

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 42 2012-11-02

Clock Talk

Turning back time

Behind a Mask

Go anonymous

Gaelic Woman

Longing for sweetness

*Plus:
From Where I Sit
Gregor's Bed
and much more!*



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***The Voice
Magazine***

www.voicemagazine.org

500 Energy Square
10109 – 106 ST NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3L7

800.788.9041 ext. 2905

Email
voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Tamra Ross

Managing Editor

Christina M. Frey

Regular Contributors

Hazel Anaka
Katie D'Souza
S.D. Livingston
Wanda Waterman

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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.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



If I Could Turn Back Time . . .

This article was originally published November 5, 2010, volume 18 issue 44.

Time: the very word is an enigma, and the concept has intrigued thinkers and artists since the dawn of history. Writers, poets, and musicians constantly express a longing for the past, a yearning for a slower present, or a view into the years ahead.

Every fall, those locales that observe daylight saving time (DST) do indeed have that often-coveted ability to turn back time—at least, an hour's worth. Unfortunately, far from granting insights and clarity, it disturbs sleep patterns, disrupts schedules, and wreaks havoc on farming operations.

For most North Americans, the clocks will move backward during the wee hours on Sunday morning. But why do we put ourselves through this self-torture twice yearly? Is it because it fulfills some social obligation—to conserve energy and aid farmers?

Wrong.

The concept and implementation of DST have always been controversial, and not just because of the temporary inconvenience of lost sleep. A 1922 *Yale Law Journal* [article](#) recognized that the idea of a daylight saving time law is at once both a local and a society-wide question. It also raised another interesting issue: whether a majority of urban vs. rural voters (and vice versa) could influence local and national policy on DST.

Over the past few years, new controversies have arisen. Most significant is the changing view on the once widely-held notions of daylight saving time and energy conservation. In the light of research from the past few years, our old ideas of DST and energy are being questioned, and they're not emerging unscathed.

The DST-energy connection is an idea that's been tossed around since the 18th century, when Benjamin Franklin wrote an essay in the *Journal of Paris* suggesting that observing a form of daylight saving time would reduce the use of candles in the summer.

On paper, it seems to work. By moving the daylight hours to a time when more people would be awake, wouldn't it cut down on energy use and consumption, reducing our reliance on electricity and oil and helping to protect the planet?

In actual practice, perhaps not so much. The problem is that when we talk about energy consumption, daylight, and basing our daily activities on the sun, we're looking at the daylight-energy relationship in a vacuum. We're wearing blinders, blotting out the wider picture that would be clearly visible if we were looking from side to side.

"This thing all things devours:

Birds, beasts, trees, flowers;

Gnaws iron, bites steel;

Grinds hard stones to meal;

Slays king, ruins town,

***And beats high mountain
down."***

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit

For example, a 2007 study by researchers at University of California–Berkeley directly challenges the energy-saving concept. The study, which coincided with the United States' extension of the DST time period by a month, points out that the simulation models used to project energy savings are based on outdated information from the oil embargo-era '70s. The results, the study claims, have lost relevance due to the possibility of other social factors of the time and because of changing energy usage norms (for example, the modern prevalence of air conditioning).

Interestingly, the study also cites the Australian experience from 10 years ago. In 2000, the Australian government added two months to the daylight saving period in order to deal with the Sydney Olympics. The temporary change only applied to part of the

country, and the Berkeley study compared the energy use between two of the states that did not host the Olympics: Victoria, which changed its daylight saving period, and its neighbour, South Australia, which did not. Surprisingly, the state of Victoria did not save energy through its increased DST period. In fact, it may even have used more.

Other studies have reached similar conclusions (for example, those involving the recent switch to DST in certain holdout areas of Indiana). So much for energy consumption.

And then there's the helping farmers myth. In fact, many farmers have in fact lobbied—and still do—for the repeal of the observance. In this integrated age, when many modern farmers have to synch their day with the city world, DST can cause disruption to farming by disturbing farm animals' feeding schedules and creating crop harvesting dilemmas.

