

[Page 79 - Dawn Fraser, Writer Selections](#)ISSUE : [Issue 45](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1987/6/1

my officers insisted that I write something for every show. I will not comment further on the merit of what I wrote but I won the prize on every occasion. Until finally the other so-called artists refused to compete, saying that Fraser would get the prize anyway. There was no jealousy or ill feeling, the boys were good sports. We did not need money. We had no board to pay. So I spent my prize on Vodka, shared the drink with those who would accept it and said that if they liked my stuff, I would still try and write, but would not accept any more prize money. And I was surprised as anybody with the stuff that came into my head. I could create characters that I never saw and spin yarns that were pure fiction. There was nothing smart about it. I did not have to think. That stuff would come into my head just as fast as if it was coming over the radio and I would have to write fast with the stub of a pencil to catch it as it flowed. Each line would rhyme with the one preceding it and they would seem to carry the approximate same number of words. For instance, If you can't say something good about me Please say something bad. Lay on McDuff. My hide is tough. I'll thank you for the Ad. I do not know if a divinity was shaping my ends or whether the stuff was coming from Mars. Even after I was back in civil life and at home, I was not very smart on the typewriter and my gentle mother used to call my efforts "Tap-tapping." I would be lost in the middle of some yarn and Mother would say, "Oh, stop that and come to lunch." But the stuff would be coming over even after I went to the table and I would leap up saying, "Oh, there is a good line," and back I would go to the machine. If some guests came in and my presence was needed I would appear, but the stuff would keep crowding into my head until it arrived at some intelligent conclusion. I note that I am beginning to make mistakes in my typing, a sure sign that I am getting weary. I am not as young as I used to be. So I must conclude this effort as gracefully as I can. My book published first in 1921 • 1000 volumes. Later enlarged under same title • 2000 volumes. Finally new title Narrative Verse • 2500 volumes. They have been disposed of and I have none to offer now. I had a rather original way of marketing my books. When I found that they moved very slowly when left on consignment in local bookstores, I invaded homes with a briefcase full of books, ask the householder to permit me to leave the book. They paid nothing, promised nothing, signed nothing, please read a little of it. I would like your opinion. I am not sure whether it is any good or not. I will call again in a week or so with your permission, and if it does not interest you, I will pick it up and thank you for your very kind cooperation. I regret to state that I never received any favourable notice by the press of my native province. I have seen pictures in the local newspapers of the newly appointed dog catcher and of little Johnny Jones who passed his examination from the first grade into the second. But never have I seen it recorded that Dawn Fraser was even alive. Perhaps they wished I was not. Perhaps I offended them with some of my observations. Oh; yes. There is one exception to this complaint. When the first edition of my book appeared more than thirty years ago, the old Halifax Chronicle in a review of literature stated exactly this, I quote: "We would say



offhand that Dawn Fraser writes as good verse as Service. We would call this Nova Scotia poet a Jim Tully in rhyme, an Edgar Guest, with more guts and less pollyannism." I have heard, but am not sure, that it was a Professor Logan of Dalhousie who dictated that comment. If it was and if the gentleman is still living I am very grateful to him. And finally • I am a humble old fellow. I am not vain about anything I accomplished. I have never called myself a poet or introduced my material as poems. I have not sought social distinction. If I had such ambitions I would not confess that I had been a hobo or had only an elementary education. It is my belief that everybody has some talent and it is a duty to try and develop it. I did not train to be a writer. The stuff was forced upon me. It kept crowding into my head and I had to expel it as surely as I had to exhale my breath. I claim to be a real democrat. I scorn titles and crowned heads. I dislike the word "Master" when applied to anybody except God Almighty. To hear anybody called "excellency" or My Lord, or Your Grace, or Your Highness, makes me smile. We all have our faults. Nobody is excellent and those who assume those titles are no better than anybody else But I am weary and must stop. I hope the above comments will be satisfactory to whoever requested them, and I thank that party for being interested enough in me to make the request. CASE HOBBY HUT The Knitting & Craft Shop 204 Commercial St., North Sydney, N. S, Tel. 794-7774 Pure Wool & Synthetic Yarns Knitting Needles & Patterns Smocking Supplies Locally Made Ceramics Artists' Boards Sewing Notions Knitted Items Wide Range of Craft Supplies Counselling Assistance to Small Enterprises COUNSELLING * Utilizes retired business persons to provide advice and counselling for your business (CASE). Harry Tobin Counselling Co-ordinator FEDERAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK BANQUE FEDERALE DE DEVELOPPEMENT ' 50 Dorchester St., Sydney 564-7710 Canada (79)