

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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August 21, 2009

Disconnected

Anti-social networking

Poetic Medicine

Healing words

AU Options

Accounting certificate

Plus:

*From Where I Sit, Dear Barb,
Sister Aurora, and much more...*



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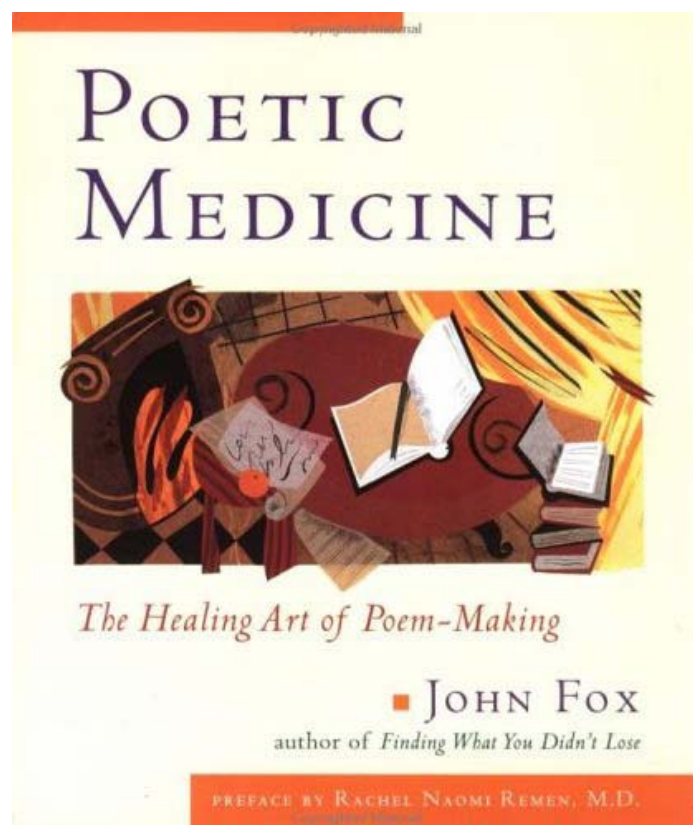
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



WORDS

Kimberley Sanders



John Fox, Part I

A certified poetry therapist, John Fox is a poet and author of Finding What You Didn't Lose: Expressing Your Truth and Creativity through Poem-Making and Poetic Medicine: The Healing Art of Poem-Making.

John conducts ongoing poetry groups in the San Francisco Bay Area and is an international leader in the movement of poetry therapy as an expressive art and medicine. In part 1 of a two-part interview, he shares some thoughts about his work.

How long have you been writing poetry?

I wrote my first poem when I was 12 or 13; I can't remember exactly. I was watching a girl skate alone on the ice at Thorton Park, in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and I was standing up as I wrote the poem. Although I wouldn't have said this at the time, there was a sense of wanting the words to skate across the page.

What drew you to the art of poem-making as a healing modality?

I love writing, and have since I first started to write. I remember the feeling of joy when, in second grade, I made up my own stories. That joy was not *only* in the writing but some larger sense of making something. I created homemade books with poems and photographs and gave them to people who made a difference in my life.

Another reason, certainly, was that I was born with a severe medical problem with my right leg that developed during my childhood and teenage years. So I would write about that, especially as a teenager. Writing poetry gave me a voice that helped me not only to cope with this difficulty that included considerable pain but opened up a way to gather insight that helped me find meaning and grow.

My father, who greatly appreciated poetry, mostly classical poets from the 19th century, shared this with me, and my siblings. His goal was to communicate messages about noble attitudes. I saw that poetry could speak to issues about life not only in a literary way but in a personal way, also.

These elements, aspects of poetry that lent themselves to healing, to seeing oneself and others in a way that included body, mind and soul, began to come together in the early '80s when I met Stephen Levine and soon after that my mentor in poetry therapy, Joy Shieman, who worked at El Camino Hospital in Mountain View, California.

It seems that the academic community finally recognizes poem-making as a valuable tool for student development. What are your thoughts on this?

There has been a tremendous amount of work in this area through medical humanities programs that occur in many medical schools. Physician poets like Jack Coulehan and Audrey Shafer along with a nurse

practitioner poet like Cortney Davis, and Arts-in-Medicine writer like Gail Ellison, to name a handful of people, have been so important in advancing this field.

In addition to the PBS documentary [*Healing Words: Poetry and Medicine*], I've written about the value of poem-making by people in medicine in a book, *The Healing Environment*, published by The Royal College of Physicians in England, and also, *Whole Person Healthcare*, published by Praeger/Greenwood.

Poetry contributes to a deeper sense of listening and a greater capacity to notice details about someone. We see the intimate and sometimes unspoken clues in a person's story that can help make authentic the phrase "medical care." My poet friend Kim Nelson (who works with incarcerated youth) writes that poetry helps us to recognize that "It is the details of existence / That reveal our code of connection."