If these aren't enough, other studies have cited still further negative societal results from the promulgation of DST: weeks of sleep deprivation for so-called "night owls" and a rise in cardio-related deaths immediately after the switch from standard to daylight time are two striking examples.

But what about Benjamin Franklin? If you read his original essay dealing with the daylight saving concept, you might detect more than a hint of sarcasm in the writing.

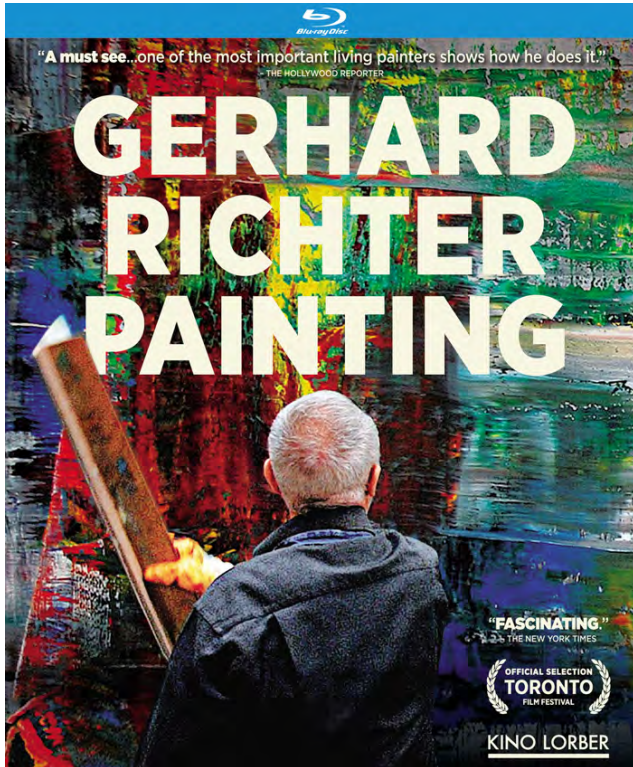
Don't fear, though: not everyone loses. According to Scientific American, the golf industry stands to gain hundreds of millions of dollars each year, as long as DST is observed. Not surprisingly, they and certain "retailers, especially those involved with sports and recreation," are strong proponents of daylight time observance.

Something to think about when we flip the clocks back this weekend.



GREGOR'S BED

Wanda Waterman



Recent Discoveries from the Realm of the Experimental and the Avant-Garde

Film: Gerhard Richter Painting (Kino Lorber 2011)

Writer/Director: Corinna Belz

"Many of the contradictions in Postmodern art come from the fact that we're trying to be artists in a democratic society. This is because in a democracy, the ideal is compromise. In art, it isn't."

Brad Holland

Who Cares if They Like it—Is It *Right*?

Watching Gerhard Richter paint is mesmerizing. He looks utterly absorbed, like an oracle delivering a visual prophecy. With no soundtrack, it really feels like we're standing off to the side and watching Richter and his

assistant puttering around the huge white studio, painting, moving paintings around, and carefully changing their minds about what stays and what gets painted over.

But the sense of clandestine surveillance is an illusion: "Painting under observation is the worst thing there is," Richter admits. "I know I'm being watched, so I walk different. Painting is a secretive business anyway."

Gerhard Richter Painting is a portrait of the artist as a rather nondescript, older gent whose humble demeanour contrasts sharply with that of the dark-suited poseurs trailing him in the galleries, arms crossed, fingers on their cheeks in a studied appearance of thoughtfulness.

They Shouldn't Feel Comfortable

Richter is having an art show. He wants the gallery to be as stark as possible. "A really cold atmosphere," he proposes, "so people will be happy to get out. They shouldn't feel comfortable."

In this barren environment the large abstracts are strangely beautiful. Like this film, the paintings seem at first to be about nothing, but become more resonant and evocative the longer you look.

Richter seems to particularly enjoy seeing beauty framed by coldness, void, or even damage. While referring to a photo of a nude sculpture on his desk, he points out that the nude is beautiful in itself but is rendered more beautiful by the fact that the arms and legs are missing. "The mutation makes it more beautiful," he remarks.

