

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 42 2011-11-04

Monster House

What are you breathing?

Sound Off!

AU's coat of arms

Maghreb Blues

Oostenrijk's latest

Plus:

*From Where I Sit
Cruiscin Lan
and much more!*



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***The Voice
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



SOUND OFF: AU'S COAT OF ARMS AND CREST

Maxie van Roye



Actions speak louder than words, but images can speak loudest of all. In fact, as the old saying goes, pictures are worth a thousand words—and in today's visually-oriented culture, where quick, image-related stimuli are a primary means of propagating brands and concepts, they may be worth much, much more.

So when you create a picture, it's crucial to ensure that the thousand words you're propagating are saying exactly the message you're hoping to get across. That's why I'm bothered by the new Athabasca University coat of arms, received from the Canadian Heraldic Authority just a few months ago.

While the coat of arms won't replace AU's long-time logo, AU's Heraldry office "[encourages] widespread usage of the coat of arms"—so you'll be seeing more of it, especially once the office releases its guidelines for use.

The move is not without controversy. "The crest design has been a very long process, and we're pleased to see that it's been completed," says Tamra Ross, Executive Director of the Athabasca University Students' Union. However, there are concerns: "We're told that student input was sought throughout the stages of design development, but AUSU has not been directly involved," she says. "The very strong northern focus isn't quite in synch with our view of AU as a national university . . ."

The ancient art of heraldry is very message-specific. Each component of a crest and coat of arms has a significant meaning, and AU's coat of arms is no exception. AU's [Coat of Arms page](#) describes in more detail the symbolism behind each image used. But there's a disappointing trend: as noted by Ross, much of the coat of arms seems over-focused on local and regional ties.

For example, the green spruce represents northern Alberta, the bear the west (and a local First Nations), and the poplar leaves, north-central Alberta. While several of the aspects have dual meanings, there's little to indicate that AU is somehow different than any other school that's giving a heraldic nod to its brick-and-mortar campus.

Which seems to miss the point.

The coat of arms and crest simply don't reflect the significant role of AU in redefining who a university student is. Not bounded by geographic location, age, or even ability to dedicate time to full-time learning, the AU student—and, by extension, the modern student—can't be summarized by a limited geographical concept. While Athabasca University has ties to the local community, there's no campus that a student might look toward as home, in the traditional sense of alma mater.

In fact, in 2010, nearly two thirds of all AU students lived outside of Alberta—with the number of Ontario-based undergraduate students almost equal to the number of those from Alberta. And even among the Alberta-based undergraduates, many didn't reside in north-central Alberta; more than a third lived in Calgary alone. This means that the geographic symbolism on AU's crest and coat of arms doesn't reflect the experience of even a quarter of its undergraduate students.

For graduate students, the numbers are even lower.

I'd always thought of AU as a place that bucked the narrowness of educational tradition in favour of open-minded approaches to learning, but there's no indication from the coat of arms' symbolism that this is the university's strong point. Oddly, the AU badge—a circle, representing the global aspect of distance education, surrounding the local-themed poplar leaves—seems a much better representation of what AU is all about.

Athabasca University was a pioneer in breaking down demographic boundaries in education, and remains a strong force in the open access world today. This is the accomplishment not just of one governing body, but of all the AU family—including the staff, professors, tutors, current students, and those students who have gone before us. The coat of arms should reflect this achievement.

"We're told that student input was sought throughout the stages of design development, but AUSU has not been directly involved . . . The very strong northern focus isn't quite in synch with our view of AU as a national university."

*Tamra Ross, Executive Director,
Athabasca University Students'
Union*

YOUR TURN! It's time to sound off:

What do you think of Athabasca University's new coat of arms and crest? How well do you think it represents the university and its students?

Tell *The Voice*, and you could win!

Ten respondents will win free *Voice* swag! Email us today at voice@voicemagazine.org and let us know your opinion on AU's coat of arms and crest.



HEALTH MATTERS

Katie D'Souza

Detox the Air



Have you ever pondered the air you breathe? It may be invisible, but it's not as clear as you think—even indoors. A dizzying number of items in our houses and offices are constantly off-gassing volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, into the air. These VOCs are toxic in various degrees, and some are associated with (or even believed to cause or exacerbate) certain diseases.