Most AU students balance work, family, community commitments and school. How can students first find time to write for pleasure and second use poem-making to enhance their everyday lives?

The fortunate thing about poems is that they can be brief. A favourite poet of mine, William Stafford, when asked "What is a poem?" answered by saying "it's where you don't have to write all the way across the page."

What he means, partly, I think is that in a poem you can imply and suggest. You don't have to explain everything. The writer Erica Jong said, "The image is a kind of emotional shorthand."

For some people it is helpful to actually set aside some time dedicated to writing—even 20 minutes a day or every couple of days. For others it may be helpful to carry a notebook and have it available to jot something down. But value your words enough to catch those thoughts that catch your attention. Even a fine poet like Robert Frost said he had no idea what a poem would be when he started to write it. This may sound glib but you can start anywhere.

These are strategies to get started, to make it more accessible. But I would say that one has to get a real feeling for its value. I've written some books that have ideas for writing, sample poems, and actual space to write in the book! One should wade into the water a bit and get wet. The water is fine!

You've spoken about the importance of telling our own life story. Since you are speaking to an audience of university students, where precise language is vital, can you share how this alchemical bond could unite the poet to academia, in both a real and metaphorical sense?

I think I would rather try to connect academia to the poet. That seems, to me, to be a better way to go! The poet can learn from academic rigor, as you suggest, from the importance of precise language. A poet can learn a great deal from poetic forms and by becoming familiar with all the elements that can make up a poem. The question a poet in academia might ask is, what does it mean to learn? How can I open to the process of poem-making?

About 22 years ago I wrote to the Greek poet Odysseus Elytis. Elytis won the Nobel prize in 1979. His poems, of great lyric beauty, have had a great impact upon me. I sent him some of my poems and asked him to comment. What he wrote back, so briefly, was to say, "A window to the world of the unknown but also the true has been opened to you and it will help you."

So my image, both real and metaphoric, for the poet to connect is for academia to open the windows! I think the key is to have the window open.

***"Even a fine poet like
Robert Frost said he had
no idea what a poem
would be when he started
to write it. This may sound
glib but you can start
anywhere."***

ANTI-SOCIAL NETWORKING

A. K. Flynn



On Thursday, August 6, the social networking world was rocked: Twitter was down for two full hours.

So life-altering was the denial-of-service attack against the micro-blogging site that the *Wall Street Journal* (the *Wall Street Freakin' Journal*) published articles on not only Twitter's outage (and Facebook's similar disruptions) but also interviewed celebrities on what the outage meant to them as well as asking its readers what they got up to in those Tweet deprived hours.

Is this how important Twitter and Facebook (and to an ever smaller degree, MySpace) have become? That without constant contact with friends, family, and the random people you have allowed to be your friends or followers just to bulk up your numbers, we achieve a collective level of loneliness or loss of purpose so great that it reaches newsworthy proportions?

Maybe it's a good thing I suck at social networking.

I, like millions of others, have both a Facebook profile and a Twitter account but I must be using them incorrectly. Unlike everyone else, I do not check either account obsessively or even regularly. I barely post anything, have few friends on Facebook, and absolutely zero followers on Twitter.

I've never been much of a joiner so I never had any interest in MySpace or any similar websites before last year. I never participated in any extracurricular activities in high school nor did I attend a great deal of school dances (I would have considered participating in more than just my core studies if my school had offered more than just sports or the Michael Jackson fan club by way of extramural activities. I find this to be quite telling of both my school's priorities and my high school experience as a whole); the dances I did attend, I spent the hours making fun of people while safely sitting at the back of the bleachers. To me, not being on Myspace was a point of pride. Much like having never watched *Titanic*, I was secure in the knowledge I was unlike every other girl my age. And then Facebook came along.

Facebook was appealing to me in a way MySpace wasn't: if I joined Facebook, I would finally get my sister to shut the hell up. If I got one more email requesting that I sign up or one more snarky comment from her saying that I couldn't see her latest vacation photos unless I logged onto Facebook and added her as a friend, I would've gone on a homicidal spree.

At first, I admit, I loved Facebook. I loved adding silly comments to people's photos. I loved posting notes. I loved receiving friend requests. But all too soon, the honeymoon was over. The honeymoon being, of course, when I toed that line in the sand where you reach the limit of your real everyday friends and have to begin hunting for the people you haven't seen since grade school just so you don't seem like the only loser on Facebook with less than a hundred friends.

Sadly, I reached my limit at six (I'm not including the family members I dutifully added as Facebook friends, my mother's friends she insisted I add as friends, or the people I added as friends but kinda wish I hadn't

and can't think of a way to kick them off my friends list without them noticing; those folks push my number up to a measly 30).

At first my fingers itched to add more people as friends, to scour other people's pages adding acquaintances as "friends" while poring over school yearbooks and employee lists from work just to bump my numbers and make me look cooler to the people who don't already know me well enough to know I only have a handful of friends. I was desperate. I felt that my lack of "friends" was a judgement against me as a person. I felt like I had failed at a website.