An Aesthetic Inspired by Trauma

In case you're thinking Richter is a curmudgeonly egotist, he's in fact a very polite and kindly man who exhibits a deep sense of connectedness to people and to society in spite of his refusal to bow to anything but his own artistic convictions.

"Music expresses thoughts and feelings very well without words, yet we expect a painting to render its message with recognizable images and symbols."

He talks about having seen American documentary photos of the atrocities of World War II. As a young German he was scarred by these photos, which to some extent influenced his aesthetic and modus operandi. Wrestling with the horror of human cruelty, mortality, and powerlessness endowed him with a phenomenal drive to keep working and to be authentic and honest in his work.

In old film footage, a young Richter is pacing slowly across the roof of a city building surrounded by apartment complexes. He describes art as a moral act.

An act that proceeds from the artist's conscience, or an act of social morality? the interviewer asks him. "Both," Richter replies. "It starts with your own morality, but you're not alone."

Range of Techniques

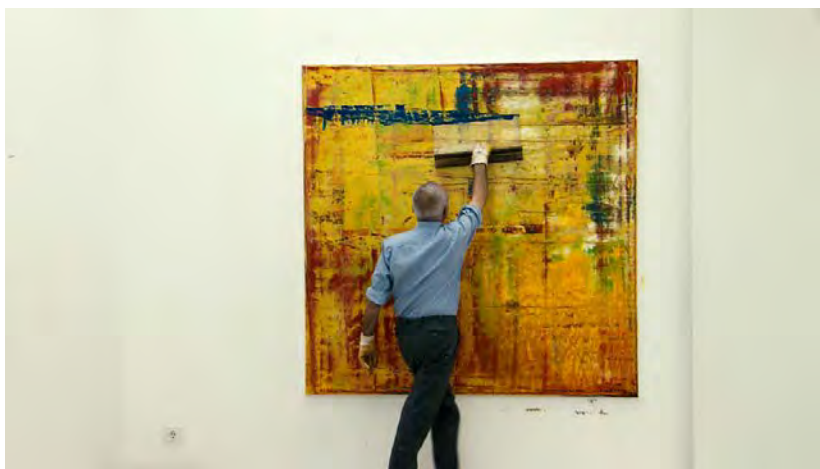
Richter's work spans many genres and techniques, from a kind of magic hyperrealism to the abstract works of recent years. His earlier portraits are jarringly unique in their approach to creating likenesses, largely because of their unusual poses and Richter's insightful renderings of facial expressions.

Richter's more recent jumbo abstracts, on the other hand, must be judged on their composition and colour and little more. His tools include industrial paintbrushes, knives, and a huge squeegee that looks like a shelf. The latter is pulled slowly across the huge paintings to smear paint in patterns that are almost random.

True to the Deepest Conviction

These abstracts appear at first glance to be rusted metal walls with paint accidentally splattered across them, so simple and so grotesque as to almost insult the art viewer. Is this pure arrogance on the part of the artist, or a fearless resolve to be true to the deepest personal inspiration?

Music expresses thoughts and feelings very well without words, yet we expect a painting to render its message with recognizable images and symbols. Perhaps



Gerhard Richter working on *Abstract Painting (910-1)*.
Credit: Kino Lorber, Inc.

we've been spoiled by the Renaissance—all those rich details, all those clearly wrought symbols, pictures teeming with allusions—into thinking that art without images isn't art at all.

Like the best abstract painters, Richter reminds me of a young Mi'kmaq girl who once carefully drew me a beautiful design. From habit I asked her what it was. Not wasting a second doubting herself or bowing to my expectations, she abruptly replied, "It ain't nuthin'. It's just a picture."

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.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Be Prepared

After Hurricane Sandy's winds, rain, and flooding brought the East Coast to a standstill, it seems a good time to evaluate our own emergency preparedness. After all, disaster conditions--whether an earthquake, blizzard, city-wide power outage, or even a house fire—can happen anywhere. This week's links offer some tips for sensible emergency preparedness.

