



## SpyGlass

*tHe MaD hAtTeR, editor*



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*Sitting around the tea table can be quite delightful -- especially if you've got some good dirt to dish. I keep my mouth shut and my ears open hoping to find some interesting tidbits that I can pass around*

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### Love Among the Picture Books

While reading **Arlene Perly Rae's** sprightly compendium, *Everybody's Favourites: Canadians talk about books that changed their lives*, the MaD hAtTeR found to his glee that children's books brought together at least one couple. Writers **Sandra** and **Richard Gwyn** discovered a shared passion for *The Story of Ping*, which surely led to couplehood. That little spanking Ping tries to avoid always gives the MaD hAtTeR a satisfying shiver and what about those delicious restraints! Word has it that local librarian **Claire Fyfe** and her husband read **Donn Kushner's** *A Book Dragon* aloud to each other while courting. One learns something every day! Children's books as aphrodisiacs -- oh, my, my!!

### A Close Working Relationship

And speaking of couplehood -- we were, weren't we? -- how many children's authors and illustrators with different last names are really married? The MaD hAtTeR got out his little black book -- there were **John Burningham** and **Helen Oxenbury**, **Jill Paton Walsh** and **John Rowe Townsend**, **Virginia Hamilton** and **Arnold Adoff**, **Robin McKinley** and **Peter Dickinson** to name just a few. And then, of course, there are those who share a last name (as if the MaD hAtTeR needed a hint) and a passion for children's literature -- **Tana** and **Russell Hoban**, **Leo** and **Diane Dillon**, **Anita** and (the late) **Arnold Lobel**.

### Remembrance of Things Past

When Canadian illustrator **Harvey Chan** was presented last fall with the Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award for illustration for *Ghost Train* (written by **Paul Yee**), he wasn't just overcome by the emotion of winning IBBY-Canada's prestigious prize, but by some ghosts from his own past. IBBY-Canada had arranged for Chan to receive the award at one of the monthly meetings of CANSCAIP (The Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers) which are held at a Toronto private school, De La Salle College. IBBY-Canada wanted to present the award to Chan in the presence of his peers. Little did the organizers know that Harvey had actually attended De La Salle for two years of high school when he emigrated to Canada from Hong Kong. The MaD hAtTeR noted that Chan was just a little nervous about returning to De La Salle -- even as an award-winning children's book illustrator! What the MaD hAtTeR wants to know is -- was young Harvey an award-winning student too?

### I'll Drink To That

In Strasbourg, a book launch is done *comme il faut*. The MaD hAtTeR has it on very good authority that **Tomi Ungerer** launched his latest book, *Flix*, with a cigarette in one hand and a scotch in the other! The launch, my compatriot tells me, was a leisurely, civilized affair though what the MaD hAtTeR forgot to ask was -- were the guests treated with the same largesse?

### Positively Dottie?

Some Spyglass readers might recollect a column that appeared in December in a local newspaper, *The Toronto Star*, that revealed Canada to be a hotbed of Doyleism and Doyleites -- that happy band of



readers that delight in the novels of Canadian children's writer **Brian Doyle**. Following up on a tip from friend of Spyglass, the MaD hAtTeR has an interesting discovery to share. Said friend recently read the latest novel by one of Canada's most eminent adult writers, multi-prize winner **Carol Shields** and was left wondering if Shields might herself be a Doyleite. In her latest novel, *Larry's Party*, the main character's mother's name is Dot and she is constantly at war with germs and dedicated to cleanliness. (Small wonder, having killed her mother-in-law with a jar of badly bottled beans!) Now is it a coincidence that Brian Doyle has a character called Aunt Dot(tie) in his 1984 novel *Angel Square* who also wars against germs and is a devotee of the "cleanliness is next to godliness" school of thought? Is Carol Shields a secret Doyleite?!

*Have you got something you want to share among friends? Something you might not want just anyone to know? Contact me, the MaD hAtTeR, c/o The Looking Glass. I promise to be really discreet and it'll be for my eyes only!*

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