Even still, I couldn't bring myself to do it. I would be turning into exactly what I've grown to hate about Facebook—the desperate poseur.

They not only have every person they attended high school and college with listed as a friend but also the parents and siblings of those people. They check their Facebook throughout the day, at work, at school, even ignoring the people sitting right beside them to do so. Witnessing this extreme level of socialization feels very much like sitting back on the bleachers again, watching everyone else dance.

A small part of me is jealous that they have pseudo-relationships I don't have, but I'm mostly glad that I don't have to try so hard. I have come to accept my pitiful, hermit-like existence both online and off and while I like and appreciate the easy connection Facebook provides, like hell am I going out of my way to foster any kind of extraneous friendships.

If you haven't noticed by now, I am not so much a social butterfly as I am a social slug. I am perfectly capable of being social—at times I could even be called "pleasant"—but I would much rather be at home alone watching television than I would at a bar surrounded by strangers. I am a big fan of interpersonal connection but not if I have to go out of my way for it. Obviously I'm not alone in this and that's why I think people lost their minds for two hours on August 6.

Unlike its precursors, very little is required from you to enjoy Twitter. Having "followers" does not have the same connotations having "friends" has. Your Twitter following is not a representation of your social life but rather who happens to find your 140-character non sequiturs amusing or, even more accurately, sufficiently time-wasting. Twitter offers a connection to millions of people and their millions of thoughts with none of the hassles of poking, giving gifts, or adding comments.

Twitter is for those seeking to connect much more than Facebook is. Facebook is about the presentation, the photos and the "friends." Twitter is about the quick news flash, the random thought, and what you just ate, which is much more revealing than any photo album of you getting smashed at the bar could ever be.

While my hermit-like way prevents me from being a frequent and followed Twitterer, I understand why the Twitter-less felt so deprived. Twitter is no different than reading notes scrawled on a bathroom wall; it is proof that someone has been where you are and left their mark before fading back into the ether. Whether that note was left for you alone or for a million to read, it is a unique link that has bonded you to someone who could very well be millions of miles away.

You have read someone else's thoughts and maybe, just maybe, understood them better for it. For some that loss of connection was surely profoundly lonely, but what do I know? I suck at social networking.

Your Twitter following is not a representation of your social life but rather who happens to find your 140-character non sequiturs amusing or, even more accurately, sufficiently time-wasting.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Gregory Pepper, Part I

Gregory Pepper is a Guelph-based visual artist as well as a writer and singer of deliciously gloomy experimental songs. He is now on tour to promote his latest CD, With Trumpets Flaring (soon to be reviewed in The Mindful Bard). Recently Gregory took the time to answer some of Wanda Waterman St. Louis's questions.

Getting Started in a Music Career

I'm still not sure if I can justify calling it a "career" since I really don't make very much

money. Although after releasing albums independently for almost a decade being part of an actual label feels pretty legit.

Like many angry young men before me I was very much taken by punk rock in my early teens. There was a sense of freedom to it that inspired me to pick up a guitar and almost immediately start making up songs—terrible songs, but incrementally less so. Then the usual stuff: playing in bands, learning how to multi-track and arrange music, and eventually crossing paths with a like-minded label (Fake Four Inc.) willing to release my record. Frankly I'm still waiting for that "big break," but fame is a strange and fickle friend so for now I'm pretty comfortable in the afternoon shadows of obscurity.

Musical Background

I studied guitar in a formal environment for a few years, but shredding on the instrument never really appealed to me as much as chords, rhythm, and melody. Once I figured that stuff out I applied it to drums and piano and sort of taught myself, which explains why I have appallingly poor technique.

Tell me about your childhood . . .

My mom was telling me a story the other day about how when we were living in Zimbabwe all the kids would crowd around and reach out to touch me because they'd never come in contact with white people before. I can't recall that myself, but I think it marks some subliminal development of my brash, narcissistic personality disorder. Pretty normal stuff though, really. Training wheels and skinned knees. Nothing dark or fascinating.

On Touring

I haven't had a chance to tour the new record yet, although past experiences have taught me that you should always bring plenty of duct tape and felt-tip pens. Oh, and Pepto-Bismol too. Lots of sitting around and waiting, eating poorly and consuming illicit substances. It seems fun in retrospect, but I get a lot more out of being productive, creating something from scratch, you know? Playing shows can be a pretty fleeting pursuit, since there's nothing left to show for it when you look back.



What do you need in your life in order to be creative?

Beer. Maybe a bit of grass.

Are there any books, albums, or films that have been landmarks in your creative development?

Yeah, I mean, everything you see gets absorbed and reconstituted as something else. Michel Gondry, Charles Bukowski, Brian Wilson . . . I mirror all these guys, but in a skewed, gimpy sense.

Whatever possessed you to write a suicide song ("If You Try") in doo-wop style?

I really wanted to mimic the Harlem doo-wop sound, but I think I failed on a sonic level.

The subject matter, though, seemed to fit perfectly. There's a marked sadness to those old 6/8 tunes and I felt like a brash, timely depiction of hopelessness was called for.