There are a wide variety of building pollutants that seep into the air we breathe. In the summer, the concentration of indoor air pollutants is often lessened by the increased “fresh” air flow from open windows and doors. However, cooler temperatures mean we shut the windows, allowing less fresh air into our living and working spaces.

It saves heating costs, but concentrates air pollutants.

Many of us have heard of Sick Building Syndrome, a collection of symptoms (general malaise, eye, nose, and throat irritations, hypersensitivity reactions, and taste abnormalities) related to toxic indoor air quality. Although this syndrome is a more extreme example of the havoc air toxins can cause, it's important to remember that air toxins have negative effects on our bodies regardless of how visible our symptoms may be.

The Culprits

What might be lurking in your home or office? Let's examine some common indoor air pollutants:

- *Formaldehyde* is commonly known for its use in preserving insects, but it's also lurking throughout your home. The chemical is used in carpets, particle board, insulation, grocery bags, and even those handy paper towels you use in the kitchen. Formaldehyde is strongly associated with aggravating asthma.
- *Benzenes* are a class of organic compound used as solvents, and are found in dyes, detergents, rubber products, and even gasoline. Highly toxic chemicals, they can cause liver and kidney damage, as well as negatively affect other body systems (including lymphatic and brain).
- *Trichloroethylene* is another common, yet noxious, air pollutant. This chemical has an anesthetic-like action, dulling the senses and affecting the respiratory and central nervous systems. It's found in varnishes (think floors and furniture), adhesives, photocopier and toner inks, and machine shop equipment (in degreasers and metal finishings, for example).
- *Moulds and mildews*, though not necessarily chemical cocktails, are another prevalent air pollutant. Their rapid growth and off-shooting of spores wreak havoc on some people's respiratory systems, aggravating or causing asthma, sneezing, wheezing, or skin rash.

A Solution

It can be disconcerting to learn about air pollutants. After all, it seems like we can't get away from them, unless we open our houses and buildings to the elements (allowing snow to pile in the living room as in *Mr. Popper's Penguins*).

Fortunately, there is an option that's easy, effective, and surprisingly simple: plants. Not every plant will do the trick, but NASA-led research showed ten key plants with enhanced air toxin removal capabilities. These natural air healers purify the air by removing a minimum of 30,000 micrograms of airborne toxins in a 24-hour period.

- *Overall air pollutant removers (including mould spore removers):* Three types of palms appear to be the most effective at overall removal of a myriad of air pollutants: bamboo palm (*Chamaedorea seifrizii*), areca palm (*Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*), and lady palm (*Rhapis excelsa*). Additionally, plants like the Boston fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata*), peace lily (*Spathiphyllum* sp.), and the ficus plant (*Ficus macleilandii*) also proved useful in general air cleansing.
- *Formaldehyde removers:* Some plants are particularly effective at removing single toxins from the air. The rubber plant (*Ficus robusta*) and English ivy (*Hedera helix*) are excellent at reducing formaldehyde concentrations.
- *Trichloroethylene removers:* The dracaena plant (*Dracaena deremensis*) and the dwarf date palm (*Phoenix roebelenii*) are both effective at trichloroethylene removal.

Take a deep breath. Did you just inhale a dangerous chemical cocktail? Formaldehyde, trichloroethylene, and other pollutants may be lurking in the air inside your home. But here's some good news: certain plants work well to remove these air toxins.

