

YOUR STAY IS WORTH REMEMBERING

Worth remembering, Donna Sinclair. Wood Lake Books, 1984. 108 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0919599-14-1.

Drawing upon her years of experience as a teacher of creative writing, Donna Sinclair, a minister's wife who is also the author of a previous book, *The pastor's wife today*, has produced a "how to" book on writing one's autobiography. Although *Worth remembering* is an outgrowth of working with senior citizens, all English teachers working to produce creative writing with children from the grade five level through continuing education programs for adults may find this a useful book. The book leads the reader consider the rationale behind writing down one's life experiences, shows him techniques to find and expand a theme, and concludes with to a chapter on getting the manuscript published. Toward this end, Mrs. Sinclair suggests Canada Council grants, the New Horizons program which encourages Canadian story telling, commercial publishers, or merely photocopying the number of copies one needs from a typescript.

If this information were all that this book contained, it would compete with other writing manuals for the teacher's attention. What makes *Worth remembering* special is Donna Sinclair's belief in spiritual values and in the worth and contribution of each human life. She wants to help the reader not only to write better, but also to understand himself better and ultimately to live more in harmony with himself, his world and his God.

In chapter 6: Unknown Themes, she explores this introspection, suggesting

Something happens when you write regularly, forcing yourself to sit down with your pen and dredge up something to say. You begin to call on parts of yourself that you didn't know were there. It's a little like the discipline of prayer. Being alone with yourself and God so much means you have difficulty ignoring aspects of yourself you can escape the rest of the time.

And it's like looking in a three-way mirror in a clothing store. You may suddenly begin to see yourself as others see you, front and back, all the way around. Sides of yourself you wouldn't otherwise see.

Those usually unknown parts of yourself are important, though. That's what this chapter is about; finding out the hidden themes in your life and how they affect the rest of your story. Not so much "what happened" as "what led me to do it that way?" I want you to get at the myth by which you live your life — the belief structure that lies behind the things you do (p. 63).

As well as suggesting that one write regularly, Miss Sinclair advocates dream analysis to help one find out one's life themes. She gives the reader a very basic reading list to introduce him/her to dreams and their meanings. But what about the origin of dreams? (p. 74.)

Some suggest they are simply one's subconscious forgotten images showing you what you have been avoiding seeing. But for me, they come from the same place as the water, the same place as the leaves on those leafless trees of mine. From God.

While the references to God might limit the book's acceptability in some situations, the book gives an excellent step-by-step guide to the process of writing an autobiography. My father, who had just completed a 176 page biographical manuscript about his own life as son of Ukrainian pioneers in Thunder Bay before I showed him this book, found the book's ideas and methods stimulating. People who have parents with stories to tell might well purchase the book as a gift.

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Responses and notes

The IODE Book Award is given annually to a Toronto area author or illustrator of a Canadian published children's book. This \$1,000 award was given to Robin Muller, for his book *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

1987 ChLA Paper and Program Call

The theme of the 1987 Children's Literature Association Conference, May 14-17, at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, is "Cross-Culturalism in Children's Literature." The deadline for submitting papers and proposals for workshops or panel discussions is January 10, 1987. Submissions postmarked later than January 10, 1987, will not be considered.

Persons giving papers, workshops or panel discussions should be ChLA members. They are required to arrange their own expenses and to make their presentations in person.