Did "I Was a John" emerge from personal experience?

No, it hasn't quite gotten to the point where I've paid for sex. That tune is more a meditation upon looking at the loose, lewd photos of my wife around the time we met, five or six years ago. The "little something extra" is not an STD reference as some have speculated but rather a parallel between love and a roll of bank notes on the credenza.



AU OPTIONS

Bethany Tynes



University Certificate in Accounting

Students looking to begin a career in accounting, or pursue further education in the field, may find that AU's University Certificate in Accounting is an option worth investigating. In the last year, approximately three hundred and fifty students have applied for this 30-credit program which, according to the AU [calendar](#), has been "designed for students who want to develop skills and knowledge appropriate for an accounting professional."

Beth Nixon graduated from the program last September, and is currently enrolled in AU's University Certificate in Advanced Accounting. Nixon decided to enrol in the Certificate in Accounting program after having moved to rural New Brunswick from Edmonton, Alberta. Though she had previously completed a Business Administration degree through the University of New Brunswick and "worked for seven years in the credit industry" while in Edmonton, she found that "there is limited call and limited salary for credit professionals in NB." After having initially tried a New Brunswick CGA-designation program, Nixon found that AU classes were a better fit for her life, and enrolled in the University Certificate in Accounting program.

Nixon found the flexibility of the certificate program to be its greatest strength. Cheryl Christensen, Coordinator of Advising Services with the School of Business, meanwhile believes that "the greatest strength of this credential is that it provides you with the basic accounting framework that will be needed as you further develop your accounting expertise."

One aspect of the program which has both advantages and disadvantages is the manner in which it is administrated. School of Business courses at AU employ a call centre model, meaning that instead of having an individual tutor, as with classes in most other departments at AU, students must contact the call centre with their questions. Administrative questions can be answered within the call centre, but course-specific questions must be forwarded from the call centre to the appropriate academic, who then contacts the student.

The main drawback of the system is "that the student does not have direct access to an academic and must wait to be contacted back." Nixon says that the inability to contact professors directly was her least favourite part of the program. Because of this frustration, "it's gotten to the point that I rarely contact the call centre anymore," she says.

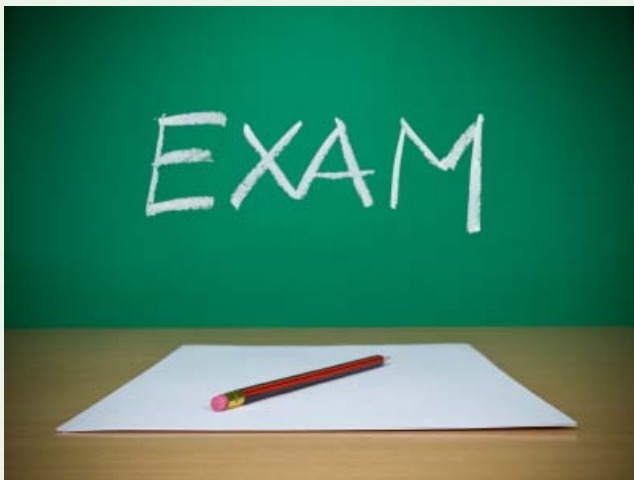
The call centre model has a number of distinct benefits as well, though. "The vast majority of administrative-type questions can be answered" by the call centre, Christensen explains, and "any course-specific question you may have is directed to the most appropriate individual." Furthermore, "instead of having set dates and times to contact a tutor," which many students find inconvenient, the call centre "offers more flexible hours and operates every day but Saturday."

Related programs offered by the School of Business using this model include the University Certificate in Advanced Accounting and the Bachelor of Commerce with a major in Accounting. Christensen says that the “subject area of accounting has always been our most popular in the School of Business,” and the Certificate in Accounting program, in particular, “can help those interested in a more basic accounting role within an organization.” It can also be used “to further [a student’s] accounting career and to complete requirements necessary for a professional accounting designation such as a CA, CMA, or CGA.”

Even students planning to complete a full degree, such the Bachelor of Commerce with a major in Accounting, can benefit from taking this program, as completing the certificate first allows students to gain an additional credential along the way, just by “completing the same courses you would if you were to start out in the Bachelor of Commerce degree.” Christensen advises that “working in smaller steps can also help to keep a student motivated on their way towards their end goal of becoming a professional accountant.”

Overall, certainly an option worth looking into for those students considering a career or further studies in the field of accounting.

AROUND AU



Exam Request Deadlines Changed

September brings changes for all students heading back to school—and this year, there’s an important change that AU students need to know about.

Effective September 1, the exam request policy will change, and that means new deadlines for arranging exams.

