

# City's unofficial poet laureate

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*When we started looking for an unofficial poet laureate, it would have been hard to find someone more appropriate than Heather Price. She's a dedicated amateur writer who has put pen to paper for years, for the sheer enjoyment of the art.*

*The search started almost on a lark, after I read a story in the Sudbury Star about the city's attempt to find an official poet laureate. That person will write poems about the city and read them at public events. It's a way to document the life of a city, in verse form.*

*In Niagara Falls, the newspaper appointed itself to the task of finding a suitable candidate, using a limerick contest. The Review has done the heavy lifting for city council. All it would take now would be for the city to sanction our choice (and our readers' choice) and make the position official.*

Like a lot of people who take satisfaction from putting pen to paper, Heather Price has a lifelong love of writing and enjoys sharing her hobby, but harbours a quiet desire to turn it into something more.

Price is the winner of So You Think You Can Rhyme, The Niagara Falls Review's search for an unofficial poet laureate.

The contest started in October as a lighthearted attempt to find a poet laureate for the city, after a news article in the Sudbury Star described the search by that city's council and public library to find a poet laureate.

Readers submitted more than



MIKE DIBATTISTA/The Review

Heather Price was picked as the winner of The Review's search for an unofficial poet laureate for Niagara Falls, a contest inspired by the search in Sudbury for its own city-appointed poet laureate.

50 limericks in response to The Review's challenge.

Balzac's Coffee on Queen Street hosted a reading night in November that narrowed the entries to 10. They were posted on the paper's website.

Readers picked Price's entry, titled Parked at the Mall, as their favourite. Her prize is a gift certificate for two tickets to a 2010 Shaw Festival performance.

Price, 56, lives on Green Avenue with her husband, Don, the owner of Gryphon Crane and Material Handling. She said she was "excited" about winning the contest, even though she knows it's an unofficial title.

She got so excited about the interview for this story, Price - who usually drinks tea while she writes - put on a pot of coffee for the first time, a job her husband normally does.

She confessed she found writing a limerick a challenge, especially the fifth and final line that has to rhyme with the first two lines.

"That was the stumper for me," she said, adding she usually writes longer poems and short stories.

"I love to do lighthearted poetry and stories for families and friends," she said.

They're often inspired by the

events in her life or in the lives of her family or friends. When one of her out-of-town friends had a bad experience with the driver of a chartered bus tour, Price wrote about what it would be like to be a passenger on that trip and having the driver go through their bags, confiscating their liquor bottles.

Sometimes, her inspiration comes from imagining situations, like the poem Gone, in which she tried to imagine what it would be like to be a cancer patient dying in a hospital.

Other times, she's inspired by real-life experiences, like There's Nothing Wrong With Me

## PARKED AT THE MALL

Heather Price

Daredevils have been at the Falls  
1812 brought us cannon balls  
Laura Secord was dear  
Warned British the U.S. was near  
Now we fight to get parked at the mall

that describes her own father's insistence he was fine despite an illness.

"If I write a poem that's sad, I'm going to make you cry. If I write a poem that's funny, I'm going to make you laugh," she said.

Price said she started writing when as a student at Westlane Secondary School, encouraged a teacher.

"I have done poetry all my life," she said at her home with a fireplace-DVD playing on the TV and Christmas music in the background.

"You know you have to do something and you don't know you're doing it. I always knew I could write.

"As a kid, I have always written. I have a tremendous love of books and papers and pens. When I'm going to the library, I get all excited. It's just right. I think anyone who really writes has to have that."

In the late 1980s, she was a contributor to a quarterly magazine in Niagara Falls called The Polymer, that got its name because editor Laurie Reece liked the sound of it. It was sold in a few corner stores.

"It was fun. I loved it. I got to write regularly," she said. "I just loved it."

In 1995, Price won a Hallmark

cards Valentine's Day contest for poetry writing, earning her two tickets to the Gershwin's musical Crazy For You in Toronto.

Now, you will find her on the sofa in her living room with a notepad and her 11-year-old Yorkshire terrier on her lap.

She has taken writing seminars, including one in 2000 with Wainfleet author William Thomas, who wrote The Dog Rules Damn Near Everything.

Price is like a lot of people who write because they have a passion for it, but live with the frustration of not being able to share it with a wider audience or not knowing what to do with the stories and poems she does write.

"I would love to have a regular writing job. But I don't, and I don't know where you'd go for one. I don't know where to go to get an outlet for it."

For a while, she tried writing greeting cards and selling them in a gift shop in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Over the summer, she wrote a script for a "no-budget" zombie movie called Dead and recruited her friends as actors to film it in her backyard. The reason for making the 45-minute film wasn't to earn critical acclaim, but 50 years from now she and her friends would be able to look back, laugh and think of the good times they had.

She's working on another winter project, another movie script.

"I do it strictly for enjoyment, but I'd be very happy to be paid for it."

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