

ecfwa

Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association

Fall 2002

the nib

Make history!

Have your say on the ECFWA constitution

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Members who do not have Internet access, and those for whom e-mail addresses are not available, will receive a copy of the constitution along with this newsletter. If you no longer have the e-mailed version of the constitution, please contact the e-mail address on page three for another copy.

ECFWA members are encouraged to submit their comments on amend-

continued on page three

Ag communication initiative at U of G launched



Alan Wildeman, Vice-President Research, University of Guelph (right) accepts a \$100,000 from Ontario Pork's Marketing Manager Keith Robbins, on behalf of the new agricultural communication initiative coming to the University.

Photo: Martin Schwalbe

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Prez Sez...

Andrew Douglas
ECFWA President

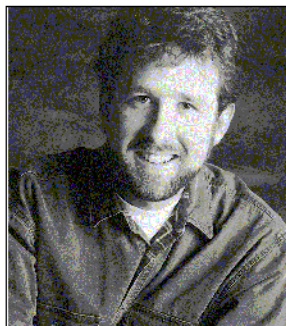
It's hit and miss for bylined editorials

I don't think there's an industry with better shoptalk than the media.

The latest buzz I got from huddling with a bunch of journalists came at a recent meeting of editors from Farm Business Communications publications. FBC is the division of Agricore United that owns *Country Guide* and *Cattleman*, the pubs I work for. The debate around the table was about whether we should print a byline with opinion pieces or not.

Every publication has a place for the editor to spout off opinions on hot topics. The strict definition of an editorial should probably be taken from major newspapers where editorials are written by editorial boards. Those editorials are meant to present the newspaper's opinion which may not be the same as the writer of that day's editorial.

Most ag pubs don't have the time to sit down and hash out the publication's stance for each editorial. Still, every ag pub has a space for editors to blow off steam, whether it's a column at the front of the magazine or a piece on the page of the newspaper



where they run letters to the editor.

In Ontario, most publications sign their editorials or opinion pieces. Both Don Stoneman and Robert Irwin sign their column in the front of *Better Farming*, although Irwin doesn't like the moniker "editorial" for their notes from the editors' desks.

The editors of Eastern Ontario Farmers Forum let layout decide whether their editorials will be anonymous or not. "If we have an extra line left over when we're laying out the page we'll put our name to an editorial," says Terry Meagher, who edits the newspaper with his son Patrick. Philosophically though, Meagher thinks it's a good idea to claim a point of view. "Readers should know where to pin the blame," he says.

Lack of reader feedback drove Ontario Farmer to take a hiatus from running unsigned editorials a few years ago. Editor-in-chief Paul Mahon says the anonymous editorials weren't generating any feedback. The minute he started writing his page

three column with his byline letters started hitting his desk.

Last year Ontario Farmer resurrected the anonymous editorial calling it "150 words" and running it at the top of the editorial page. Most of the time Mahon ends up writing it although Jim Romahn won a CFWF Award for a 150-word piece on the Walkerton inquiry.

Romahn prefers to have his name on opinion pieces such as his column that runs in Manitoba Co-operator. He used to write some of the daily editorials at the Kitchener Record after meeting other editors and the publisher to decide the newspaper's opinion.

We at Farm Business Communications play both sides of the fence. The Manitoba Co-operator runs unsigned editorials whereas Country Guide even runs the editor's picture with opinion pieces. As Peter Gredig, my boss and editor of Country Guide Ontario, says "if you're going say something controversial or attack an organization you'd better put your name on it."

It's fun to stretch our minds a little and discuss ethics in journalism. Being in public relations brings its own ethical and professional quandries that are worth discussing, too. With events like the winter training seminars, ECFWA gives us all a forum to talk about these kinds of ideas.

At this time of year it's enough just to try and keep your head above the deadlines let alone think about lofty things like whether you should sign an editorial or not. Still, ag media and ag communicators hold a lot of power in shaping ideas and it's worth talking about how we do our jobs.

Keep an eye on the ECFWA listserv for the topics and dates of the winter training sessions. We may not discuss editorials but we have some subjects that will tickle your fancy.

