

Saturday was the Day of the Poets for Orangeville residents



By Constance Scrafield

Harry Posner was certainly the right choice as Poet Laureate for Dufferin County. Full disclosure, he is prepared to go again if they ask him and here's hoping they will, for Mr. Posner has fulfilled, and more, his ancient post's expectations.

He has written verses about occasions. More to the point, he has visited schools to do poetry workshops with students, and, bringing it out of the dusty realms into which (misguided) current curriculum is directing studies away from the arts, back into the light, he has shown students the joy and fun of poetry.

He has done a number of workshops at the libraries about poetry, demonstrating the art of reading it and of writing it. He has given presentations at the Probus Club.

His piece de resistance, however, is his Day of the Poets, staged throughout Orangeville, last Saturday, May 5.

He was pleased to tell us in a recent interview, "The day went swimmingly. It was a perfect day with the tent. There was outdoor poetry, it was so beautiful with the poets outdoors on sunny Broadway.

"There were four venues and all the poets showed up, 20 of them, plus the Town Crier.

There was an open mike at the library where poets who had not registered with the festival could still read their work.?"

He told us more about it all, "We got some of the poetry printed on large sheets and I went around town and offered them to shops to put in their windows. So, people could read the poets as they walked down the streets.?" we inundated the air of Orangeville with poetry!?"

The festival inevitably incurred some costs and, as Mr Posner explored ways in which to cover them, he began to cover them.

The League of Canadian Poets funded the event inasmuch as Mr. Posner was determined to "recompense the poets for their travel expenses and time. Poets," he said, "rarely get recompensed at all. So, the \$1,000 from the League helped with that.

"The BIA contributed and so did various businesses and, from a small beginning, it ballooned to \$3,000. We were able cover the cost of posters, printing and the rest of the expenses of the poets.?"

He was happy to report that In the Hills Magazine was on deck to write about it, Pete Patterson there to take the perfect photos.

Mr. Posner, himself, made "an archival video of the event.?" He said, "It all came together so beautifully.?"

As it happened, there were lots of other things going on in Orangeville. The Rotary was doing tree-planting: "It was a busy weekend, lots going on; all kinds of activity. Timing is very important in these things too.?"

Meanwhile, back at the open mike in the library, if Mr. Posner was there at a pause in the action, as he told us, "Because I'm the host and the organizer, I jumped in with the open mike. I didn't have a spot in the festival. I had to move around to watch things.?"

He had praise for "there were seven volunteers, a tight group. They did their jobs and they were just fantastic.?"

The post of Poet Laureate can be traced back to the ancient Greeks who made a crown of laurel leaves to honour for poets and heroes. It has had a varying life since those long ago times, arriving even here in a well meant shadow of the days when poets and heroes were celebrated in the same ceremony.

Whether he is ever offered the post of Poet Laureate again or not, Mr. Posner promises, "It wouldn't stop me from organizing another Poets' Day. This was the first time I did it on my own. I helped with the Collingwood Literary Festival, where I hosted the poetry section, some years ago. This time, I kept it contained as a one man band but, next time, I might like some help.?"

When asked, he talked about the biggest thrill of the day for him: "It was walking around the downtown of Orangeville watching

these poets sharing their words.?

He said, "Culture needs to be part of the world. That day, poetry came to ground in Orangeville.?"