

## State of the Art-Nancy Bauer-Salon TJ-Saturday February 13, 2016

In 2015, the City of Fredericton called for applications for the position of a cultural laureate, and in January a committee met several times to select one. Monday, February 8, at a regular meeting of city council, the choice was announced.

Anyone involved in Fredericton's literary scene won't have to be introduced to Ian LeTourneau. He enthusiastically attends every book launch, poetry reading, Odd Sundays, often accompanied by his charming wife and delightful son. But for those who don't know him, let me introduce you to the first Fredericton Cultural Laureate.

LeTourneau is an accomplished poet with two volumes of poetry, *Defining Range* and *Terminal Moraine* published by prestigious presses—Gaspereau and Thistledown. He's an editor of the Fiddlehead and for Goose Lane Editions. He's been involved in the Writers' Federation of New Brunswick, the University of New Brunswick Poetry Weekend and the Writers' Union of Canada. He talks on the CBC about local books. You might say that he has been the unofficial poet laureate.

Ian is an experienced instructor, so when he says he would like to conduct workshops at the library for adults and children, I know he can. He's full of ideas about the position—taking people on walks through Odell Park, talking to groups about the importance of arts and creativity, making use of the regular media and the social media.

Although he was born and raised in Dalhousie, he received his BA and his MA from the University of New Brunswick and lives here on the north side of the river. He writes that his vision for his two-year mandate is "to celebrate, engage and inspire." One of his duties will be to compose poems to commemorate various city events.

Here are some lines from his "A Cubist View of the Saint John River." "Stasis. This morning, the concrete piers/of the old train bridge transform the river//into a factory of ice:/a Duchamp, nude and mechanical./Gliding over the current, /the river's thin integument cracks." I had to look up integument—an outer protective layer, hence the ice. I like the image.

I was looking forward to attending Ryan Griffith's play, "Returning Fire", described by Theatre New Brunswick as "a unique theatre experience told almost entirely through text messaging." Right up until the end I was going to risk the storm, but at last good sense prevailed. The play would work like this: I bought a ticket and then all afternoon I would get text messages from the three actors who were texting each other to arrange a meeting place. At 7:30 they would finally agree on a place to meet, and I, along with the others in the audience, would join them, some place downtown. When I confessed to Ilkay Silk that I couldn't remember how to use my so-called smartphone, she invited me to her place where she also would be getting the text messages. I phoned Bell Aliant to make sure my phone was smart enough to receive such messages. I phoned my grandson to go over details. I was ready and felt "with it." But it snowed

and snowed and police said stay off the roads, and finally I decided I shouldn't risk life and especially limbs. In the last week three of my friends—able young men—have fallen on the ice.

I was especially eager to see "Returning Fire" because I've seen several of Griffith's plays. A couple of years ago I wrote, "He's one of New Brunswick's most talented young playwrights."

But by the next day, the roads and sidewalks were cleared enough for me and my passenger Travis Lane to get to Westminster Bookstore to attend the launch of Shari Andrews' *First Thin Line*, her sixth book of poetry, a handsome volume published by Oberon Press. Fellow poet Lynn Davies gave an excellent introduction to Andrews' reading. I was surprised when I got the volume home to see that many of the pieces were prose poems. When she was reading them to us, I was picturing them as poem poems.

As preface to her reading she explained that the book explored women's identity. Davies pointed out how often Andrews gives details of the clothes the women wear and the jobs they do. An announcement of the opening of a boarding house in 1838 by Mrs. Atherton inspired these lines from a prose poem: "You wore your funeral suit, navy-blue serge, buttons covered in the same heavy fabric. The row of buttons and your spine were like book ends keeping you upright, when your heart beat too fast, when your hands trembled as you and your accounts were examined by the bank manager."

Riverview's Danny Jacobs has won the grand prize in *PRISM international's* 2015 Creative Non-Fiction contest with his piece, "Ghostly Transmissions from John D. Rockefeller." I've written about Jacobs' poetry, so I'm eager to read his essay.