Armed with a Plan

Nothing in an emergency situation is going to be simple. What if there are additional environmental hazards? What if your family is scattered across town when disaster strikes? The federal government recommends preparing an emergency plan so that everyone in your family will be on the same page. This site will help you create an emergency plan that meets your particular needs.

Disaster Kit

Having a disaster kit on hand isn't only for conspiracy theorists; many national and local governments recommend supplies sufficient to keep you going for at least three days (since in an emergency it can take that long for help to arrive). This checklist, from the state of California, will get you started.

Food Safety

It doesn't take a large-scale disaster to affect food storage—just a few hours without power can cause damage. This fact sheet, from the USDA, explains how to tell whether your refrigerated or frozen food is still safe to consume. It also details how to ensure that shelf-stable food can be safely consumed following a fire, flood, or similar emergency situation.

Little Details

What disasters should you be particularly concerned about in your area? What to do in the event of a specific emergency, like a flood? What about odd situations, like chemical spills? The Government of Canada's Get Prepared campaign has the answers.



THE TACKY CHEESE AWARDS

Wanda Waterman

THE TACKY CHEESE AWARDS

WHY WE LOVE "B" GRADE SCI-FI FLICKS**NOMINEES IN THE "GREAT ACTOR HURTIN' FER MONEY" DEPARTMENT**

TRANCERS FOR
SNAGGING THE
INCOMPARABLE
HELEN HUNT BEFORE
SHE GOT FAMOUS

STARCRASH FOR
LANDING
CHRISTOPHER
PLUMMER FOR THE
ROLE OF "THE
EMPEROR"



CLASH OF THE TITANS
FOR GETTING SIR
LAURENCE OLIVIER TO
PLAY ZEUS



DOESN'T THIS
JUST SAY IT ALL?

BY WANDA WATERMAN WITH CREATIVE INPUT FROM BEN WATERMAN



Anonymous, Part I

If a few bad apples spoil the barrel, how many trolls and bullies does it take to spoil the Internet? It seems we've reached a tipping point, with an increasing number of online media sites starting to ban anonymous comments. But before we rejoice in this triumph of transparency, we need to be careful what we wish for.

It's a debate that's been around a long time. As early as 1787, newspaper editors tried to stem the potential abuse of anonymous letter writing by collecting the writers' real names, with the right to publish them. In this *American Journalism Review* [article](#), Bill Reader explains that the plan didn't go over well, and editors eventually backed down.

Fast forward to 2012, and the move to ban anonymous comments is gaining traction again. The *Vancouver Sun* recently switched to a Facebook-account [comment system](#) that identifies posters by their real names, and several other online papers have already done the same thing. In May,

PCMag [reported](#) on Bill S06779; if passed, it would force all websites based in New York to remove any comments posted on a site "by an anonymous poster unless such anonymous poster agrees to attach his or her name to the post."

The argument against anonymous commenting seems logical: if people are forced to use their real names, they'll think twice before making hateful, false, or otherwise harmful comments. Whether it's online comments or letters to the editor, the use of real identities will lead to a more civil—and potentially useful—discourse. It's about standing up and owning your opinions, taking responsibility for the things you say.

If you're dealing with thoughtful, rational people, that approach has merit. But there's no guarantee that people will become either thoughtful or rational simply because they have to own the things they say. Like Ann Coulter, for example.

Politics aside, it defies even the most basic bounds of decency to call someone a "retard." Especially in public. Yet that's exactly what [Coulter called President Obama](#) on her Twitter account, and in spite of the general disgust at her words she hasn't had the integrity to delete the offensive term.

It's easy to dismiss Coulter as a radical case, but plenty of other examples exist. Even in the supposedly respectable halls of our national Parliament. In these [extracts](#) from *The Oxford Book of Canadian Political Anecdotes*, there's no shortage of very public insults by well-paid, well-educated people—the politicians who are supposed to set a tone of serious debate.

Even in the public eye, in a professional capacity and with cameras rolling, they fling insults like “sleazebag,” “slut,” and “sambo” (directed in 1991 at the only black member of the House of Commons). At a debate in 2006, a female MP was reportedly referred to as a “dog.”

