

Profile of a lifetime writer

by Jeff Harrington

As usual, June Callwood was talking about something she cares about. Beaming, she spoke of the great pleasure she gets when she can help someone. Seconds later, she clenched her fists, intensity flashing through her face.

"Here's an injustice, here's a goddamn injustice that can be fixed. Most things you can't fix, but you can talk about the pain."

She has been writing about the pain for a long time.

Last Tuesday, the former "conscience of the Globe and Mail" urged a roomful of journalism students at King's College not to "stunt their growth" by shutting the world out.

"There is a wealth of human pain out there that you would be much more comfortable not to consider.

"Well, I'm here to argue that you have to care. Despite the poor economics and outlook of com-

mitting yourself, you have to commit yourself."

These are not empty words. For fifty years, Callwood has been more than a journalist.

She started working at the Brantford Expositor when she was "16 or 17" and was the woman that popped the bubble in the Globe and Mail's all-male newsroom in 1942. She was 18.

Callwood has written 24 books and more than 400 magazine articles. She has helped found more than two dozen organizations and has enough awards and medals to make Pinochet jealous. She is a social activist and ardent feminist, and to some people, she's a first-class pain in the ass.

Denied a raise while a freelancer at the Globe, she came to work in rags and pinned "Give June Callwood a raise" signs on the managing editor's door ("I think that's a responsible way to act").

Last September outside a gala

function of the 54th congress of PEN, the international writers' group, she enraged people protesting PEN's alleged lockout of minority writers by telling each and every one of them to "fuck off." The then-incoming president of the English-speaking section of PEN Canada, she claimed they "hadn't done their homework".

And her strong pro-choice stance makes her no friend of the anti-choice movement.

Her detractors include Roy Megarry, the Globe's publisher, who found her compassionate weekly columns too "depressing" — her third stint at the paper ended in December. Callwood said she left because Megarry wanted her gone, and out of loyalty to her husband of 46 years, sportswriter Trent Frayne, who she said the Globe humiliated and hurt when they let him go.

Talk about a *bad* editorial decision.



photo: Alex Garant

June Callwood: writing for the love of it. And talking too (see below).

Coverage of social issues

"Are we reflecting in our newspapers the complexities of our societies? We're not, because we're doing it on a crisis basis. Crisis management by newspapers is dreadfully irresponsible. Black people in Toronto have been harassed by police for years. It isn't covered with the excuse that you don't cover that Air Canada landed safely today."

"Things haven't changed (since I started at the Globe in 1942). Women's issues are seen to be less important than men's issues. More than half the babies born are male — why are children a women's issue? Why is violence against women a women's issue, when men are doing it?"

Writing

"To lose the sense that you're writing out of love is to be lost. You write for the love of it, because you want to be part of something that has integrity. (In every story, you should say) where are the fools in this, and where is the wisdom, and whether I like it or not, where is the truth?"

"You always write with a bias.

The best you can do is to be fair to the opinion with which you do not agree; that's really what freedom of speech is all about (I'm stealing this from Oliver Wendell Holmes). You've got to go to the wall to protect ideas that are distasteful to you."

Censorship

"(Some people) think you clean up societies by prohibiting dirt. I think you clean up society by making sure the dirt shows. I will defend a racist's right to say racist things. I want to know where that racist is."

Life at the Globe and Mail

"On the Globe and Mail, the women do the dog work, and men sit in the offices. The women are on the floor sitting in front of the computers for eight hours and the men are strolling around; it's just like watching a harem."

Canadian Newspapers

"The rotten morale on papers across the country comes from the journalist with the yearning heart, the idealists who gradually sell their souls. The price is very high, the price is ultimately cynicism and despair."

ABORTION:

Is opinion divided? YES.

Is this a complex issue? YES.

Should the Dalhousie Student Union have an abortion policy? NO.

VOTE 'NO' TO A DALHOUSIE STUDENT UNION POLICY ON ABORTION.

FIRST AID COURSES OFFERED

St. John Ambulance Emergency First Aid Courses will be held at Dalhousie over the next few months. There is a \$25.00 charge which covers the cost of workbooks and pamphlets. The one-day sessions are scheduled for:

March 23

from 8:30 am. to 4:30 pm. Registration and payment must be made prior to the day of the course and a confirmation will follow.

For more information, or to register, contact the Safety Office at 424-2495.