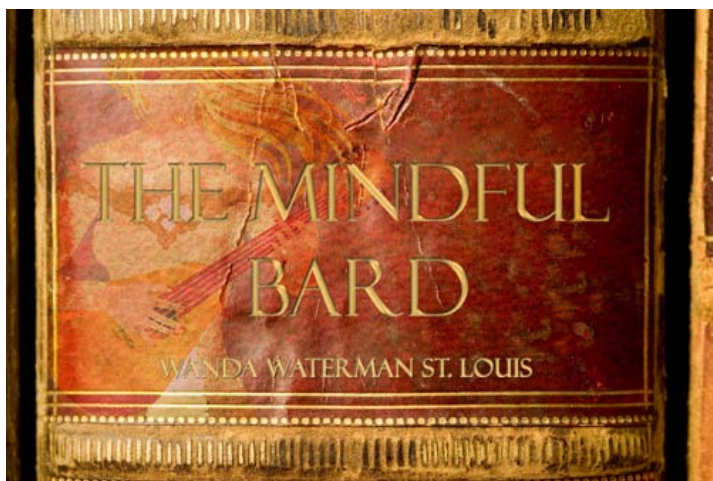
Requests for invigilated exams inside Canada and the US must now be made 20 calendar days before the exam write date. For students outside Canada and the US, requests must be made 30 calendar days in advance.

(The previous deadline, which ends August 31, was that exam requests within Canada and the US needed to be submitted at least 10 calendar days before the planned write date.)

Although the deadlines are longer, the updated policy also contains a new option for writing exams late. If students request an exam *after* the 20- or 30-day deadlines, they can now write their exams up to 30 days after the course end date. The late-request fee is \$50 and applies to all exams requested after the deadlines (even if the exam does get written before the course end date).

The 30-day allowance may prove to be a welcome alternative to a standard course extension, which is two months at a fee of \$165. You can find full details about AU’s current exam policies in the [Examinations and Grades](#) section of the online calendar.

If you’re an AU student and want to share your thoughts about the change, join the conversation titled “Changes to Exam Request Policy” in the General Student Chat section of AUSU’s [discussion forum](#).



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

CD: Gurf Morlix, *Last Exit to Happyland*

Label: Rootball Studio, Austin, Texas

Release date: 2009

A High Plains Drifter's Heartfelt Meditation on the Road to the South

*"lonely child, frozen north
where the great Niagara flows
winter nights would get so cold*

*had me sleeping in my clothes
but the starlight glow of the vacuum tubes
revealed a world unseen
at five below, on the radio
I heard the drums, from New Orleans"*

"Drums from New Orleans" by Gurf Morlix and George Caver, *Last Exit to Happyland*

For our recent interview Gurf had to come out of the bush to access a computer long enough to answer my questions. He's been staying in a cabin in Ontario for the summer. Writing. For a guy reputed to have more long-term genuine friendships than pickles in a jar (this in a world of easy communication and myriad short-term acquaintances), Gurf harbours a surprising love of solitude.

These beautifully crafted songs are nearly all eulogies to the kind of goodbye in which you leave whole worlds behind, turning, sadly and reluctantly but with a spark of hope, down the dusty road to the new worlds waiting for you beyond the next gas stop.

When we talk about regionalism it's easy to forget that the open road in North America is as much a region, complete with its own culture, values, and mythology, as are New England or the Midwest. Gurf manifests the emotional tenor of this road culture in his lyrics about loneliness, bereavement, and the intoxication of new discoveries.



In Gurf's inner landscape all roads lead to the south and every radio station is tuned to the finest roots country, blues, jazz, and any other genre that sprang from the rich stewpot of cultures and heritages that make up southern music.

Like any insightful writer Gurf is able to empathize with others to the point where he can not only feel their pain but also express it. For *Voice of Midnight*, Gurf spontaneously penned the love song a friend of his might have written for his recently departed, and deeply beloved, wife. When he sings it, it's hard to believe that this is not Gurf's own private pain.

"Walkin' to New Orleans" is a number that musically might have fit neatly into *The Threepenny Opera* if that opera had been written about Hurricane Katrina:

*"Now I can't think, I can only feel
time's stopped movin', this don't seem real
if I don't get there, I'll die tryin'
and I'll haunt this highway, til the end of time"*

Gurf is part of that school of male southern songwriters who have some grit in their oyster shells, who lose not one ounce of machismo for all their sensitive treatments of life's craziness.

The last lines of "Crossroads" are precisely what needs to be said about God and Satan in the new millenium:

*"Now I know some people, who sold their souls to the devil
and they don't sound nothin', like Robert Johnson."*

Last Exit to Happyland manifests six of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it is about attainment of true self; and 6) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour.

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

DID YOU KNOW?



Science Labs

Most AU students are familiar with the university's excellent library services, but unless you're a Science student you may not be aware of another great resource that's available: the science labs.

AU "provides facilities in which to complete all compulsory labs in-person in Athabasca," and some lab sessions can be organized so students can complete all their lab course components at the same time. Other lab locations are available too, so be sure to check out the website for all the info you'll need to start your experiment!



Reminders

This week, voyeurs and the naturally curious will get an insider's look at my office and with it some insight into one woman's life. Are those shrieks of excitement or wails of protest?