And it isn’t only public figures who’ve grown to have this attitude, this in-your-face lack of concern for others. There’s no shortage of people willing to wreak havoc when their sports team loses. They spill into the streets by the thousands, rioting, burning, and smashing everything in sight. Rioters and onlookers record every moment and proudly post the destruction online. No one appears remorseful until they’re caught.

Right now, hateful anonymous comments abound. But forcing people to own their words might not lead to the result we want. Like the rioters and politicians who claim to have been caught up in the heat of the moment, open comments could easily spiral into an atmosphere of one-upmanship, of bravado.

If a dozen or so people post insulting comments that stay just this side of illegal, will it become trendy to see who can say the most offensive things while using their real names? It’s a chicken and egg scenario, and we won’t really know until the experiment’s underway.

In the midst of all this speculation, it’s easy to overlook the fact that trolls and bullies don’t just live in the dark corners under the bridge of anonymous comments. Often, they’re in plain sight in our halls of power. Next week, we’ll look at some reasons why anonymity can be a very good thing for all of us.

S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).

DID YOU KNOW?

Purdue OWL



As the end of the semester approaches, odds are there’s a research paper brewing at the back of your mind. Stumped on the mechanics of composition? Got a grammar or usage question? Need help with a citation?

Whatever your writing-related dilemma, you’re sure to find help at [Purdue’s Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#), a fantastic resource that’s freely available online. In addition to general tips, advice, and rules, it includes resources for specialty writing, including technical, medical, and engineering writing and literature and sociological review. There’s even helpful information for those creating essays or portfolios for admission to grad school.

Whether you’re still in the initial phases of your writing project or you’re fine-tuning it for submission, the OWL is one site you’ll want to bookmark--and return to again and again.

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman

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

Album: Seinn (2012)

Artists: Mary Jane Lamond and Wendy MacIsaac

"Moch 's a 'mhaduinnrinn mi éirigh

Early in the morning I arose

Dhirich mi àirighnaspréigheadh

I climbed the shelling

Fhuair mi a' chruinneagdhonn gun éirigh

I found the brown-haired maiden not yet risen"

"ÒranLuaidh" (traditional Scots Gaelic song)



The Importance of Being Gaelic

Years ago, while working on a television pilot set in Nova Scotia, my writing partners and I decided to include a Gaelic-speaking character. We contacted the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia and asked if one of their members could translate and record a few lines for us.

When we received the lines, we sat back open-mouthed as the magical words spilled out of the computer. We'd heard Scots Gaelic in songs, but except for the odd word here and there from displaced Cape Bretoners, we'd never before heard it spoken. We were mesmerized by the tongue's almost mystical flow, a sound teeming with history and attesting to a rich, keen cultural sensibility.

Gaelic-speaking Highland Scots settled in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia in the 18th century, continuing to live traditionally and to speak their language. In the 19th century, Scots Gaelic was the third most commonly spoken language in Canada (after English and French). The families who settled along the coast gradually lost fluency while the poorer inland farm folk were able to hold onto the language right up until the present, albeit in diminishing numbers.

In the 20th century there began a kind of revival in the face of the threat of the loss of this language and culture. Universities, public schools, and community groups mustered to teach the language and traditions to a new generation, which seized on it with alacrity. The result was a kind of renaissance that produced many great performers and writers as well as the world-famous Celtic Colours festival held on the island every fall.

"Within the old songs of poor ethnic groups there is usually to be found a great longing for sweetness, a need for not just bread but roses, too."

Two very notable products of this renaissance are fiddle and piano master Wendy MacIsaac and iconic songstress Mary Jane Lamond. Both friends had solo careers, but MacIsaac often accompanied Lamond on stage and in the studio as well. Their creative rapport spun itself into a partnership when the two thought it might not be a bad idea to record an album together.

Seinn is an album of traditional and original Gaelic tunes. It's a rich, resonant recording, with the kind of changing, driving pulse typical of a genre that creates its own rhythms and changes them when the listener least suspects. The arrangements are superb, paying respectful homage to the past while letting recent history weigh in.

