



Am I Wrong?

column by Roger Varley

(It's been a few weeks since Conrad Boyce handed over the reins of *The Cosmos*, the newspaper he started in - and has guided since - 2005. We figured that was enough time for him to catch his breath and the moment was right to find out more about the man who has been figuratively coming into your homes each week for the last eight years. So we invited him for a cup of coffee: true to form, he chose a smoothie instead!)

I guess the way to start this, Conrad, is not by going back in time, but by going forward. Tell me about your new venture.

Well, all through my life, I've essentially alternated two careers: my professional acting career and my professional writing career. So for the last few years, in fact most of the time since I came to Uxbridge, I've been doing my professional writing career and doing theatre as a hobby. With the exception of that one summer when I did professional

theatre in Lindsay. I promptly lost my shirt and had to go back to professional writing to pay off the debt. But now that I've retired from *The Cosmos*, I'm going to go back to the professional theatre for a while and see how that does. So what I'm doing is, I'm mounting some of the one-person shows that I've done before and I'm hopefully going to sell them to schools, to do them in house concerts, much like the one you did for Adam and Eve, or just take them around myself and promote them, like the one I'm doing in three weeks up at Leaskdale. But I'm also going to be doing some different kinds of professional writing. There are some writing projects that I've had on the back burner for a long time while I've been doing *The Cosmos*.

Is that going to be theatre-related writing?

There's a variety. One of the books is a history of the Thomas Foster Memorial, one of the books is going to be an annotated Robert Service, a sort of a guide to all the references in Robert Service to the gold rush and all the things in the Yukon. Most people, when they hear or read Robert Service, there's a lot of terms that are unfamiliar to them.

The one theatre-related thing is a play that I'm working on that is actually set on the west coast of Vancouver Island. This particular play is about a historical incident from more than 200 years ago. I shall be going out there in about a month to do some further research. So that's sort of what I'm up to.

So the one-person shows you're doing initially will be Robert Service?

Yes. I have two or three different Robert Service shows that I do. I do the *El Dorado* play, which is the one I'm doing up in Leaskdale

in three weeks, which is an evening in a prospector's cabin in the Klondike in the year 1914, and then I do a sort of concert of Robert Service, where I introduce all the various poems by talking about Service himself and the gold rush and all those sorts of things. I also have a one-person play based on Service's war poems.

So El Dorado is the first show. When is that?

The weekend after Labour Day, the same weekend as the Fall Fair: Sept. 5-7 at the Leaskdale Church. It's sub-titled *A Night in the Klondike*.

How long has all this been percolating?

I knew that when I retired from *The Cosmos* that I would not be able to retire totally. I knew I had to do something to try and pull in a living, because we couldn't afford to retire totally, so the one-person shows that I already had seemed like a logical way to approach it. As for the writing projects, I didn't actually think about that until after I quit *The Cosmos*. One day as Lacy (Conrad's dog and constant companion) and I were wandering through the woods, I said: "Well, here's an opportunity to revive those things as well." She agreed with me.

Do you have anything else lined up for your one-man shows apart from El Dorado?

I've established a contact with the schools. There's a group called Mariposa in the Schools, which places artists in the schools, and the woman who runs that is actually quite keen on Robert Service. She was quite excited when I called, so I'm probably going to be booking some school things through her. We'll just see how interested the schools are. But the thing about the Robert Service shows is that they are applicable to many different elements in the curriculum. You can perform them, obviously, in a drama class; you can perform them in a literature class, a history class, because they're all about the gold rush, a geography class, because the Yukon is a place that a lot of kids aren't familiar with. And they're totally adaptable for any age from about Grade 4 right up to

Grade 12. I think they should get a good response, but we'll see. I also have a contact for house concerts. There are a lot of different house concert networks all across Canada, but most of them are focused on music: folk groups or small classical groups. Very few of them, if any, have ever tried theatre as an element, but almost all the ones I contacted said they thought that was a good idea and it's something they might want to pursue in the future.

That all sounds exciting, Conrad, but it's time to talk about The Cosmos days. How difficult was it to leave?

It was difficult. I never contemplated that I would do it forever, obviously, but even though I'd only been at *The Cosmos* for seven-and-a-half years, Lisa had been doing her job for 30 years and she'd had enough, so when she decided she was going to quit, it made sense for us both to go into something new together. So we made the decision to

large paper to begin with so she had some income coming in, so that's why we chose the Canada Day issue as her first issue.

Obviously, I have a deep attachment to it since a bunch of us started it together and I've been the main staff guy for most of the time. On the other hand, I was really content with what we'd done with it. I felt I was leaving it in good shape. I think I left it with a fairly good reputation with an incredible group of contributors. I felt I left it with a reasonable chance of continuing to succeed.

Did The Cosmos turn out the way you

originally intended when you started it or did it take any unexpected twists or turns?

The main twist and turn was the increase in competition. That was a major challenge, because when we started the only real major journalistic com-

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TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE PRESERVE TRAIL

On August 1st, a dam (west of Concession 6, south of Old Stouffville Road) was breached. This breach impacted the pond and dam structure in the Countryside Preserve.

Currently, the water level of the pond is low due to damage to the Preserve's dam caused by water overflow. Since the water level of the pond is low, there is no public safety issue, but because of the damage to the dam, the portion of the Preserve trail that goes over this dam will be closed until further notice.

An Environmental Assessment will be conducted to determine the future of the dam. Possible outcomes could include repairing or removing the dam.

A public meeting will be held in the future to discuss possible solutions. Public notice will be provided once a date is determined.

Until a decision is made regarding the future of the dam in the Countryside Preserve, the water level in the pond will be kept to a minimum depth and that portion of the trail over the dam will remain closed.

2014 "YOUR SUPER PET" Calendar Entry Form

The Uxbridge Scugog Animal Control Centre invites you to participate in their 10th Annual "Your Super Pet" Photo Contest/Calendar. All photos will be included in this 12 month calendar, but only 13 winners will be selected to be "Super Pet" of the month. Please fill out this entry form and submit with your photo and \$12.00 entry fee:

A. Drop off at: Uxbridge / Scugog Animal Shelter
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