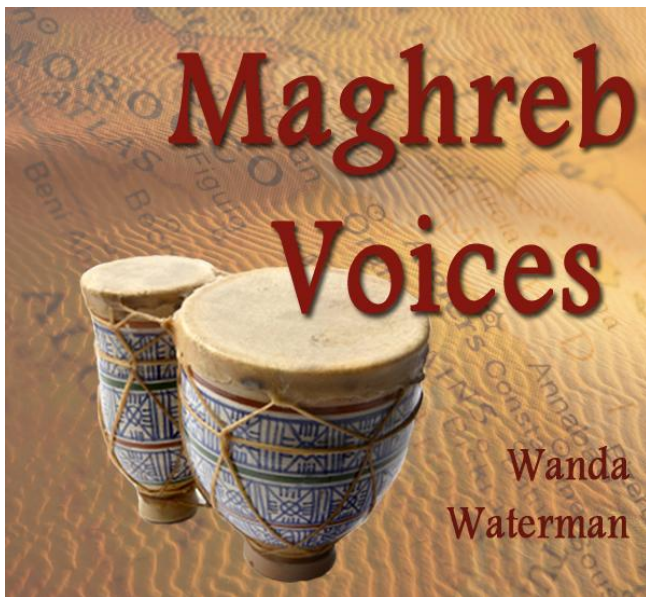
For advice on the best conditions for growing some of these plants, the National Asthma Patient Alliance has the [details](#).

A final thought: it's not just adults who are affected by environmental pollutants. Infants and children are especially susceptible due to their smaller body size—yet they're exposed to the same levels of pollutants as us adults. Plants in your child's rooms may prove particularly beneficial. Additionally, this holds true for our pets: dogs and cats, for instance.

Even if we can't necessarily detect indoor air pollutants—whether visibly by their effects—they're still lurking around and affecting our health. Be sure to drop by your local plant source and introduce some fresh air into your home or office!

Katie D'Souza is an AU graduate and a licensed naturopathic doctor. She currently practices in Ontario.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for personal interest only; it is not intended for diagnosis or treatment of any condition. Readers are always encouraged to seek the professional advice of a licensed physician or qualified health care practitioner for personal health or medical conditions.



Album: Jan Wouter Oostenrijk, *Sharqi Blues* (2011)

Artists: Jan Wouter Oostenrijk, guitar; Karim Darwish, drums; Karim Ziad, drums; Salex Abdikader, Oriental keys; Joost Swart, jazz keys; Marco van den Akker, bass; Bas Bouma, drums

Oostenrijk Meets the Dark Man at Another New Crossroads

"I like to be inspired and challenged. Inspiration can come from people, cultures, music, or languages. I absorb it all and make it my own. My creativity takes the form of playing with the ingredients and placing them in a new order or context."

I've had different obsessions every five years. As a kid it was Vivaldi's Four Seasons and science fiction novels and as a teenager The Cure (early) and Iggy Pop. As a jazz student my heroes were Wes Montgomery, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Joe Pass, Robben Ford, and Joe Zawinul."

Jan Wouter Oostenrijk in a 2010 *Voice* [interview](#) with Wanda Waterman

Remember back in the 60s, when albums became more than just an assemblage of randomly available tracks? It was possible to say about many of these oeuvres that *This album was about . . .* in a way that could not have been said about, for example, the albums of Buddy Holly.

In retrospect, rock operas and theme albums were a departure from the original minimalist spirit of rock 'n' roll, but notice how that decline coincided with a general shift away from the deep social engagement common at the zenith of the counterculture movement? What I'm getting at is that in times of intense social turmoil, musical artists tend to be a bit more narrative in their albums as opposed to just churning out disparate songs.

Sharqi Blues was conceived just prior to the series of domino effects that sparked the revolutions and protests across northern Africa and the Gulf countries over the past 24 months. During this time Jan Wouter Oostenrijk married a beautiful Egyptian girl with whom he soon bore a daughter. Parallel to both these world-wide political events and developments in his personal life, Jan kept right on running in his own musical direction: the melding of Middle Eastern musical genres with Western jazz, rock, and blues. In *Sharqi Blues* the personal, the political, and the creative are peas in a pod.

The music blends blues with what we in the West call "belly dancing" music, but which in the East is referred to as "raqs sharqi" (literally,



“Oriental dance”). Jan imitates the fast runs of sharqi music on his guitar and mixes it with guitar-led blues to create a personal portrait rooted in his rigorous education in jazz, Western classical, and Arabic music and his solidarity with the ideals and initiatives of the Arab Spring, to which *Sharqi Blues* is dedicated.