"Keeping up With Calum," for example, smoothly synchronizes two Cape Breton musical traditions: fiddle music and the blues.

MacIsaac's fiddle playing is rhapsodic, buoyant, and textured with multiple rhythms and a splendid buffet of melodic ideas. Lamond's sincere, throaty vocal delivery and expert pronunciation of Scots Gaelic is always a pleasure to hear.

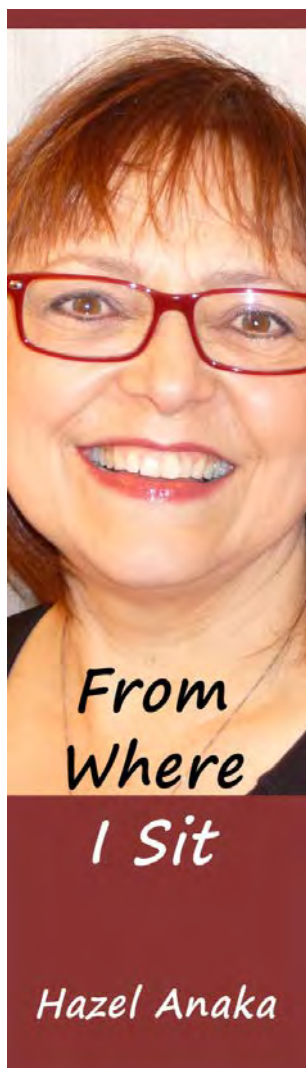
In the history of Europe and North America it's been women who've played the central role in preserving and handing down folk and fairy lore, perhaps because of the time spent with their children. An alternative history emerges, parallel to that of the conflicts between nations: the struggle of families and communities to survive.

But not just to survive. Within the old songs of poor ethnic groups there is usually to be found a great longing for sweetness, a need for not just bread but roses, too. We turn to their music again and again in our own search for tender, heartfelt expression, and to be lifted up from our own sloughs of despond.

This album is a unique and marvellous addition to a precious canon. Keep 'em coming, girls.



Seinn manifests six of the Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavour; 3) it is about attainment of the true self; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 6) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.



Another Speed Bump

With harvest well out of the way and our kitchen cabinets due to be delivered in early November, it's becoming crunch time for our reno. The drywaller/stippler/painter who saw the project in early August gave a quote and accepted the job. But when I called him over Thanksgiving weekend, he said there were other jobs ahead of ours and "if you can get someone else to do it, go ahead."

"It" was to include, among other things, scraping the stipple off the ceiling. *How hard could it be?* I thought. I slapped a ball cap on my head, put a plastic drop sheet on the floor, and found a spray bottle. A few blasts of water softened the stuff. Using a four-inch scraper, I got the finish off very easily in the kitchen and in the hallway. I did about a square foot area in each location.

Pretty pleased with myself, I decided to tackle the thicker surface in the living room. This was more fibrous, twice as thick, and more stubborn to remove because it appeared the ceiling hadn't been primed.

Roy mentioned asbestos. I got scared and stopped immediately. I got the quick and dirty facts by Googling asbestos. Next I called a remediation company in Edmonton, and by fluke spoke to their safety officer.

She gave me the contact information for the lab that does testing for them. I had already collected about a tablespoon of the scarier looking stuff in a zip-lock bag.

Here's the deal, in a nutshell. Our house was built in 1959, and only the living room was textured. We moved here in 1984. The ceiling bears scars of renos we've done over the years. The kitchen, hallways, and two bedrooms were stippled in the late 1980s. Asbestos is a known carcinogen and was outlawed in 1979. It had been a miraculous, binding fireproof substance that found its way into a variety of building products in institutional, residential, and commercial settings.

When asbestos is disturbed, the fibres become airborne. Up close, the fibre has a hook that attaches itself to the lungs, where it causes scar tissue and destroys function. Remediation involves people in respirators and hazmat suits, HEPA filters, air movement machines, portable showers, plastic shrouding, and certification if the job is done right. Sounds real cheap and easy, huh? Then I was told it is impossible to remove asbestos from fibres like clothing, furniture, drapery. "That would have to be thrown away."

