

CALAMITY'S CORNER

FOR READERS, WRITERS & MOVIE BUFFS AT LEISURE



© OCTOBER, 2011, Vol 4. Issue 10

WELCOME! Calamity's Corner is a cozy or chaotic place- you supply the mood and the beverage- to share interests in books, films, places and leisure pursuits.



Do YOU have an opinion about books, films, places and leisure pursuits?

Excellent!!

Send in

- A review or comment – even a few paragraphs is great.
- an unusual event/activity
- your favourite city or holiday destination.
- Feature your pet
- Suggest a quick quiz
- Suggest a writing exercise

Email Calamity at:
calam@live.com.au



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BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

TO

Lisa Y; Uncle Jack D: Julija S, Laura H, Julie W. Prue B; Paola; Linda L Anna L. W; Bob Sz; Jen B; Christopher V; Patrick V; Geraldine E. Pat McD.

And to all you Librans & Scorpions

Have a wonderful day and a rewarding year!



AUTHOR OF THE MONTH OCTOBER

NANCY M BELL



Her haunting words cast a spell of magical healing over her readers and convince us miracles do happen.



Sydney based band covering rock music from the 60's to today. Click on their banner & **LISTEN TO THEIR MUSIC**

Live performances in NSW.

October -at 8:00pm

8th Warilla Bowls & Rec., Shellharbour

9th Royal Exchange Hotel, Windsor

21st Wiseman's Bowling Club, Wollongong.

22nd Pendle Inn, Sydney

I'm excited to present my editor, Canadian author Nancy M. Bell whose young adult and middle grade fiction enchants and inspires the young and the young at heart. Nancy draws on her interest in Earth Energy lines, the Celtic tree Alphabet, Cornish myths, and her love of horses to enrich her novels, stories and poems.

[Laurel's Miracle- Book Trailer](http://youtu.be/Fy3nNKHdQYk)
<http://youtu.be/Fy3nNKHdQYk>
this video is truly beautiful.

Website:

<http://www.nancymbell.ca/>

[Nancy's Author page](#) at
MuseltUp Publishing
<http://tinyurl.com/3sbn7sn>

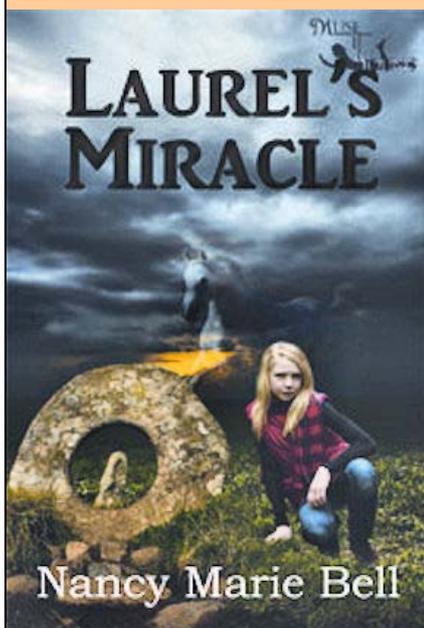
[Laurel's Miracle](#) available
here. <http://tinyurl.com/3veats8>

CANADIAN AUTHOR AND POET NANCY M. BELL

THE POWER OF WORDS

I love writing, the process, the magic of words on paper evoking strong emotions in the reader.

From early childhood I was seized with the need to express myself through the written word. Whole sentences and phrases would form in my mind and demand to be given life by the act of my placing them on paper.



I still have many of my childish scribbles, short stories, poems and even some full-fledged novels. When I look at them now, they are full of structural errors and punctuation mistakes. However, the magic is still glowing, the bones of the stories are alive and well preserved over the years by the fact they were given expression on paper.

I thought it was magic when I was young, and I still do.

The act of writing opens many doors. A wealth of knowledge lies hidden between the covers of books. At one time only privileged people had access to books, originally someone would procure a scribe to write down oral histories. The resulting document now belonged to the person who commissioned it. That person owned the "copyright" to the particular book. Literally, they had the power to grant or deny someone the access to copy from their text. This is how many of the old Irish texts came into being; *The Yellow Book of Lecan*, *The Tain Bo Cuailnge* and the *Book of Kells* to name a few.

Writing has opened other doors for me personally. The research for *Laurel's Miracle* put me in contact with people I would never have met otherwise. In the process new friendships have been born which I treasure. As with all things, I would start with the kernel of an idea and look for information pertaining to that. During the course of the investigation new and interesting topics emerged and off I would go chasing down the connecting information. Delving into the warren of knowledge and following the twists and turns of the chase, often finds me in the possession of facts I would not have obtained by a more direct route. The vastness of knowledge which exists is astounding, though sadly the amount that has been lost is equally vast.