Take the sensuous rhythms and maqams of sharqi and add the raw energy of blues guitar and what do you get? As I argued in [The Travelling Desert Blues Show](#) series, American blues can be clearly traced to the Sahara Desert and its environs. Saharan culture, mythology, and riffs are now being shared by desert bands like Tinariwen and Etran Finatawa, who incidentally felt such musical sympathy with American blues players that they’ve incorporated their styles into their own traditions.

Sharqi music and dance in Egypt have about the same social status as the blues and juke joint dance have traditionally held in the United States—a lowly one. These genres are not “respectable” within the societies that spawned them, but are nonetheless an integral element of the culture. In fact, they’re often the raw material and inspiration for a host of other genres.

The first track of *Sharqi Blues* has an ominous slow guitar solo that launches like a grenade into a spectacular anthem. The next four tracks suggest the sheer sexy fun of sharqi blues, and tracks six, seven, and eight are tributes to the bliss of monogamous love. Track nine, “Beyond Borders,” is my favourite: a meditation that brings to mind to the now-global influence of the blues and jazz and the cross-fertilizations that have kept it vibrant. At the same time it suggests the universality of the desire for democratic freedoms.

The album concludes with “Revolution Jam,” with clips from protests and superb guitar and piano—a triumphant funk-flavoured nod back through history to African-American civil rights movements and forward to the brave new world now opening up in the Middle East.

Sharqi Blues encapsulates the rousing intensity of Hendrix at Woodstock coupled with Mothers of Invention ingenuity and the thrill of Middle Eastern riffs and beats. The keyboardists, both jazz and Arabic, are divine, and Jan manages to include every guitar sound—from surfer rock to funk to acid to blues. The phenomenal drummer Karim Ziad provides a catalyst that practically throws off sparks. It’s a psychedelic caravan ride from Cairo to the Mississippi.



Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book [They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good](#), a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

What Are You Doing Behind the Wheel?

Since Alberta introduced its Distracted Driving legislation two months ago, I've been paying more attention to who is coming down the road toward me. Because I really can't differentiate among most makes and models of vehicles, I rarely, even around home, look at oncoming drivers and expect to recognize them—let alone see what they're doing.

In an attempt at full disclosure, I admit to touching up my lip gloss (sans mirror), checking addresses, or talking on the phone *prior* to the new law. You'll get no holier-than-thou guff from this kid. But really, people: eating soup with a spoon, reading books, maps, or newspapers splayed across the steering wheel, texting, and applying mascara? This is craziness.

I especially hate the (usually) young men driving humongous four-by-four pickup trucks while bent over like question marks, one elbow on the armrest and a phone glued to their heads. In Alberta, which is truck heaven, those vehicles are lethal and usually driven far too aggressively even when the driver is not distracted.

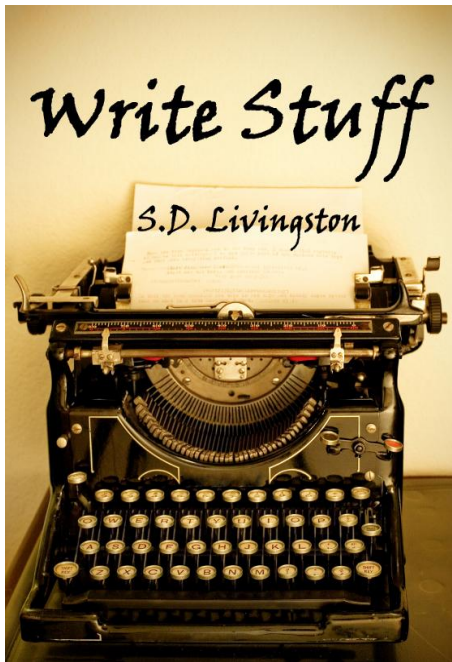
I suspect there is lower compliance with the law in rural Alberta because the police are few and far between and the odds of someone catching you on a country road or quiet secondary highway are remote. The same thing happened years ago with seat belt laws. And we had the grim death stats to prove it. You just can't tame that Wild West mentality that says, "I'll make

my own damn decisions about how I live and what I do." Even if it kills one in the process.

