

Whitchurch-Stouffville author works with limitations to tell story of prejudice

BY CAROL COOPER
Special

Ann Goldring likes limitations—at least when writing. The Whitchurch-Stouffville resident, retired high school teacher, environmentalist, published poet, short story writer and author finds stimulation from writing in restricted forms.

"I like to be boxed in a little. I think I'm a minimalist, so maybe the box helps that, having the restriction. I absolutely love haiku—not of the 17-syllable variety, but much smaller than that. You can say so much in such a little space, using so few words."

So spare was her style when writing her recent novel, *Spitfire*, the publisher asked her to flesh out the manuscript. "I had to learn how to fill it in, how to give more depth to it," Ms Goldring said. "Maybe I thought I was writing a haiku."

Set in the fictional town of Whitfield, Ontario during the Second World War, *Spitfire* paints a gentle but provocative portrait of a less productive limitation—prejudice.

Members of protagonist, Kathryn Lockhart's Grade 6 class routinely and matter-of-factly bully and ostracize



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Author Ann Goldring and her recently published novel, *Spitfire*.

those from the other side of the tracks, while town citizens snub and ignore them.

And although there are no hard-and-fast rules, it is assumed only boys can

enter the town's soapbox derby.

Aimed at 11-year-olds, the novel grew from a creative writing course assignment at George Brown College 10 years ago. Participants were asked to describe a familiar childhood setting.

Ms Goldring wrote about her hometown of Whitby, on which Whitfield is loosely based. "And then I just kept on writing to see what happened," she said.

Written and rewritten "several hundred times" over nine years, she submitted the story to three publishers on the advice of Canadian children's writer Sarah Ellis. Raincoast Books published it.

"I was very interested in the idea of the wrong side of town, which I don't think we have now," Ms Goldring said.

"If there is a wrong side of town, who said it is the wrong side? So it has to be that the other side is then the right side. I was interested in the psychology of what sort of people had the idea of a wrong side of town.


"They were doing so much for the war, but what were they doing for the people who were right there on their doorstep? I wanted to empower those on the wrong side of town and in fiction,

See SPITFIRE, page 16.

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