The willingness of people to share information is amazing. I have contacted authors of books I have used in research to clarify something or ask for additional information and their response has been overwhelming. Some of these encounters have resulted in great friendships along with a general enrichment of my life. The community of words binds us.

The writing process brings me fulfillment and great joy. Stories and poems take on a life of their own. Often the characters will go off in an entirely unforeseen direction and I, as the author, have to follow along behind, tripping over my fingers on the keyboard while trying to keep up with them. This results in the story taking a major detour from where I thought the plot was going. It invariably makes me laugh at my foolishness in thinking I control the action.

Sometimes I feel more like a conduit for the stories, a doorway for them to enter the material realm and share their secrets.

There are always secrets hidden behind the words, doesn't matter which words are used. I don't pretend to be privy to these secrets; they reveal themselves to those readers who need to recognize them. As I read a book, often there will be one phrase or sentence which resonates in my bones and I feel as if the whole piece of work was written around those few words. Another reader may not feel the same, other things will speak to them which I don't see.

Words have power, words are power. They can condemn and praise, wound and heal. Words written on paper can bind a person to a contract; they can sentence you to death or release you. Interesting, isn't it the phrase; "sentence to death"? This implies that the correct words in a sentence can cause death or cause a person to be put to death.

Words are power and power opens doors of opportunity for those who know how to use them. Like all power objects, words should be wielded with care and compassion, never seeking to create pain or instigate harm. There is not a person alive who has not been wounded by words at some point in their lives. Words spoken with malice and hate have driven people to take their own lives, or the lives of others. There are doors which should not be opened, and ones which are difficult to pass through.

Authors should always be aware of the power they wield and use it wisely. I don't mean to imply we should never write of sorrow or ugliness of spirit, only that we should be aware of what we are giving life to and what it may wake in the minds of our readers.

BOOKS

MOVIES

MOVIES



L. J. ROBERTS' column

meet L.J. @

<http://booksaremagic.blogspot.com/>

Read her article

A Frustrated Hooker

INSPECTOR SINGH INVESTIGATES: A MOST PECULIAR MALAYSIAN MURDER

Flint, Shamini – 1st in series

Minotaur Books – 2008,

First Sentence: The accused, Chelsea Liew, was in court.

Inspector Singh has been sent from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur to investigate the case of a former model, Chelsea Liew, accused of murdering her ex-husband. Involved in a bitter dispute over the custody of their children, Chelsea, in court, threatened to kill her ex, and was the obvious suspect after his being shot. In spite of the evidence, Singh is less certain of her guilt and, working with Inspector Mohammad, dedicates himself to finding the truth.

One really can't help but like Insp. Singh. From the very beginning, one is taken in by his delightfully pragmatic approach and view. He not only wins over those around him, but the reader as well. By his side, we are provided with Inspector Mohammad, who quotes Shakespeare when he's angry. It is a winning combination, indeed.

Flint's writing and observations are wonderful. The story deals with the conflicts between Malaysia and Singapore with the author citing a broader view that... "there was absolutely no possibility of a successful resolution to the case he had just been handed. There never was when religion trumped rational behavior and politics influenced police work." "Programmed randomness struck him as an oxymoron." She also makes some solid observations about greed and humanity being out of sync with nature.

The story provides an interesting look at Sikh life and customs. Flint masterfully conveys the impact and emotions of the case through the true victims—the children. You also sense the frustration of the police in a case with several suspects for no definitive evidence toward any of them.

"A Most Peculiar Malaysian Murder" is extremely well plotted with a very good ending and wonderful characters; particularly Singh who impacts the lives of those around him. I, for one, cannot wait to read more of this series.

EDITH PARZEFALL

THE STRAIGHT STORY

(1999)

If you've seen any of **David Lynch's** scandal movies, you won't believe he directed *The Straight Story*. Based on true events, the movie follows 73-year-old Alvin Straight on his 240-mile journey from Laurens, Iowa, to Mount Zion, Wisconsin--on a lawn tractor.

Why? After his doctor tells him to quit smoking, eat healthy food and use a walker, Alvin would only consent to using a second cane. When he learns his brother Lyle suffered a stroke, Alvin decides there's one thing he needs to do before he dies, make peace with his long estranged brother. Because his eyes are bad, he doesn't have a driver's license, but he can drive his lawn mower.

Living on sausages and sleeping in the hanger he pulls along, he faces his own mortality and regrets. Some people Alvin encounters on his six-week journey share their problems and act as a mirror for his own life's twists and turns.

Probably doesn't sound like it, but there isn't a boring moment, even when Alvin takes shelter from a storm and watches the downpour, or rattles past endless fields.

