat floors. Once during my graduation I walked onto the stage and tripped on a cord and sent the whole sound system flying.

All of these fabulous school



Rural Route Ruth

Ruth LeBlanc

memories came flooding back when Dorothea Helms, a journalism teacher at Durham College, asked Kate Gilderdale and myself to attend a class.

It would be the final night of the semester and we were going to answer questions about our columns and listen to some of the students' writing.

Getting there was a little bit like a scene out of *Driving Miss Daisy*. I sat there dotty with excitement, while Kate calmly reassured me. When we walked into the class and I remembered my name and didn't trip, I began to relax and have fun.

The public speaking part didn't happen, we just sat in a circle and talked like old friends. I had a great time!

It turned out to be a night of delight. The usually quiet class erupted into laughter as our guards came down and tales were swapped.

One of the funniest stories about the flight of the greased goose was worth the trip alone. Marlene, a transplanted Newfoundlander, but now a Stouffville, can claim the fame for that little jewel which she should really share with everyone.

A mother and son team, Sue and Ryan, also from Stouffville, were a tag team to be reckoned with.

Look out Steven King, with the writing that Ryan has produced at the tender age of 17, you should be worried. This teenager doesn't write because he wants to, he writes because he has to. Ryan is what you would call a natural born writer. Intensely passionate about his writing, as all the students were, Ryan really has a gift and I hope he uses it in his lifetime.

Another rural router, Phylis, is a lovely lady who hails from England. Reminiscing about life as it once was across the ocean, Phylis can turn out a charming story.

Like most of the students there, writing has been a part of their lives whether they wanted to or not. Many of the stories they have written over the years have been tucked away from others' eyes.

I understand this completely. When the first columns I had written were published, I cringed when the newspaper would land in the driveway. Like a ticking time bomb, I would carry the paper in the house and slowly look for my story. Spotting the column, I would have the Big Guy read it to make sure I didn't say anything too ridiculous that would make my head hang in shame.

Now nearly two years later, turning the pages and finding my column is not nearly as terrifying. Having the class of fellow writers understand and experience what I have and do, was like finding a roomful of soulmates.

Beth, another student, recently had a story published and looked like the picture of happy. I understand that look and feel that way almost every week.

Thanks to Dorothea for offering the invitation. It wasn't like some of my earlier school experiences, it was terrific. Kate and I drove back to Stouffville both happy as larks and feeling really good. As Kate drove away I got in to start my car and guess? Reality time, the car wouldn't start. Ah, another ending to a perfect day — life goes on!

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