On a recent 150-kilometre trip to Killam for combine parts I passed three sheriff cars within 10 miles of each other and wondered what they were doing. Still haven't a clue. Two days later, on another trip to Killam (don't ask!), I was stopped outside of Viking by RCMP officers who were doing an educational campaign on the new law. I got a fact sheet and a rubber thumb ring so I would remember to "let my thumbs do the driving, not the talking."

Enforcement of an unenforceable law without a significant change in the mindset of drivers seems like just one more thing dumped on the local Mounties, who are already covering unimaginably large detachment areas with fewer than necessary resources. It really is a miracle that most of us come home safely each day.

Today's question is "What are *you* doing behind the wheel?" from where I sit.



Words Aloud

If you love books, you're probably a fan of words in almost any form—the rhythm of them, the sound of them. And you probably also delight in text being brought to life by talented readers and writers, no matter what the topic. I recently discovered (and rediscovered) a couple of podcasts that combine the best of that mix: fascinating subjects, great writing skills, and wonderful delivery. Whether you need to brush up on medieval England for an exam or you like weird science, here's the scoop on some words aloud you won't want to miss.

The first is The British History Podcast, by Jamie Jeffers. For students, Anglophiles, and even fans of Roman history, there's only one thing to say: this podcast truly does bring history to life. I was lucky enough to stumble across Jamie's site when it launched in May, and the audience for this series has grown remarkably fast. Believe me, that's no surprise.

Jamie begins by taking listeners back to the days of giant deer, cannibals, and Celts in "a fast paced primer that will get you ready for Caesar's invasions." Since Britain's early history is closely interwoven with Rome's, there's no shortage of episodes about those mad, bad emperors, but the focus always remains on the Sceptred Isle.

There are plenty of podcasts about Britain, history, and Roman invasions, but the quality of this one stands out. Jamie clearly loves his chosen topic, and that comes through in the energy he brings to it. The pace is lively and the technical values are consistent, but one of the biggest selling points is his ability to combine thorough research with an engaging speaking style (and a welcome absence of those gasping inhalations that so many broadcasters are prone to).

Keeping the historical cast of governors and emperors straight can be confusing, so you may find yourself listening to some episodes a few times, but there always seems to be something new to discover the second (or even third) time around.

The second podcasting treasure isn't new to me or to most fans of the CBC. But if you've ever been curious about mastodon massacres or fanged frogs, Quirks and Quarks is the place to be. Bob McDonald hosts this long-running science show that takes on all things weird and wonderful in the world of science—and turns it into fascinating listening.

Among other honours, McDonald (actually, make that Dr. McDonald) has been short-listed for the Canadian Science Writers Association Book Award, and received the 2001 Michael Smith Award for Science Promotion, from NSERC, as well as the 2002 Sandford Fleming Medal from The Royal Canadian Institute. Yet his approachable style makes this podcast anything but a dry old science lecture.

In fact, a sense of wonder pervades every episode as he asks scientists to help explain such offbeat phenomena as mummified beetles, stingless bees, and right-handed teeth. Most of the topics come from readers' questions, so you never know quite what to expect.

In some ways, these two podcasts couldn't be less alike. The British History Podcast informs and entertains thanks to the efforts of one person, while Quirks and Quarks has a team of seasoned broadcasting professionals running the show.

But both of them also have all the right ingredients for success, so be sure to check them out. Your ears will thank you—and your grades just might, too.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Write Longer, Faster, Stranger

November's begun, which means that the NaNoWriMo phenomenon is in full swing. Participants in National Novel Writing Month sign on to complete a 15,000-word short novel in just 30 days, and local and online support groups abound for authors attempting to work within the guidelines. But NaNoWriMo isn't the only place you'll find writers struggling to fit stories into strictures of time, space, and style. Click through these links for a few more unique approaches.

Book in a Minute

If you thought writing a book in 30 days was bad, how about writing one in 60 seconds? This *Sun Sentinel* article describes the work of Dan Hurley, the self-proclaimed "60-second novelist." Several years back, Hurley conceived the notion of interviewing people and writing a quick life story—on the spot—in just one minute. You can read a sample interview and "novel" [here](#).

