

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Owen Wagg

BY PAULA BOON

Owen Wagg describes himself as a simple man. He lives a quiet life in a small house with his wife Marnie and three rescued dogs, works as a loader operator at a local quarry, and enjoys writing in his free time. But it took some time for him to get to this point.

"I'm one of those people who've done a lot of things just to try them out," says the Dwight man, who was born and raised in Huntsville.

In the early 1970s, Wagg studied architecture at Fanshawe College. He then worked for an architectural firm for about ten years before deciding he needed a change.

When he returned to the area in the early 1980s he worked at various jobs before trying bush work, first firewood, then horse logging. Eventually he studied and became a homeopath and iridologist, helping his wife part-time at her natural health clinic from 2000 until now.

After spending one winter driving a sleigh, Wagg started a horse logging business, which lasted from 1985 to 1998. The greatest lessons he learned during this time were discipline, patience, and the true beauty of nature.

"You learn a lot bringing out one log at a time trotting behind a horse," he says.

Horse logging also gave him time to think, which was conducive to his writing.

Wagg began crafting poetry in the 1970s and won an Editor's Choice Award in an American poetry contest in

1991. "There were over 50,000 entries and mine was in the top 3 per cent," he says.

The winning poem, called *Lost Pioneer's Dream*, was inspired by a local decaying log homestead.

Writing short stories and poetry began as a way to fulfill his imaginative side. "Architecture taught me to visualize what a building looked like without it actually being there," he says. "Writing is very similar: you attempt with as much clarity to visualize a book front to back. It's a lot of fun."

Three years ago Wagg started his first novel, *The Nears of Afar*. Since then, writing has been his main focus outside of work and family.

"Many of my dreams are almost stories and this novel idea came from one of these dreams," Wagg says. "The book is about why we cry, what makes us cry, and where the tears go."

In the story, creatures called Nears live off human tears, and they do bad things to make people cry. A family finds out the Nears exist and attempts to do something about it.

Wagg gets up early, around 4 or 5 a.m., and writes until it is time to go to work, and then goes back at it again in the evening. "There's a different energy in those early morning hours and I feel more receptive to the creative



flow," he says.

Many people, says Wagg, are losing the ability to see the beauty and love of life around them. He hopes this novel will open some eyes to this regard.

"If one person sits down and thinks, the books has served a purpose," he says.

Wagg notes that the book contains stories woven within stories. "There are many levels. So if you read it once, you may have a specific idea about what the story was about, but if you read it again, a whole different perspective may occur," he explains.

Asked about the self-publishing route he has chosen, Wagg says, "I had to do this myself. I've always been a procrastinator and started things without finishing them. So my goal was to complete a book from start to finish by myself."

Wagg, the father of two and grandfather of five, has never talked about his writing before, because the novel had to unfold with its own energy. He says telling others about things sometimes allows their energy to interfere.

He found not talking about writing brought out the best of it undeterred. "You talk about it after you're done. I learned this the hard way over the years," says Wagg.

Thanks to Julia Bertelson for suggesting that Owen Wagg be profiled.

LETTERS

Field damage makes Irwin Memorial student 'want to cry'

I am a student at Irwin Memorial Public School and last Wednesday a person came onto the school property and ruined our field.

Our field is destroyed and we are not allowed to play on the field anymore. That means we can't play soccer or do track and field. There are big ruts and we can't even walk in it because we might break our legs or ankles. Our field is more than 100 metres long and covers half of our school property.

I think that this is horrible and it makes me want to cry. I want to sue whoever did

that because it is not fun to stand around on our tiny bit of pavement. I am very mad at whoever did that and I wish they would confess.

A few weeks ago we hosted a cross-country run. We were told that we should host it next year and that track and field should be here also. But now it can't be because some crazy person destroyed our field. I think that it is terrible.