My office is nine by 11 with a red oak laminate floor. The room has a large east-facing window with a sheer roller blind to diffuse the morning sun. Over the desk is a ceiling fan with three light fixtures. Not pretty, just functional. Perpendicular to the window is a T-shaped custom desk top fitted between two sets of white laminate kitchen cupboard base units. Hanging above each base is an upper unit. They conceal home-office essentials not particularly attractive to look at. The desk surface is white laminate with a black wooden edging. A black two-drawer legal file cabinet holds up the end of the desk furthest from the window. Two Ikea units tucked underneath provide my only drawer space.

The room itself is organized chaos. I've surrounded myself with the things that touch, move, and inspire me—words, mementos, talismans—reminders of who I am and what is important to me.

Because I love words they are everywhere. They do double duty as decoration and inspiration. There is "Imagine" and "Believe," "Write" and "Integrity." I filled a multi-piece black frame with seven inspiring quotations instead of photos. There are the immortal words of Yoda: "Do or do not, there is no try." A reminder that talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words.

This room of my own plays to the senses. A cinnamon vanilla candle and a bud vase with flowers from my garden provide fragrance. A small stereo brings Pachelbel or Andrea Bocelli to life if I need music to move me.

In a large glass floor vase I've begun stacking the rocks I bring home each day from my walk. Some of the prettier, more tactile ones are within reach, as are a chunk of rose quartz, blue lace agate, and a citrine geode. What some might consider visual overload is in fact just what I need: vases of

every shape and size, sculptures, leather-covered boxes, original artwork. An oil painting of Puerto Vallarta serves as incentive to work hard all year for a week of reward in the sun. A mixed media collage painting of my own reminds me that there is another side to my creativity that needs nurturing as well.

And of course there are books, recently reorganized into three bookcases. Others sit in stacks begging to be read or reread. A collection of bookmarks wait to mark my spot.

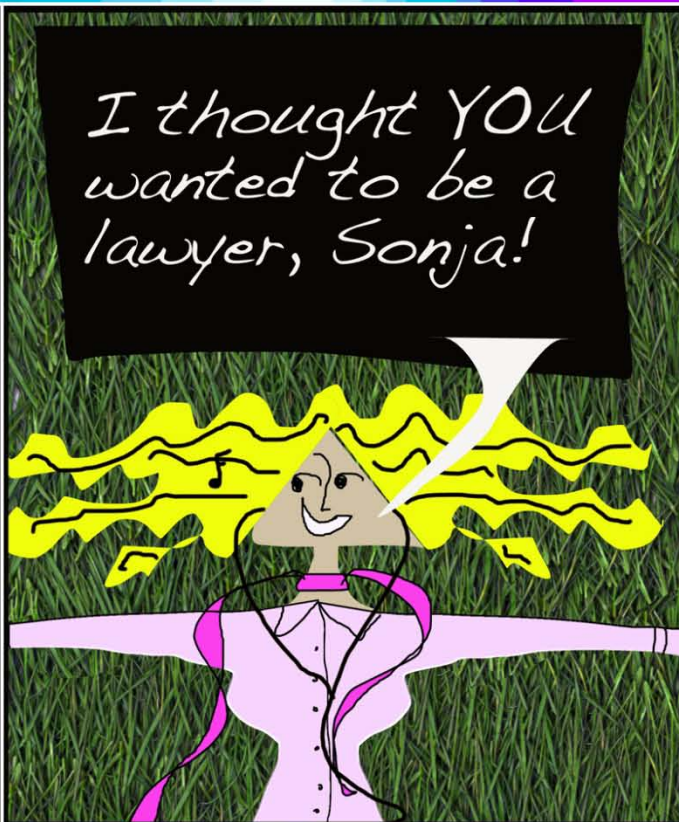
A mini altar sits opposite my desk and reminds me that spirituality can take many forms and is part of every breath I take.

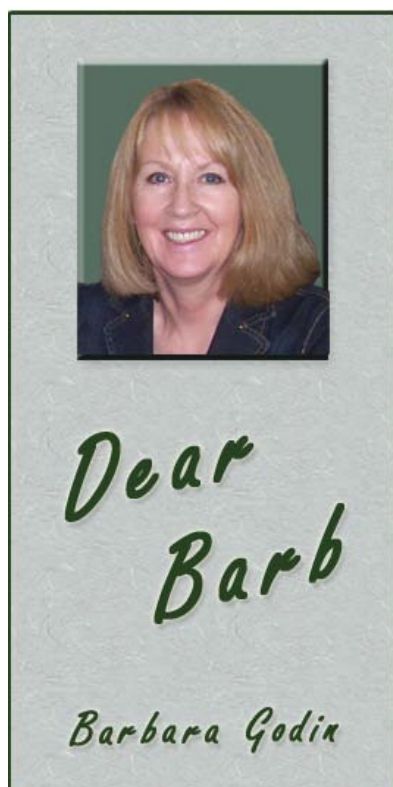
The only photo in the space, a small black and white one of my two sisters and me taken in the mid '60s, reminds me of my roots.

