

The Elizabeth Bishop Society of Nova Scotia Newsletter

Volume 18

Summer 2012

Call for Suggestions

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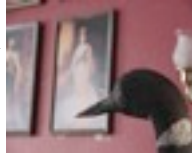
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Elizabeth Bishop Film

In January 2012, John Scott and a film crew came to Great Village to shoot the film.

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EB 100 Legacy Project

The publication of "Echoes of Elizabeth Bishop" is now underway.

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Banner project

"Images of My Village" EBSNS asking students to create images of their villages.

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Editorial

In 2012 Brian Bartlett became editor of the EBSNS Newsletter and for the past decade he has brought a diverse range of articles, reviews, notices and poems to the society's membership and the wider world. Brian introduced photographs to the newsletter, a welcome addition which has delighted all readers. The 2011 EBSNS Newsletter marked Brian's final issue as editor — the EB100 issue was a fitting point of departure bringing the society through its biggest and most important year yet, as we celebrated Elizabeth Bishop's centenary. The EBSNS will miss Brian's sure hand on the editorial reins. The society is deeply grateful to Brian for all his hard work and able leadership. The EBSNS Board extends heartfelt thanks to Brian for his significant contribution to the newsletter and the society over the past ten years and more, giving us memorable issues which always contained eclectic content that informed, entertained and inspired. As they say in Brazil (where Brian visited in 1999), MUITO OBRIGADA, Brian!

This 2012 issue of the newsletter marks a transition for a variety of reasons. Since Brian became editor, the society has expanded the ways it communicates with members and the wider world. We now have a website (www.elizabethbishopns.org) and blog (www.elizabethbishopcentenary.blogspot.ca). Even as these online tools give the society new ways to provide information, we did not want to end the newsletter, recognizing that it is still important to connect in a tangible way. It was decided to re-evaluate the purpose of the newsletter.

An editorial committee was set up to look what sorts of changes to make and to see the newsletter through the transition. It was decided to give the newsletter a new look, to reduce its size, increase the number of photographs and to print in full colour. The focus of the content will be more fully on the Village, through information about

Bishop activities and projects beyond Nova Scotia will also be included when possible.

The Elizabeth Bishop Centenary celebrations in Nova Scotia were hugely successful and the EBSNS played a significant role in the whole year. The society is now involved in several legacy projects that emerged from all the activity in 2011. Information about them will be provided in this and future newsletters, on the website and the blog. The editorial committee hopes the society's members will enjoy the changes to the newsletter. When a permanent editor is chosen, more changes may be implemented, but for now we are excited to launch the "new look" of the EBSNS Newsletter.

Editorial committee:

Sandra Barry, Rosaria Campbell and Laurie Gunn

Call for Suggestions: Poems about Elizabeth Bishop



Brian Bartlett, Anne Shifrer, and Corey Clawson, Elizabeth Bishop scholars or readers, are compiling an anthology of poems that respond to the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop. We are looking for poems that comment significantly on Bishop's life and personhood as well as poems that comment on or engage

with the craft, style, or substance of her poetry. Poems that shape themselves in relation to Bishop's work (e.g., Lowell's "Skunk Hour" modeling its ending on Bishop's "The Armadillo") are also of interest.

While we may include a few unpublished poems, our primary goal is to gather published poems (approx. from 1950–2012) and to present these as a poetic conversation that both adds to the critical conversation and provides its own unique commentary on the character, craft, and value of Bishop's art.

The editors would greatly appreciate suggestions from Elizabeth Bishop readers and the broad audience of poetry readers as there are doubtless many poems of which we are unaware. Please send suggestions to Anne.Shifrer@usu.edu and she will send these along to the other editors.

We may also propose a panel on this subject for the 2013 American Literature Association Annual Conference to be held in Boston, May 21–24. Those interested in our project might look toward participation in such a panel.

The EBSNS was formed in 1994 to celebrate the life and work of the poet Elizabeth Bishop. The society seeks through its various activities and projects to promote the appreciation and study of Elizabeth Bishop as a Nova Scotia writer. The EBSNS publishes an annual newsletter and holds its AGM in Great Village in June of each year. For more information about the EBSNS and about membership, see our website: www.elizabethbishopns.org. You can also find more information about Elizabeth Bishop on the EBSNS blog: www.elizabethbishopcentenary.blogspot.com.