Laurel

Grade 5, Irwin Memorial Public School

Inconsiderate person ruined school's grounds with vehicle

On Thursday when I came to school I expected to see a normal field that we could play in, but no. We came to school and saw a torn up ruined field that we can't play in. It is ridiculous how destroyed it is. The person who did this came in the middle of the night and drove his or her vehicle over and over in the same spot so the holes in our field are about seven inches deep. We can't even play in our field without worrying about hurting ourselves.

I am so disgusted that someone would

do such an inconsiderate and horrible thing. It makes me feel sad just to look out at the field. I believe that whoever vandalized our field and turned it into a piece of ground with deep ruts and clumps of dirt and grass all over should be sent to jail. I feel sad, mad and disgusted by what our beautiful field looks like now. I really hope they catch who did it.

Sarah

Grade 5,

Irwin Memorial Public School

Disgusted Grade 5 girl wants to tell vandal how she feels

Last Thursday I went out and could not believe my eyes. Someone vandalized the school field. The field has huge ruts and is all torn up. There are big clumps of grass everywhere. The ground is destroyed.

I feel really disgusted that someone would do that. If I ever met him I would tell him how I feel.

Mary

Grade 5, Irwin Memorial Public School

Culprit should come forward

Last Wednesday a ridiculous person came with a truck or car and made ruts in the field at our school. Now we cannot play soccer or football. It is about a foot deep and we can't play anything in the field.

I feel very angry about this. There's

nothing to do at break time. Everybody in our school is mad. Whoever did it please say your name.

Gage

Grade 4,

Irwin Memorial Public School

Lots of kids like to play on school field that was damaged

Last Wednesday somebody came and ripped up our field and made big dents in it. We cannot play soccer at recess and lots of kids like to play on the field.

I feel very mad at whoever did this. There are big clumps of grass so we cannot play

because someone could get their foot caught in the big chunks and break their ankle. All the little kids are sad too.

Kaylee

Grade 5,

Irwin Memorial Public School

Whole school feels 'really mad'

Last Wednesday someone ruined our school's grass with a truck or car. The whole school feels really mad because we cannot play baseball and soccer any more. About half of the school likes to play soccer.

He made chunks of dirt the size of about one foot big. It is really mean that someone would do this.

Ben

Grade 4, Irwin Memorial Public School

Fixing field will take a long time

Last Wednesday a terrible thing happened at our school. Somebody went on the lawn with their car and ruined our lawn. We were disgusted and very sad because now people can't play on the lawn. The police are going to our school and marking the tires and then they are going to try and match them up with the car.

I feel very sad and terrible because it is going to take a really long time to replace

the lawn before we can play on it. Me and my friends are so mad we want to talk to that person and tell him what he did wrong. My teacher, Mrs. West, is a very nice girl and I hate to see her upset about this. If you have any information tell someone and then we can find out who did this horrible thing to us.

Emily

Grade 5, Irwin Memorial Public School

Soccer-playing friends can't believe extent of damage

Last Wednesday something ridiculous happened at Irwin Memorial Public School. A guy/girl came in a truck and ripped up our 300-metre grass field where me and my friends have played soccer ever since junior

kindergarten. Now some twisted guy came and ripped it up. I can't believe it.

McGregor

Grade 4,

Irwin Memorial Public School

Student is disgusted and angry

Last Thursday when we got to school our field was destroyed, with big clumps of grass ripped up and ruts that came from a truck with an inconsiderate driver.

I feel disgusted and angry with the person that did that.

Talour

Grade 5, Irwin Memorial Public School

— See more letters on Page A15 —



HEALTHCARE HEROES

Attention Elementary School Artists

4 p.m., Friday, November 7 is the deadline for Muskoka and East Parry Sound Elementary School Students to submit artwork for the Huntsville Hospital Foundation's Annual Christmas Card Contest.

Past winners, including James Boothby from Riverside Public School, can tell you it is worth it. Students from Gravenhurst to Burk's Falls have been recipients of \$100 for themselves and \$100 for their school.

This is a very important fundraising program for Huntsville Hospital as the Christmas Card has raised almost \$500,000, since 1996!

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