I wish I could see your reminders, from where I sit.

Sister Aurora

There's a rainbow dancing in the sky tonight, and I think I'm gonna go outside . . .





Pre-Marital Counselling Can Help Build Foundation

Dear Barb:

I will be getting married soon and I'm so scared. I really love my fiancé but so many marriages end in divorce. My parents and my fiancé's parents are both divorced and we don't want to end up the same. Is there anything we can do to guarantee that our marriage will work?

Thanks, Terry

Hi, Terry. There are no guarantees in life. You can do everything right, but you can't control what the other person in the marriage will do.

There are many things you can do to increase the chances that your marriage will succeed, though. A good place to start may be premarital counselling. Counselling can bring out potential problems before they arise. If during counselling a lot of red flags pop up, you may want to reconsider whether you should marry at this time. Pre-marriage counselling is a very effective tool; however, very few couples take advantage of this opportunity.

Experts agree that one of the most important features of any relationship is communication. Without good communication you cannot work through

problems as they arise. A lack of effective communication leaves thoughts and feelings unsaid, which may lead to confusion and anxiety for both parties.

Trust is also essential. If there is no trust, accusations and suspicions occur. Infidelity is a major betrayal in marriage. For some people this is an unforgivable act, while for others it is indicative of serious problems in the relationship that may or may not be repairable. Overcoming infidelity is a personal choice and you have to be able to live with the results of your decision. If you choose to continue with the marriage, regaining trust could be very difficult.

Acceptance of each other is vital to a happy marriage. We all have idiosyncrasies and habits that annoy and irritate the other person. A good saying to remember is "pick your battles": don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Most importantly you both must have the ability to compromise. You can't just think of yourself—marriage is a two-way street, and each person's needs and desires must be taken into consideration when making any decisions.

On the other hand, there are some things that are "deal breakers" and cannot be overlooked, including any kind of abuse whether emotional, mental, or physical. Counselling must be sought before this type of behaviour is allowed to escalate and cause harm. Drug and alcohol problems can also push a marital relationship to the brink of failure, but with professional help many people have been able to overcome substance abuse and maintain healthy, strong relationships throughout their lives.

As I said in the beginning there are no guarantees, but if two people truly love each other and are committed to making their marriage work the chances of success are a real possibility, even in this throwaway society. Thanks so much for writing, Terry.

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

AUSU THIS MONTH



Annual AGM Held

As you probably already know from the AGM Report put out by the *Voice*, AUSU held its annual general meeting on March 23, 2009.

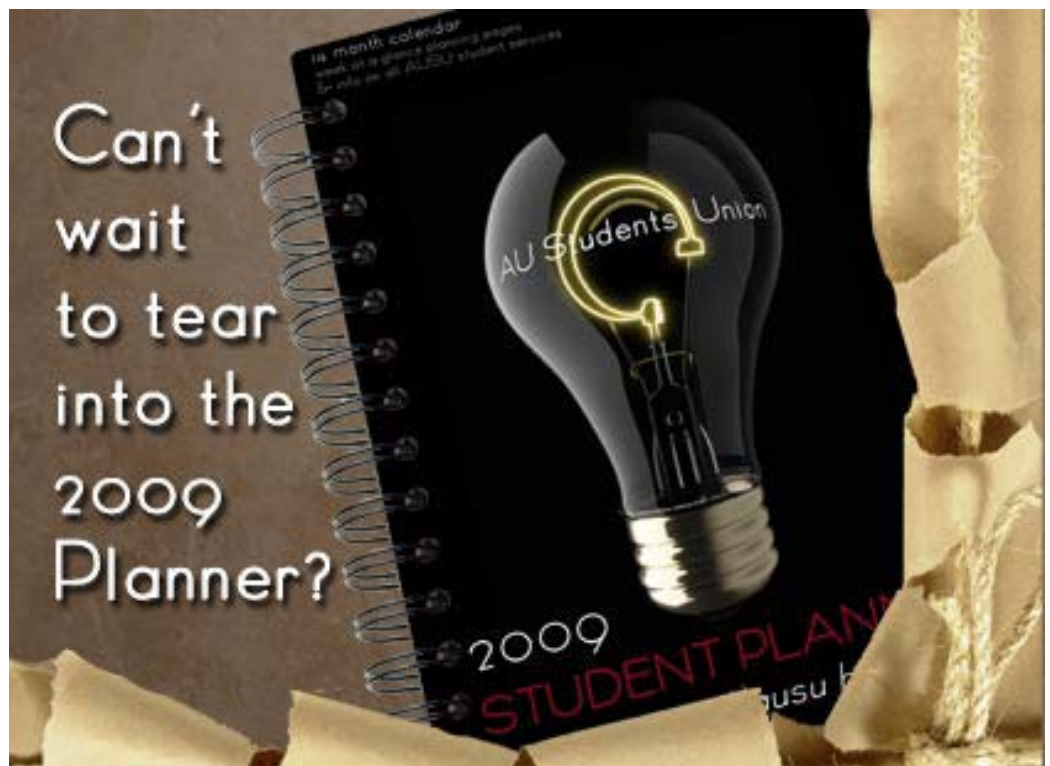
In that meeting a number of important revisions to the definitions of AUSU membership occurred, to make sure that the Councillors you elect are able to represent you during General Meetings and so that if you're a student in an AU collaborative undergrad program, you'll still be counted as an AUSU member even during a term that doesn't have any AUSU courses scheduled.