EB 100 Legacy Project for EBNS

By Sandra Barry

One of the main projects of the EBSNS during the Elizabeth Bishop Centenary was “In the Village”: The Elizabeth Bishop Centenary Writing Competition 2011. This prose competition called for autobiographical or fictional stories inspired by Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Village,” her masterpiece about her Great Village childhood. The idea was for each writer to explore or describe feelings, things, people or events about home and family, place and time, which had affected the writer’s life and connected him or her to the world. The competition was launched in September 2010 and closed in March 2011. Winners were announced in June 2011 and prizes were awarded at the Elizabeth Bishop Centenary Arts Festival in Great Village, 19-21 August 2011. The competition had five categories: Grades 4-6, 7-9, 10-12; Post-Secondary; Adult. It was open to anyone who wished to enter, though the EBSNS made a special effort to connect with students and young people in Nova Scotia. The EBSNS received 106 entries, across all five categories. Prizes were in kind (donated artwork and books), and the EBSNS committed to publishing the winning entries in a book.

This publication is now underway. The EBSNS set up an editorial committee to oversee this project. The working title for the collection is *Echoes of Elizabeth Bishop: EB100 Writing Competition*. The EBSNS is excited to announce that the award-winning publisher Gaspereau Press of Kentville, N.S. (www.gaspereau.com) will

do the printing, which guarantees the highest quality

book. *Echoes of Elizabeth Bishop* will contain not only the winning entries of the writing competition, but also a half-dozen images created by painters and photographers for the “Paint Great Village” exhibition at the McCarthy Gallery at the NSCC in Truro (July-August 2011) and the “One Art” Photographic Exhibition at ViewPoint Gallery in Halifax (September 2011).

Elizabeth Bishop’s story “In the Village” was published in *The New Yorker* in December 1953, thus 2013 marks the sixtieth anniversary of its publication. The EBSNS plans to launch *Echoes of Elizabeth Bishop* at its Annual General Meeting in June 2013. Notices about this exciting event and information about how to buy copies will appear on the EBSNS website and blog.

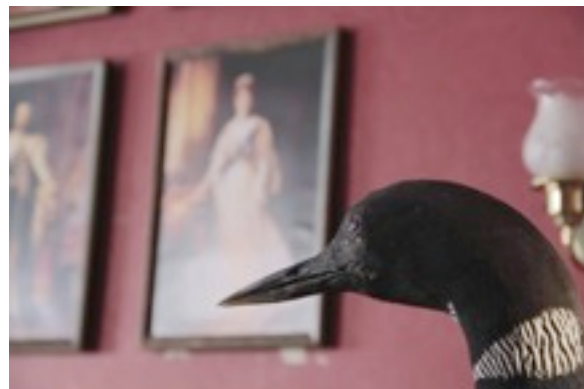
The EBSNS wishes to thank Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage for its generous support of the writing competition. The society also wishes to thank the judges for their enthusiasm and hard work in selecting the winners. And, finally, the society is grateful to all those who entered the competition and to the winners — and the visual artists — for being part of this EB100 legacy project.



Report on an Elizabeth Bishop Film

by Karen Rodriguez (wife of John Scott)

[Editors’ Note: This report is connected to an on-going film project by Nova Scotia-born film-maker John Scott – describing work on a short film based on Bishop’s poem “First Death in Nova Scotia.” In January 2012, John and a film crew came to Great Village to shoot the film. We will keep you updated on its progress.]



The pre-production planning for an adaptation of Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “First Death in Nova Scotia” started in earnest last August when John Scott visited Bishop’s ancestral home in Great Village. Along with finding appropriate locations to shoot the film, we also needed to track down some props which are specifically mentioned in the poem. What do you think was the most difficult to locate?

—a stuffed loon

—an antique marble topped side table

—chromolithographs of British Royalty Prince Edward, Princess Alexandra, King George and Queen Mary

—an infant’s coffin

—a 2-month old red head baby

The table was loaned for free from antique dealer Clair Peers at Onslow Trading Antiques, Great Village, N.S.; the coffin we had made by a local coffin maker in Weymouth, called Belliveau Cove Wood Products, they made it for us for free, the 2-month old red head — well that’s a secret!

Locating a stuffed loon was the trickiest of all. For one, loon’s are illegal to kill and it’s illegal to own a stuffed one without a permit. When we did find one at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, NY, it turns out that it is illegal to import or export migratory birds (dead or alive). Since we were shooting in Nova Scotia — that went out the window. Fortunately, when John contacted the Museum of Natural History in Nova Scotia, he was able to secure one for our use in the production. Thanks to Katherine Ogden and Andrew Hebda for this spectacular specimen!