Fifty dollars and a couple of days later, we learned we have five to ten percent Chrysotile. No amount is considered safe. That's why we are now having the problem encapsulated by re-drywalling the ceiling. Thank goodness I stopped when I did. Thank goodness another guy has agreed to do the job. Thank goodness Greg hadn't cut the 20 holes for retrofit pot lights. Just one more (scary) speed bump for this project, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Work Harder, Work Smarter

Exercise is good for physical health. It helps us stay healthy emotionally. And now new research suggests that it may even be good for the brain.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), regular exercise may “help slow the cognitive declines associated with aging”—in other words, keep age-related memory and clarity problems at bay.

The study, from the Montreal Heart Institute, founds that adults were able to improve standard measures of cognition including the . . . ability to think clearly, recall and make quick decisions.”

This went hand-in-hand with the usual benefits of exercise, including weight loss, smaller waist size, and increased flexibility and endurance.

Researchers discovered that there were “dramatic changes in blood flow to the brain” and that “the improvements in cognition mirrored weight loss.”

“Cognitive decline is largely a blood vessel problem,” study leader Dr. Martin Juneau told reporters, adding that if you make the blood vessels in the brain “healthier with exercise, you reduce the risk of decline.”

Around the World: Gator Wrangler

What do you do when a 130-pound alligator drags off your puppy? According to one Florida grandfather, there’s only one solution: tackle the gator and wrestle it underwater.

As the *Huffington Post* [reports](#), 66-year-old Steve Gustafson “‘didn’t think twice’ about rescuing his dog from [a] 7-foot alligator.”

Gustafson was working in the yard when he heard a yelp from his terrier, who “had been at the edge of a pond.” The next thing he knew, “the gator had her in his mouth and was taking her far out.”

He jumped into the pond and directly onto the alligator’s back, sending the three of them underwater while he tried to “wrestle the dog from the gator’s deadly jaws.”

“My main objective was to get the dog to the surface for air,” Gustafson told reporters, adding that “If I hesitated I would have lost my best friend.” Fortunately, Gustafson’s quick reaction paid off, and “both he and [the dog] walked away . . . with no major injuries.”

The alligator was trapped and killed and Gustafson plans to “keep it for future generations.”

AUSU UPDATE



AU Students urge candidates to improve university funding

AU students are concerned about the financial health of Athabasca University and the effect of recent news stories on the reputation of the AUSU membership.

A recent CBC report notes that in recent years the university has made a series of reserve draws to cover budget shortfalls, draining the once \$30-million reserve fund.

Tuition and fees at AU, meanwhile, continue to increase despite the concerns of AUSU that education is becoming increasingly unaffordable in Alberta.

“I’m very concerned about AU’s financial situation,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “AU is increasing student fees, observing hiring freezes, denying sabbaticals, delaying projects, and downsizing their offices due to a lack of available funds. We don’t want to see the quality of our education diminish.”

“At the same time,” Tynes continues, “I am confused by AU Board Chair Barry Walker’s comment to the CBC that AU is ‘in a very sound financial position,’ as the concerns we’ve noted do not support the notion that we’re financially sound.”

Chronic underfunding of public post-secondary education is a factor in AU’s financial stress. AU students have lobbied Alberta in recent years to address the shortfall; our members call on the candidates in Alberta’s provincial election to make post-secondary funding a priority in their platforms and to ensure that all Alberta universities are funded equally and sufficiently. Public post-secondary institutions need a reliable, predictable funding model that provides sufficient base operating funds to support a world-class education.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students' union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

Media Contact:

Tamra Ross, Executive Director, AUSU

1-800-788-9041 extension 2905

executivedirector@ausu.org

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

500 Energy Square - 10109 – 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7
- Ph: 800.788.9041 ext. 2905 - Fax: 780.497.7003 attn: Voice Editor

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Editor-In-Chief Tamra Ross
Managing Editor Christina M. Frey

Regular Columnists Hazel Anaka, Katie D'Souza, S.D. Livingston, Wanda Waterman

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