

Winston Uytendogaart's new book of poems on sale locally

By Constance Scrafield

'My wife is a book seller, ex-librarian and as she said 'Don't look for any big sales.' But at BookLore there seems to be some movement and at another book store, there are sales and it's on their website.'

This was the start of a fascinating conversation with Winston Uytendogaart, now a published poet.

He said, 'A publisher in Owen Sound ? she only publishes local people but she bought two of them. That was encouraging.

'Actually, BookLore, was making notices that Nancy Frater is going to have a poetry thing in April and include me in it. The only other thing I've done publicly was Harry Posner's open mike ? my wife conned me into going to see what kind of response I would get.'

He talked about his personal history: 'I was a planner as a private consultant with an engineering firm, mostly in Essex County, from 1973 to 1993. I was a regional planner and did a lot of heritage work ? Pelee Island, Rochester township, Halifax ? a lot of heritage designations.

'I trained as an architect, so, I was into the old building thing anyway.' All along the way, 'I was writing poetry anyway.

'When I was in New York ? my engineering firm sent me there ? I had a lot of time by myself so I had to time to write about St Barton's Park near the UN building. I was living near there.

'The other thing is I graduated from Kent State University. Ohio 1967-72 ? I was there during the shootings and during the riots and I had friends in the movement. Being an international student (a Canadian) I stayed out of the politics during the Vietnam war.

'That period was the most disastrous. I was also international student advisor ? I was paid to counsel international students how to get along with living in the U.S. ? their way of living.'

He talked about writing.

'So, it is autobiographical. I have a cabin up north ? we have no running water ? I saw some animals while I was in the outhouse. I wrote Outhouse Meditation, a bit comical but still meaningful.

'I have children in the States ? so, there's a poem in there Wispy Lamentation ? about being with them with they were children and holding their small hands through life and now they're adults ? we don't get to see each other ? so I'm saying, when we do get together slow down so we can be together and I have something to remember.

'Last one is till the last time we meet ? about the devotion of a man to his wife. 'I'll be there till the last time we meet. Til the last time my limbs work ? I can feel, see, speak ? my devotion to my wife and I'll be there to the end. We're in this together.

'I like this ? my dad died when I was 12 years old and I lived with my mother from 12 to 24. She had Parkinson's disease.

'I had a friend, a man who was with the legion ? he stood up for us and, every since I knew this man, I have a thing to November because of his connection to the legion. I wear a poppy full time on my hat ? this poem was dedicated ? he was my mentor ? he made sure we had food on the table.

'My brother lived in Toronto ? we lived in Malton. It was a tough place ? there was a lot of rough people there, this guy stood up for me ? when I needed a job he was there.'

'Everything that I was exposed to, there's some kind of a poem that came from that. I'm in the process of working on another collection.'

Mr Uytendogaart's book, Words from between Dusty Spaces and Hidden Places in my Mind, is for sale at BookLore, Roxanne in Fergus, in Bolton. Forester's Book Garden- Owen Sound: Ginger Press and Phoenix Books.

My Uytendogaart also sells his wood carvings in Dragonfly and is working on a novel about Kent State University during those troubled times.