Actor, stunt man and cowboy **Richard Farnsworth** did an outstanding job portraying Alvin Straight. During the shooting he was already terminally ill with bone cancer and shot himself shortly after the film was done.

The Governor of New Mexico presented him with an award for Excellence and Achievement in the Arts shortly before his death.



Visit Edith's blog

<http://blog.edith-parzefall.de/>

CALAMITY

JOHNNY ENGLISH – REBORN (2011)

What a fun family movie. The first *Johnny English* was funny, but to me, that was just a practice run for the sequel. *Johnny English, Reborn*. **Rowan Atkinson** in his role as elite, though disgraced, M17 agent kept me laughing for 1¼ hours. In fact 100% of the audience laughed aloud.

There is less buffoonery. He is more sensible, he knows his limitations: 'I may not know much about golf, but I do know how to hold the bat.' In physical combat, he is unexpectedly resourceful, and his misinterpretations are just funnier. He's even a credible love interest for **Rosamund Pike**, who plays Kate Sumner the behavioural psychologist ... okay, maybe not, but it's easy to care about Johnny English the agent, & forget the actor.

M17 brings Johnny English back to the fold to hunt down international assassins planning to kill the Chinese Premier. Every scene has relevance and dovetails with the others. Very well written.

From the opening in the Buddhist monastery, where he is subjected to extremes of bodily...um...discomfort and humiliation, to the speeding wheelchair, to the end where we wait in the Palace for the Queen to restore his knighthood, *Johnny English-Reborn* is a laugh a minute.

His co-stars **Gillian Anderson** (his boss at M17) and **Daniel Kaluuya** (agent Tucker, his sidekick) have surprised expressions for much of the movie, but they compliment Johnny English's confidence with their caution.

This is one I'll buy on DVD.





TUSCANY – Paradise found

by Aussie travellers **PAM & PAUL THOMAS**



As we drove towards our destination of Montepulciano in our little Fiat bambino, the scenery unfolded before us, the likes of which we had never seen before. Eventually we could see the town perched high on a hilltop with majestic splendour and we found ourselves winding our way through narrow little streets that looked far too slim to permit two way traffic, dodging people and cars and at last we heard Lisa our GPS announce "You have reached your destination".



We stayed at a lovely apartment for 6 nights in **Montepulciano** and of all the places we stayed, we both agreed this was our favourite. "Appartamenti al Poggiolo" - owned by a lovely Italian family who warmly greeted us on arrival. We were elated when they showed us our apartment. **Every morning we would sit eating breakfast, on our little balcony, watching the beautiful Tuscan countryside which stretched as far as the eyes could see, with little birds dancing in the sky, seemingly immersed in the sheer joy of flying whilst the distant chime of church bells announced the arrival of a new day.**



Montepulciano was a great historic town to base ourselves to explore the Tuscany region. I loved looking at the little boutiques selling all sorts of leather goods, art, ceramics, famous Vino de Nobile and gourmet food shops. Of interest, the Twilight saga's *New Moon* was filmed there and a lot of the locals were extras in the movie. Paul was intrigued by



this beautiful Renaissance church on the outskirts of the town, built in the 1500s.

Madonna di San Biagio,

Montepulciano has an Italian language school which a couple of our well known politicians attended, Amanda Vanstone (*Ambassador to Italy (2007-'10)*) and Tim Fisher, (*Ambassador to the Vatican 2008-'10*)



We took several day trips. We visited Saturnia to enjoy the **Cascate del Gorello, thermal hot springs.**

There are swish resorts nearby taking advantage of this natural phenomenon, but we preferred the free, off the beaten track approach. The

water flows downward at a rate of around 800 litres per minute so the water is constantly replenished and is very clean. We sat in the little limestone shelves that the flowing water carved out. It was heaven. We couldn't have asked for better weather.



I got my hair cut at a hair salon. The hairdresser couldn't speak English, nor me Italian so when she asked, "Mousse?" she and I both laughed. It was one word we both understood. It was a great haircut by the way.

On other days we visited other towns such as Siena (Florence's baby sister) and saw the gothic rather garish Cathedral of Siena. There is an interesting museum and also interesting excavations discovered underneath the cathedral. The views from the town of Pienza took our breath away. Montalcino was another historic town we enjoyed exploring and also the popular San Gimignano, however we thought San Gim was too overrun with tourists (us included!).

I would love to take the three week Italian language course offered in Montepulciano which would give me an excuse to return one day to Tuscany.