Start at the Beginning

Many writers and professors insist that the opening lines of a book are among the most crucial—how else to draw the reader in and set the tone for the story? Conversely, a terrible opening line like the much-maligned "It was a dark and stormy night . . ." can turn off readers—or, in the case of the Bulwer-Lytton Contest, become an art form in itself. The contest, which has been operating since 1982, awards honours to writers who can craft the worst opening lines in a variety of genres. Be prepared to laugh—and cringe!

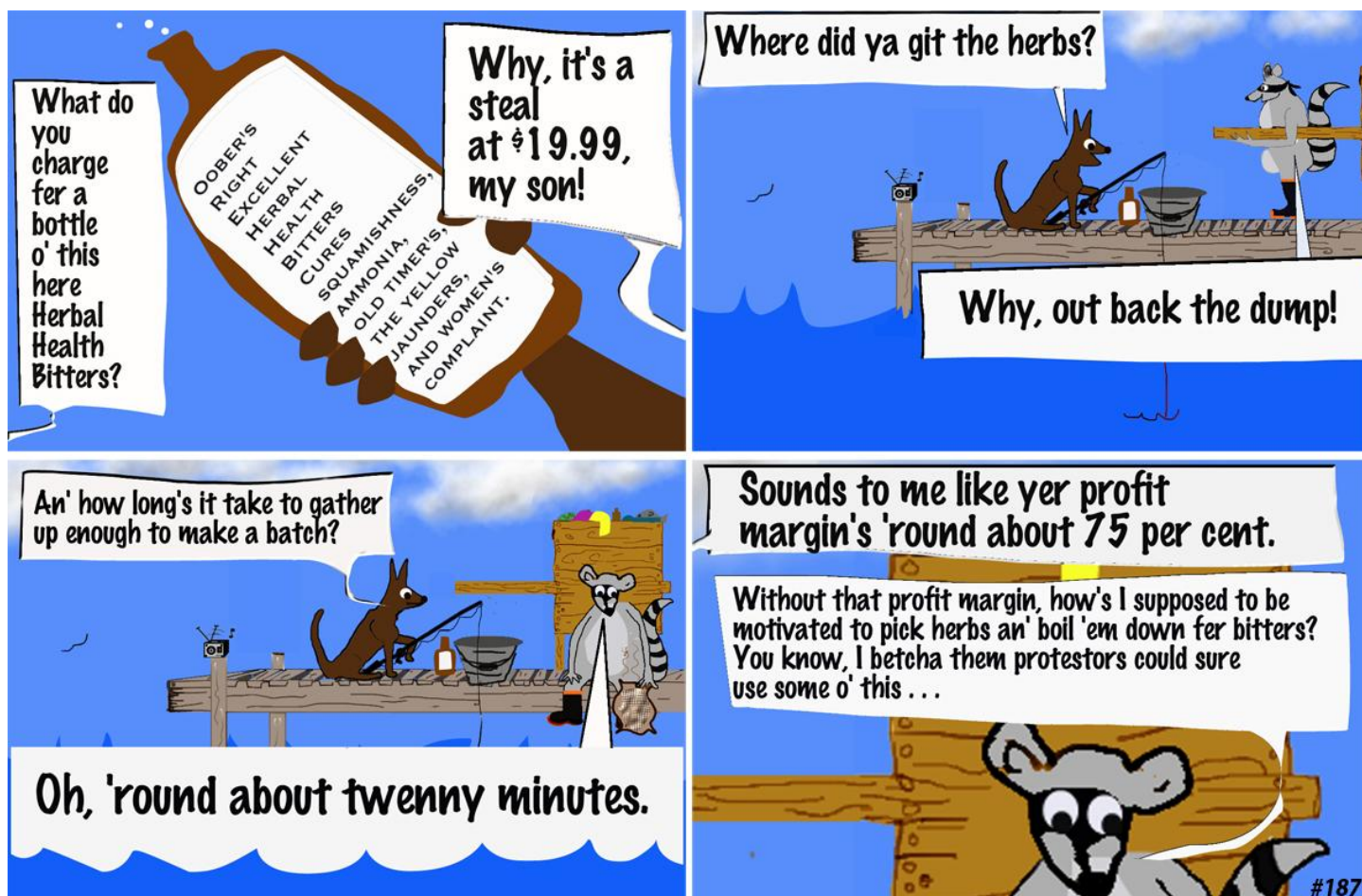
Word Count

How short can a story be—yet still tell a tale? Taking a cue from Hemingway's six-word novel ("For sale: baby shoes, never used."), these writers participated in a Wired.com project to create the new short, short fiction. For a slightly longer take, check out the review of [this book](#), which discusses 25-word stories.



CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman



DID YOU KNOW?

Visual Thesaurus



If vocabulary and word issues have you in a creative rut, consider checking out the online Visual Thesaurus. The innovative site doesn't simply list synonyms, but instead creates colour-coded word maps with synonyms, antonyms, and slight variations in meaning laid out spatially in an "intuitive interface."

In conjunction with the visual thesaurus-dictionary, Visual Thesaurus also offers many resources for students and writers—including cross-linked, interactive vocabulary lists for popular books, typical English class reading list requirements, and even standard tests like the GRE.

The Visual Thesaurus is a subscribers-only service (cost: \$19.99/year or 2.99/month USD), but you can try it free for 14 days. Subscribers have unlimited access to the thesaurus-dictionary and all other resources, including the online magazine about language, creativity, and education and the VocabGrabber, which helps you discover context for new words. For more information, or to take a test run, [visit the site](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Raising the Dead

Halloween may have come and gone, but that doesn't mean the creepy tales are put aside 'til next October. One recent news story is sure to put shivers down the spine: in a case both strange and sad, a Moncton, N.B., woman has made a request to exhume the body of her long-dead child—as she doesn't believe the body buried there is that of her son.

As the CBC [reports](#), nearly 30 years ago Jeannine Gallant's son was treated at a Moncton hospital when he was an infant, but when she went to visit him there she was “presented with a baby who she never believed was her own.” A few months later the child died, but Gallant was still never convinced there hadn't been some error.

Nearly three decades later, she still can't shake that lingering doubt and is “been haunted by that feeling that she never received her son back.”

Gallant claims it's more than merely a mother's intuition; she's never received the autopsy “that she's repeatedly requested,” and the hospital and funeral home records disagree on her son's date of death.

Furthermore, many of her son's medical records “have since been lost or discarded.”

To discover the truth, Gallant is requesting that the child's body be exhumed “so DNA testing can be performed.” As she told reporters, “If he's there, rest in peace. But if he's not, I want to find him.”

Around the World: Educational Gains

We go to university to receive an education, but many students gain something else: extra pounds that can cling to them long past graduation. In fact, the dreaded “Freshman 15”—a 15-pound gain in the first year of studies—is as much hyped (and feared) as essays and finals. However, a recent study offers news to ease the worries of first-year students: the “Freshman 15” may not even be remotely accurate.

As *The Washington Post* [reports](#), the “common belief that college freshmen gain 15 pounds on average is wildly exaggerated.” In fact, according to the study, during a student's entire university career a typical female gains just seven to nine pounds, while a male gains 12-13 pounds.

In the first year of studies, the average student gained just three pounds. And 25 per cent “reported losing weight during their freshman year.”

Still worried? Then avoid excessive partying; the study also discovered that “heavy alcohol consumption” (“consuming six or more drinks on at least four days a month”) was a key factor in determining whether a student would experience significant weight gain.

AUSU UPDATE: October 21, 2011**Bethany Tynes, President****AUSU congratulates new party leaders!**

AU students are spread all over Canada and the world, but AU's funding comes from the Government of Alberta, so it's important for us, as AU students, to remain aware of political issues in Alberta. Alberta's political parties have recently undergone some transitions, as both the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties recently elected new leaders: Dr. Raj Sherman will now head up the Liberal party, while Alison Redford has been selected to lead the Progressive Conservatives. Redford was sworn in as Premier of Alberta on Friday, October 7. AUSU would like to thank all those who participated in the leadership races, and congratulate Sherman and Redford on their wins.