2002/2003 ECFWA executive

President – Andrew Douglas, *Country Guide*
1st Vice-President – Bernard Tobin, AdCulture Group
2nd Vice-President – John Greig, *Ontario Farmer*
Secretary-Treasurer – Karen Lewis, AdCulture Group
Newsletter Editor – Jane Robinson, AdFarm

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Lilian Schaefer, Ontario Pork

Industry support kick starts agricultural communication initiative at University of Guelph

A new agricultural communication education initiative is gathering momentum, and industry sponsorship, at the University of Guelph. It was standing room only for the launch of the new initiative on October 15 when Ontario Pork joined Pioneer Hi-Bred Limited as second industry sponsor bellying up with a \$100,000 donation to the initiative.

Incorporating the 14-year-old SPARK student writing program and two existing agricultural communication undergraduate courses, the new initiative will blossom into a bona fide agricultural communication degree and a centre for professional development. Housed at the University of Guelph, the initiative will train students and others how to communicate about the Canadian agri-food industry in an informed, balanced way, with a projected start date of September 2004.

The agricultural communication initiative has two parts. The first is

Canada's only university-degree program in agricultural communication, which will be a unique blend of communications and agriculture. It will emphasize skills development, combining technical skills in journalism, marketing, public relations, electronic communications and leadership with a strong agricultural foundation in economics, statistics and rural extension, and the science of food, plants, animals, soil and the environment.

The second part of the initiative is the creation of a professional development centre for industry communicators. It will facilitate professional development activities such as writing, editing and electronic communication workshops, both in-class and through open learning/distance education.

For more information, contact: program director Owen Roberts, agricultural communication instructor 519-824-4120 Ext. 8278.

Constitution continued from page one

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Agriculture on the high seas



It wasn't the usual farm tour – pitching and tossing aboard a whale sight-seeing ship from St. Andrew, NB – with farm writers dodging the salt water spray instead of meadow muffins. Elaine Shein's spirits don't look dampened.

Photo: Jane Robinson

...Niblets...

The merger of ag agency AdFarm with the marketing communications groups of Axia NetMedia(Fieldstone and Kahntact Marketing) forms the new AdFarm. The new company's 65 people work in offices in Calgary, AB; Guelph, ON; Kansas City, MI; and Fargo, ND.

CFWF annual conference is coming to Ontario in 2004. It's never too early to volunteer. Contact Andrew Douglas, or any other member of the executive, if you have ideas about showing the rest of the membership a great slice of agriculture, Ontario style.

Jennifer Flemming was the winner of the \$500 towards the cost of attending the CFWF annual, held in Fredericton, NB in September.

Frank Jacobs, one of the founders of the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation (CFWF), passed away November 15. Born in 1917, Frank is best known as long-time editor of Cattleman magazine, from 1954 to 1974. Frank was an honorary member of the AFWA and the CFWF. Many of you may remember Frank's presence at the CFWF 2000 annual meeting in Lethbridge, Alberta. Frank also last joined the AFWA during their annual tour at Stratmore in 2001.

Congratulations ECFWA winners

ECFWA members took home the following awards at the 2002 CFWF Awards Banquet, held in Fredericton, New Brunswick this past September.

Television News Reporting – The Jack McPherson Award

Silver: Michael Chapman, Town & Country Ontario

Radio News Reporting – The Tom Leach Award

Gold: Blair Andrews, Ontario AgRadio Network

News Release – The Alice Switzer Award

Silver: Theresa Whalen-Ruiter, Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Bronze: Joanna Steinmetz, The MC Group

General Periodical – The Felix Schmaltz Award

Bronze: Marianne Clark & Dale Duncan, University of Guelph/SPARK
Aquatalk

Press Column – The Frank Jacobs Award

Bronze: Paul Mahon, Ontario Farmer

Press Editorial – The O.R. Evans Award

Gold: Hugh Maynard, Quebec Farmers Advocate

Silver: Jim Romahn, Ontario Farmer

Monthly Press Reporting – The Jack Cram Award

Gold: Carol Pilley, Ginty Jocius & Associates

Bronze: Lucas Habib, University of Guelph/SPARK

Weekly Press Reporting – The Q.H. Martinson Award

Silver: Peter Reschke, Ontario Farmer

Daily Press Reporting – The C.B. Fairbairn Award

Bronze: Juhie Bhatia, University of Guelph/SPARK

World Wide Web Site – The Henry Heald Award

Gold: Shana Bailey, Canadian Dairy Commission
www.MILKingredients.ca

Silver: Kelly Daynard, Ontario Cattlemen's Association
www.cattle.guelph.on.ca

the nib is published up to four times a year 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

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