Also, our fees were changed from being \$8, \$16, or \$24 per course depending on the number of credits, to being a flat \$3 per credit, an increase of a dollar per course for most students. With this extra money, AUSU should be able to begin moving forward with a lot of desired programs that have been held up due to our staffing not being as big as our ambitions.

Also at the AGM, some good discussion was held with respect to email accounts, an issue we know a lot of you are concerned about, and we'll keep working with the university to see if a reasonable solution can be found among all of the priority issues AU needs to deal with.

Media Committee Started

Council has approved the terms of reference for the new media committee. This group, including your *Voice* editor, will be working hard to deliver new multimedia content to you on a regular basis. Our hope is to bring forward a more engaging, interactive AUSU, one that can help you get everything you want out of your education.



AU Fees Increasing

On March 27, the AUGC approved the new fees that will come into effect in September 2009. The bottom line is you'll be paying an additional \$29 per 3-credit course, including the increase to the AUSU fees. This includes an \$18 increase to base tuition and a \$10 increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU has noted

concerns with the university continuing to increase fees by the maximum allowable by Alberta legislation, but has agreed that lower quality service is not a viable alternative.

More concerning is the increase to the Learning Resources fee. AUSU will continue to press for details on how this fee relates to the prices the university has to pay for your textbooks and online materials.

au.world Closes

AUSU has noted the closing of the au.world publication with sadness, and has brought this to the governing council of AU. In its place, AU has begun a new magazine called *AU Open* which, rather than being strictly student focussed, contains a mix of stories for alumni, investors, and students. We have strong hopes that AU will increase the focus of this new magazine to be at least as relevant to current students as the old au.world was.

2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

Members are snapping up our 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planner. Now in full colour, it has more course tracking pages, brief guides to the citation styles you'll need for your essays at AU, and of course, all the important AU dates and addresses that you need to know. You can order your own copy by going to <http://www.ausu.org/handbook/index.php>



SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo.

Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go.

With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it.

The *Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.

In addition, we have recently purchased some steel water bottles. With all the concerns about BPA in clear plastic, the decision was made to go stainless steel. Cheaper and more environmentally friendly than purchasing plastic bottles of water, fill up your AUSU bottle to keep thirst away no matter where you're travelling.

AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

Employment Site is Here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student.

Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!



INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Federal government urges schools and daycares to prepare for H1N1

As Canada's schools and daycares get ready for the September rush, the federal government is urging them to be prepared for a possible second outbreak of the swine flu, also known as H1N1.

Among other recommendations, the government is advising school officials to be diligent about cleaning practices and to "promptly isolate children who fall ill with flu-like symptoms," as the *National Post* reports.

The Public Health Agency of Canada issued the guidelines this week. Although the first wave of H1N1 infections has faded from the headlines there are concerns that, like past pandemics, a second, stronger wave of cases may be waiting to strike.

The guidelines are aimed primarily at schools and daycare centres because, as Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq told reporters, they "are known settings for influenza transmission.

"However," she added, "these institutions also have the ability to identify potential H1N1 activity and with the help of these documents, can implement measures to limit transmission."

The swine flu pandemic first hit Canada at the end of the school year, so only time will tell whether the protocols will be effective in limiting the spread of the illness. Along with an increased focus on cleaning practices, the government recommends "identifying sick students or staff as early as possible" and removing them from the classroom. The Public Health Agency of Canada isn't recommending any school closures, and a vaccine is expected to be available by the end of November.

In Foreign News: UK grant will aid 600,000 Bangladesh school children

In Bangladesh, where 67 million adults are illiterate and three million children have no access to education at all, a British government grant will ensure that at least some students can continue their schooling. The UK's Department for International Development (Dfid) has committed over \$30 million in emergency funding for pre-school and primary education.

As the *BBC* reports, the funds will ensure primary education for some 600,000 poverty-stricken children. UK officials say that 65 percent of the pupils who will benefit are girls.

With a shortfall in education funding, some 25,000 non-formal schools in Bangladesh were in danger of closing. Along with keeping classrooms open for thousands of primary students, the Dfid grant "will also help older children by making sure 2,500 after-school clubs for teenagers, 100 community centres and 150 secondary schools stay open."

Mike Foster, Britain's International Development Minister, notes that "The UK's grant will guarantee that hundreds of thousands of boys and girls will continue to get the decent education they deserve and give them the chance of a brighter future." The funds will be distributed through BRAC, a long-established Bangladeshi non-governmental organization.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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