“Images of My Village”: Permanent Banner Project

One of the most delightful aspects of the celebrations of the Elizabeth Bishop Centenary in Great Village in 2011 were the colourful banners that the EBSNS created, which were displayed not only in Great Village, but also along the shore, from Masstown to Five Islands. The banners contained the image of Joy Laking’s beautiful painting “Starry Night in Great Village.” The banners were extremely effective in publicizing EB100 and they were so admired that the EBSNS has sold most of them as souvenirs and as a fund-raiser for the EB100 Writing Competition book. Since the locally-made wrought-iron brackets that held the banners are still in place, the EBSNS Board thought that a visual art contest for children and young people in the area might be a way to create a permanent banner, one that could be displayed every year during the summer.

This idea has turned into “Images of My Village,” a call for original visual art submissions by children and young people/students in Colchester County. The purpose of this project is to celebrate the creativity of children and young people in the county; to encourage them to think imaginatively about what their home, village, town, community means to them; to express their feelings and ideas in visual art. The call for submissions will be open to all children and young people in Colchester County from Grade Primary to Grade Twelve. The EBSNS will curate a virtual exhibition of all submissions.

The EBSNS will especially encourage students who have a love or fondness for Great Village to submit because the society will then choose an image for a permanent banner that it feels best represents Great Village itself.

The EBSNS will make an announcement of this project at the AGM on 16 June 2012. More information will be made available on the EBSNS website, blog and in media releases as this project evolves. Stay tuned!!



Some members of the EBSNS Board at a recent board meeting at the EB House in Great Village.

EBSNS Brings Speakers to NSAC

by Rosaria Campbell

One of the benefits of having the Bishop Society anchored in Bishop’s childhood home is that those who live in the surrounding communities get the full benefit of the variety of people and events that the society brings to the area. The Truro and Bible Hill communities especially have benefited from the society’s continuing commitment to bringing authors, poets, musicians, actors, artists and scholars that are connected in some way to Bishop and her work.

Last year – or the “Centenary Year” as it has come to be known – saw two exceptional events come to the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) in Bible Hill. The first, in July, was a visit and reading by poet and author Joelle Biele, who visited the campus and read from the recently published *Elizabeth Bishop and the New Yorker: The Complete Correspondence*. The book, which is edited by Biel, covers over forty years of Bishop’s correspondence with the *New Yorker* and a relationship with the magazine that dates from about 1933 to Bishop’s death in 1979. The reading and the discussion with Joelle afterwards gave the audience a very personal overview of the book and its literary and historical value: a finely edited and unique study of Bishop’s creative and editorial processes and her relationship with the magazine that published most of her poems. As one person in the audience put it, the reading was “an almost private look into what goes on behind the poem we finally get to see.”

And of course, those of us who were able to make it to Great Village later that evening were privileged to be able to hear the reading of Biele’s *Those Fine Mornings*. The one-act play that tells the story of Bishop and The New Yorker using – along with excerpts from the letters between Bishop and the New Yorker’s editors – excerpts from her personal letters, archival material from the New Yorker, and even the editorial comments that appear on the proofs. Read by Joelle, Sandra, Suzie, John and Harry in the Great Village church it was truly, for many of us, one of the real high points of the centenary year.

September brought poet and naturalist Harry Thurston to the NSAC for an illustrated talk on the Bay of Fundy. Harry is well known to those in the Bishop circle, as is his reputation as a poet, naturalist, journalist, essayist and editor. A native



Harry Thurston and the Bay of Fundy

of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, he is the author of twenty books of poetry and non-fiction and *Tidal Life, A Natural History of the Bay of Fundy* – on which the talk was based - is still in print two decades after it was first published. In the comfort of the Alumni Theatre in Cumming Hall the audience was treated to an exceptional series of photographs of the Bay and to an exceptional breadth and depth of knowledge about its geography, paleontology, geology, ecology and natural history. The details in Harry’s talk were both surprising and important - from fossil records to the intimate relationship between a sandpiper and a shrimp to questions about tidal energy – and everyone in the audience that evening felt that they had been given something valuable and lasting.

The next day saw many of us on the road with Harry as he guided us on a day-long bus tour of the famous “Moose Route.” This next-to-last event in the year-long centenary celebrations was a chance for everyone to visit firsthand the area surrounding Bishop’s childhood home and to hear again the poetry it inspired. Even the famous Fundy weather (rain and fog) couldn’t drown the enthusiasm for the shore we were travelling or for what many view as the most important geography in Bishop’s life and poems.

The students, faculty and staff at NSAC wish to extend their sincere gratitude to the EBSNS for including us in these events and for bringing to the campus speakers of Joelle and Harry’s caliber.