Councillors training to serve you better

All eight current AUSU councillors, as well as our two full-time student service staff, are currently involved in a Certified Student Leader training program through the National Centre for Student Leadership. This training covers critical issues such as successful communication, strategic planning, and conflict resolution, which we hope will better equip us to work productively together to serve the needs of our student members.

Increased student representation at AU

At most Alberta universities, two of the highest decision-making bodies are the Board of Governors, which provides strategic direction, and the General Faculties Council, which deals with academic matters. At AU, meanwhile, there has always been a Governing Council and an Academic Council—until recently! The Alberta Minister of Advanced Education and Technology has amended the Athabasca University regulations, moving AU closer into line with other Alberta universities. AU's Governing Council has now been replaced by a Board of Governors, and while this is mostly a change in nomenclature, the transformation as AU moves from an Academic Council (AUAC) to a General Faculties Council (AUGFC) will be more noticeable. AUSU is particularly pleased that undergraduate students at AU will now have two seats on AUGFC, as opposed to only one on AUAC. There will also be a reserved space on the GFC Executive Committee for an undergraduate student representative. This is great news, and will allow us, as undergraduate students, to ensure that our voice is heard within this important decision-making body at AU!

What are your course materials preferences?

AU is currently re-examining their course materials model. Currently, the cost of all undergraduate courses includes access to the necessary textbooks, and these are usually mailed directly to your door. This is convenient for many students, but many others have asked for the opportunity to look for bargains elsewhere, or to buy and sell used textbooks. What about you? How do you feel about the course materials system at AU? AU is asking students for their opinion! The question currently being posed to students is as follows:

In response to student feedback, AU is considering changing the way in which students access or receive their learning resources. Currently, all the learning resources costs are covered through tuition fees and the learning resources fee. These costs include textbooks, printed materials, access to the LMS and other digital resources, copyright fees for third party materials, and the administrative costs associated with the production of such

materials. For items that a student could purchase directly from a source other than AU (e.g., books, e-books), which of the following options would you prefer?

- To purchase materials directly from a non-Athabasca University source such as Amazon
- To have the choice to purchase course materials from either AU or a different source such as Amazon
- To purchase course materials from AU but have the learning resources fee reflect the actual cost of the materials for the particular course (for example, if the learning resources in Course A cost \$100, then the learning resources fee would be \$100)
- The status quo (a fixed learning services fee per course –currently about \$170)

Email us your thoughts and we'll make sure that they're voiced in the appropriate committee!

AU honorary doctorates

Did you know that AU bestows honorary doctorates each year at Convocation? Do you have an idea for someone you'd like to see honoured by the university? Candidates should "have distinguished themselves in education, science, the arts, public service, or other areas, and have made significant life-long contributions to endeavours consistent with the mandate and purpose of Athabasca University." AUSU has a seat on the committee that nominates and selects the recipients of honorary doctorates, so to have your voice heard, drop us an email with your thoughts!

Have you heard . . .

. . . that we still have some of our awesome 2011 AUSU Handbook/Planners available? Some of the information in these little books is priceless when it comes to helping AU students navigate the university and our services—but they're free for you, just for being an AUSU member! We even mail them right to your door. All you have to do is ask!

. . . about our SmartDraw program? We've been arranging for a licence for our students to use this software for the last few years. It lets you create detailed charts and insert them into your assignments (even ones you submit as Word or PDF documents). The company has warned us, though, that there will be a massive price increase next year, so we want to know if our students feel that the software is a help to them, or if they'd rather have us look into other options. Get your copy today, and let us know what you think.

. . . there's a new AUSU website on the way? We want our site to provide dynamic content and updates so that it's a place that you, as an AU student, WANT to visit regularly! If you have suggestions on content you'd like to see on our website, please get in touch with us to share your ideas.

. . . AUSU has scholarships, awards, and bursaries for our student members? The next major awards deadline is November 1, but some bursaries are also available year-round. Make sure you check our site for more information!

Get in touch with us

Have comments or questions about AUSU or anything in this column? Feel free to get in touch with AUSU President Bethany at president@ausu.org. You can also email our office at ausu@ausu.org or call 1.800.788.9041 ext. 3413. We'd love to hear from you!

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