

# ecfwa

Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association

Spring 2005

# the nib

## Demystifying defamation

# Know what it is, and how to avoid it

Media lawyer Stuart Robertson enlightened a crowded room of writers, editors and communicators about the finer points of media law and defamation at a professional development seminar held in late January 2005.

Defamation is defined as words or pictures that have a tendency to lower a person's reputation. One gut check on potentially defamatory remarks: considering the market the remarks are published in, would you like it said of you?

The moment you publish defamatory content, the law presumes the words are false and that the words will probably damage. The onus is then on the publisher to disprove since the person claiming defamation doesn't have to prove it. And publishers are responsible for content in every part of their publication, including letters to the editor and advertising.

When the best route is to retract and apologize, here are a few of Robertson's guidelines.

1. If you make an error, retract.
2. Beware of the consequences. Apologizing is admitting you have made an error and have harmed someone. First, check with your lawyer and look at your insurance policy.
3. Do it quickly. The sooner you retract, the better. The damage will be less and if the error defames someone, the law may give you protection if you retract

immediately.

4. Don't hide it. Give the retraction equal prominence to the error.
5. Don't grovel, fudge or be cute in your retraction.
6. Understand the error.
7. Don't do it again. If in retracting you repeat the libel, you can be sued again.
8. Keep a copy of any correspondence containing or concerning any draft or proposed retraction. It may help you and your lawyer later.

- Jane Robinson

## AGM 2005: Whose land is it anyway?

Find out at this year's ECFWA annual meeting on Tuesday, April 26, 2005 at the Elm Hurst Inn, Ingersoll, 10:30 am to 3:00 pm.

10:30 am	Registration
11 am-12pm	ECFWA annual meeting
12:15-1:30 pm	Hot lunch and guest speaker author Gina Mallet discusses her book <i>Last Chance to Eat: The Fate of Taste in a Fast Food World</i> including how consumers need to be seduced into good eating, and her advice on how to tell the story of good food
1:30-3:00 pm	Panel discussion " <b>Whose land is it anyway?</b> " Hear from environmental groups, producer groups and land use experts about their take on the very timely topic of land owner rights

No charge for members, \$10 for non members.

RSVP by April 19 to klewis@adculture.com or (905) 817-1238.

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# Prez Sez...

John Greig  
ECFWA President

.....  
Editor  
Ontario Farmer Publications



years. We have healthy attendance at our seminars and our annual meeting has become a don't-miss event for many in the agriculture communicator community.

The board of directors of your organization has been fantastic to work with. We have diverse and talented people in our organization. With a successful national conference in Windsor in 2004, our finances are healthy, which is enabling your board the flexibility to provide some services which may not have been available before. It's allowing us to hold the cost line for our programming.

If you are interested in joining this energetic and fun board of directors (yes, believe it or not, a fun board of directors), please contact past-president Andrew Douglas at [guide@sentex.net](mailto:guide@sentex.net), who is chairing the nomination committee.

## Tightening freedoms

Two American journalists are nearly at the end of their judicial appeals for continuing to refuse to divulge confidential sources to a grand jury investigating a leak of the identity of a secret agent.

They are just two of seven journalists subpoenaed in the case and two of many more journalists who in the United States in the past two years have been drawn directly into the court system for doing what journalists have done for years.

This is a scary step backward for our usually free friends to the south.

Such invasions of the investigative powers of journalists have also happened in Canada, but to a lesser extent. An Ottawa Citizen reporter had her home and office raided in relation to work she had done on the Maher Arar affair.

I've watched American agriculture writer organizations get involved in these sorts of causes, especially as they relate to agriculture and thankfully we have had no call for such action in Canada yet. It would make for some interesting debate around our board table.

The North American Agriculture Journalists, for example, an American organization of agriculture writing professionals,

has sent letters to the United States Department of Agriculture protesting the decreasing level of access American farm journalists have to critical sources in the USDA.

That's a relatively new role for agriculture writer organizations in countries where journalistic freedom has been a cornerstone of democracy. Let's hope it doesn't become a major role.

This is my last Prez Sez, as I'm not running again for president of the organization. I've been very pleased with the vitality of the ECFWA in the past couple of



Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Food Stephen Peters invited some farm writers to meet with him in Guelph earlier this year, seen here with (left to right): Anne Howden Thompson, Suzanne Atkinson and Kate Klages. Others attending included Don Stoneman, Jamie Reaume, Andrew Douglas and Jim Romahn.

Photo by Jim Romahn.

## Productivity seminar recap

# Time: how to make better use of it

Part storyteller, part relaxed professional, Mark Ellwood delivered his own take on improving productivity in work and life at the second winter seminar put on by ECFWA.

Ellwood owns Pace Productivity Inc., a company specializing in showing organizations how their employees can gain an extra three hours per week to work on their top priority activities. All in a low key, calm kind of way. His basic premise is that we can all learn to manage time more practically, and it usually starts with setting goals.

Goals are nothing new. Ask any CEO of a successful business about the importance of goal setting, and it'll probably be right up there with a healthy bottom line. Goals are a record about what you want to achieve and a corresponding timeline. Ellwood described the SMART goal system to help guide you through setting your own - **Specific. Measureable. Appropriate. Realistic. Timely.**

### Doing the "to do" list

With goals in hand, the next step is breaking them into smaller, manageable tasks. Those tasks are best captured in a daily to do list. Ellwood manages tasks by category-

izing them into four groups.