PET OF THE MONTH

MEET CHIRP

“Chirp is a white budgie which is very unique, and he has some blue patches on him,” says Taylor McGovern of Sydney, NSW. “He is my baby boy,”



“Chirp loves playing with his keys and his ball which he snapped off his ladder. He also loves making a mess with his food and water. Often when I come home from school I have to clean up bird food and water. He was a baby when I got him on the 2nd of February, 2011. Chirp has just turned 1.”



FROM THE GROPER'S SHELF



All agree, I am the friendliest fish in the sea, but some even claim I'm more handsome and smarter than the octopus, that mighty creature of the deep.



Aw ...we won't go there!

A BLAST FROM THE PAST



by [Jacquie Rogers](#) author of [Faery Special Romances](#)
[Down Home Ever Lovin' Mule Blues](#)
[Much Ado About Marshals](#)

from [Mélange Publishing](#)

October 19, 1959
Aachen, Germany

The Scotch-Club opened for business, the world's first discothèque with the set-up that would become wildly popular in the 70s and 80s. Dancehalls had been prevalent for decades, but the Scotch-Club was the first to combine the floor, lights, sound, and DJ. The latter was accidental. Initially, anyone could play a record, but Klaus Quirini wasn't enamored with how things were going so he took over and used the style similar to radio DJs. Turns out, everyone had a great time and the Scotch-Club used DJs from then on.



Discothèques spread first to London and then to the United States. Go-go dancing got its start at New Jersey's Peppermint Lounge in 1962.

If you can read German, I think this site gives more info: [Scotch Club »](#)
<http://www.baffly-scorpion.de/index.php/tag/scotch-club/>

CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISE. Need an unblocker for a poem or story?

Take a loved nursery rhyme character and describe him or her 20 years later.

For example:



- In what way did the experience change the cow who jumped over the moon?
- After their tumble, did Jack recover and did Jack and Jill ever find their happy ever after?
- How did little Miss Muffet conquer her arachnophobia?

UNUSUAL EVENT

Father's Day and a Birthday aren't generally regarded as unusual events, but when a family gets together for **an intimate Teppanyaki** well . . . they dined like emperors on delicate Japanese cuisine until their personal chef began throwing the food at them.



Photos by Natalie.

Some caught the eggs and rice, but even a drummer's dexterity was challenged when two eggs were thrown at him at the same time. ☺ Note the egg on the right. That one gave them plenty to laugh about.

CALAMITY'S NEWS

WELCOME TO Michelle Pickett, USA; Elizabeth Lloyd, USA; Margaret Fieland, Boston, USA; Rebecca Ryals Russell, Florida, USA; Rochelle Weber, Illinois, USA.

All Calamity's Corner members are invited to **Nancy Bell's launch Party**, via the comments at <http://wendylaharnar.blogspot.com/> today!! Just by leaving a comment, one lucky guest will **win** a copy of Nancy's e-book, *Laurel's Miracle*.



Calamity's **Spitzli**, at top rt. corner of CC, had an accident and dislocated her kneecap rt. back leg. She needs an operation on Tuesday. She doesn't complain, but it is hard to see such an active pup so quiet. She is so accepting and tries to stay calm. One good thing, she walks beautifully on the lead. Doesn't pull or lurch forward, just steps slowly and looks up at me, waiting to be carried. Now I'd give anything to have to yell at her to 'Heel'.

QUICK QUIZ

OCTOBER

Thank you to Ted, NSW, Australia.



1. Pilgrims make the steep climb to visit whose sanctuary?
2. You'll find it in which town and country?
3. It was built on the spot where which event supposedly occurred?
4. In what year?
5. This was gradually enlarged to include a church and the Franciscan Monastery known as ...?
6. The twenty-minute walk up through the lush ravine leads you on the *Via Crucis* lined with what atmospheric features?

Answers to SEPTEMBER quiz

from Ted NSW, Australia.



1. **Stradivarius violin** (this one is the rare "**Lady Blunt**" violin named after the grand-daughter of Lord Byron who once owned it.
- 2 a) It was made in **1721**
b) In the northern Italian city of **Cremona**
c) By **Antonio Stradivari**
3. Auctioned in June this year, it raised the record price of **£9.8m. (\$15.9m)** four times the previous Stradivarius violin record.
4. In 1971, at Sotheby's the "Lady Blunt" violin sold for **£84,000.**
5. This Stradivarius violin was auctioned to raise money for relief projects in northern Japan where the deadly earthquake and tsunami hit on 11 March.

N THE WEB

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Consult SALLY ODGERS -- <http://www.affordablemanuscriptassessments.com/products.htm>
for manuscript assessment --- you can afford . . . and for affordable workshops.

Until next month, I hope you find the leisure time you need to spend in those pursuits that make you happiest.

CALAMITY

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