

The Art of Repurposing Yourself book signing at HHPL



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The three main principal writers from White Pine Writers, Kathryn Wishlow, Steve Scally and Vic Bodnar, were joined by a couple of the book's other story writers, Marsha Pace and Rod Emmerson, at Hastings Highlands Public Library on Oct. 15 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. They were doing book signings of their first book *The Art of Repurposing Yourself*, and they also gave readings from the book and answered book-related questions.

Sitting at a table over by the fireplace at the HHPL, Wishlow, Scally and Bodnar, the three principal scribes from White Pine Writers, were joined Pace and Emmerson, who had also written stories for the book. Wishlow said that they'd had a big crowd come by at 10 a.m. to get their books signed, bought and then left, but she thought that people had misunderstood and that nobody would show up to this second reading at 1 p.m., which as it turns out they didn't.

Wishlow described how the book came into existence, starting back in 2018, and how it really came together during the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions over the past two plus years, when they could really focus on it.

"We found more and more people that had stories and challenges that they had met and repurposed themselves. All different ages, sizes, shapes, different destinations like the U.K. and Germany. There are guy stories, there are girl stories, there are young people stories, there are retirees, there's a huge variety. And it just came together all by itself and as we started to put it together, we realized that they kind of led into each other. We were all on the same page, writing different stories, but with the same message. And we put them together. And the last six months was probably the most active overall. From February to September, with a little hiatus due to one of our writers being ill and recovering," she says.

Scally reveals that not only were they the authors, but also the editors and publisher of *The Art of Repurposing Yourself*.

"We did everything a publishing company would do, we did ourselves. It's self-published, but if you look at it, you'll see it's very professional," he says.

White Pine Writers is incorporated and a legal entity, according to Wishlow, and their printer is in Kingston, the same printer that Queen's University uses, Allan Graphics Ltd. She says that they'd heard stories of authors losing money with publishers who have subsequently gone bankrupt, so they thought they could help out local people who've written something as consultants, guiding them

along and publishing them under the White Pine Writers umbrella, if they so wish.

Wishlow, Scally and Bodnar all read from one of their respective stories from the book. Wishlow's story 'Retire or Repurpose?' was about her love of 're' words, the meaning of the word retire and her definition of it to embrace retirement with optimism and purpose. She feels that retired folks should now be referred to as 'repurposed.'

'And that was the basic inspiration for the book's title. It's about turning lemons into lemonade or lemon meringue pie. It's about not allowing ourselves to be limited. These two gentlemen said they weren't writers and I said yes you are, because you are wonderful storytellers. If you can tell a story you can write. It just takes an effort to push up what your thoughts are or how to embellish them,' she says.

White Pine Writers have gotten plenty of other repurposing stories in addition to the 24 stories that comprise the current volume, so a sequel is certainly seriously being considered.

Pace, who also did the graphic design for the cover and book, said that she wrote her first story having never written one before.

'So, the story here is called 'Left is Right.' That's my story and I'd never written a story before but [Wishlow] pushed me a little bit and I wrote it. So, you never know,' she says.

Scally and Bodnar both read passages from one of their stories. Scally's tale 'Restructuring' was about a change in job and career skill sets with a move from sales to working at a radio station, while Bodnar's story 'Lost and Found' was about hunting and travelling as a youth with his uncle and a friend in the Great White North and using their innate and learned skills to survive in the sometimes harsh natural elements.

Bodnar says that the whole purpose of the book is when your life is faced with challenges, the first thing you have to understand is you can change it.

'But you have to try. People sit back and go 'I don't know what to do.' Try, do anything and at least attempt something,' he says.

Scally says, to coin a phrase, 'shit happens,' and that it just doesn't happen and stop.

'It doesn't happen and you fix it and you live happily ever after. What really happens is, and it's evident in many of the stories there are multiple instances, if you look in reflection to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing results of that continue. There are ripple effects and things have changed. In the change, people have had to adapt to what has changed,' he says.

Scally believes that the book will never be obsolete as long as that's the case, and that the message of repurposing after a challenge will always be relevant.

Asked what story really resonated with them, or was their favourite (aside from their own story/stories), all the writers said that all the stories resonated with them in one way or another and that they saw something valuable in each of them which made them a favourite. Pace recalled that her story 'Left is Right,' about being left-handed and not being able to use her left hand in public school, really struck a chord with Emerson's wife, who is also left-handed and faced the same obstacles in school.

'So, she said she really resonated with my story because I told it the way it actually happened to me and the broad effects that had on me as an adult. And I also wrote what I had to go through to bring myself out of that as an adult and become aware that this is just part of my life and learn from that and move forward. I had to repurpose myself because I couldn't sit down with a paper and a pen, and I had to find out what that was all about. Because everything I did, I had writing to do of some sort,' she says.

The Art of Repurposing Yourself is available at local area libraries like the HHPL and bookstores like Ashlie's Books in Bancroft. It can also be ordered online through www.whitepinewriters.ca or through their Facebook page under 'White Pine Writers.' Wishlow,

Sally and Bodnar can be reached at whitepinewriters@gmail.com.

Wishlow says she has worked with many organizations on many projects and events over the last 45 years [like the Pine Island Writers, writing for a newspaper, and writing scripts for the Bancroft Theatre Guild, according to her author bio].

?Never have I worked with a team as cohesive, inspirational and gifted as the White Pine Writers.?