A) *Major priorities* - these tasks often require that you book time with yourself to get them done. Ellwood helped the group understand what makes this list with a simple exercise. He calls it planning your time in a void. If you had nothing to do tomorrow, what would you work on, that you could finish in a

### Mark Ellwood's evils of email:

- get off newsletters you think might send something you need, one day
- keep emotion out of messages
- if your message is more than three paragraphs, pick up the phone instead
- eliminate the cc button unless you're going to tell someone why you are copying them

day, that would affect your goals a month from now? The items you identify become your priorities that you do today, based on your longer term goals.

B) *Responsibilities* - these are tasks you have to do every day for your job, and they often have to be done as they happen i.e. email, regularly scheduled staff meetings, etc.

C) *Requirements* - administrative tasks that have to be done eventually. In large organizations, these type of tasks take up to 20% of work time.

D) *Dump/Delay/Delegate* - these are things you shouldn't really be spending time on. Look for ways to pass this over to someone else.

### Where did it all go?

Here are some of the trends Ellwood sees that mess with our ability to manage time.

#### 1. We're inventing more ways to be out of touch.

Technology, according to Ellwood, has done little to help the communication process. He personally has no cell phone, no pager, no laptop and no PDA, choosing to use more traditional communication methods...and that hasn't hindered his ability to work effectively with clients in more than 10 different countries.

2. **The greater the technology, the increased chance that something will go wrong.** I have first-hand experience at this with a certain data projector technology. But I'm not alone, Ellwood claims one in four PowerPoint presentations run into technical glitches.

3. **Society is geared towards speed, and that brings stress.** The trouble with speed, he says, is that you can't get any faster than instant. I get that one too. You've just hit send on an email marked "high priority", maybe thrown in a few exclamation marks to catch attention...waited a second...and nothing. Hello! Where is everybody? Don't they know this is important? My time is valuable and I don't have all day.

His parting wisdom. Slow down. Create a calmness. Strive for balance. And make choices that make time for what matters.

- Jane Robinson

## CFWF 2005 to light up Lloydminster

To celebrate provincial centennials in Alberta and Saskatchewan, CFWF's 2005 annual conference is planned for bordertown Lloydminster this fall. Tour and travel details are still in the works, but in the meantime, set aside these dates and start planning your trip west - Friday, September 23 through Sunday, September 25, 2005. At this time, there are no regular flights to Lloydminster, so watch your email and [www.cfwf.org](http://www.cfwf.org) for details about travel recommendations to Saskatoon or Edmonton.

# Niblets

ECFWA vice president **Carol Carson** and her husband John had a baby girl on October 30, 2004 - Lily Elizabeth. Congratulations!

~o~

**Adele Pelland** has joined the public relations department of Quarry Integrated Communications Inc. in Waterloo and can be reached at (519) 570-2020 ext. 2214 or apelland@quarry.com

~o~

**Jeannie Bryson** is the new administrator for the CFWF awards competition (jeannie@quanglo.com). Look for the awards package and entry form in late spring.

~o~

**Kelly Daynard** is continuing her work with Ontario's beef producers, and other livestock producers, as the new Program Manager with the Ontario Farm Animal Council. You can reach her at kdaynard@ofac.org or (905) 821-3880.

~o~

**Bernard Tobin** won top honours in the 2004 John Hervey Awards competition winning first place in the magazine category for his article "Reunited with Riyadh," a story about champion pacer Riyadh and his groom Bob Butter appearing in *Canadian Sportsman*.

~o~

**AIS Communications** has been purchased by Annex Publishing and Printing, of Simcoe, Ontario.

~o~

## ECFWA supports Stan Young Award

**J**ust before he died earlier this year, Stan Young made a personal contribution to establish an endowment fund for students in the new communications program at the University of Guelph.

On behalf of its members, ECFWA executive has made a donation to help support the fund.

Young was one of the best-known professionals at the University of Guelph, where he was an Ontario Agriculture College graduate in 1949. He obtained a doctorate from Cornell University at Ithaca, New York, in 1959, specializing in plant breeding with minor studies in agronomy, extension and community development.

He became well known as an extension specialist at Ontario Agricultural College from 1959 until his retirement in 1992.

Among his awards and professional recognition, he received the New Holland Award for contribution to agriculture in 1970, a life mem-

bership in the Canadian Society of Rural Extension in 1979 and was named Outstanding Agrologist of the Year by the Ontario

Institute of Agrologists in 1986 and by the OAC Alumni Association in 1988.

He was a charter member of the Ontario Institute of Agrologists and president in 1971-72, a member of the Agricultural Institute of Canada where he served

as a councillor in 1968-89, and a long-time member of ECFWA.

Stan was born and raised in Cochrane and is survived by his wife, Audrey and their four children.

Young started the OAC Alumni Foundation for Agricultural Communications on Dec. 21 with a personal commitment of \$20,000. He died nine days later.

Donations for the OAC Alumni Foundation Stan Young Award can be made through the Alumni House at the University of Guelph.

- Jim Romahn/Jane Robinson



Stan Young

## 2005 summer tour set

**B**ased on the success of the revived ECFWA summer tour of 2004, we're doing it again this summer. The dates are set for Thursday, July 14 and Friday, July 15. We plan to tour northeast of Toronto, but the details and exact locations are still in the works. Stay tuned for more information.

*the nib* is published for members of the Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association.

Please submit information to the editor:

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Check out the CFWF web site at [www.cfwf.ca](http://www.cfwf.ca)

### ECFWA 2004/2005 Executive

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