



Minnesota Writing Project

May 2002

Vol. 11 No. 3



These few days in Washington, D.C. have forced me to re-examine my feelings about politics, government, patriotism and freedom and to look at our country in a new way. I love Washington, D.C. and jumped at the chance to go when Muriel asked me, but I wasn't prepared

for the daunting task ahead of us or the visible reminders of the vastly different world we live in compared with my last visit two years ago.

On Thursday, we walked to the Capitol through paths filled with blooming tulips, purple pansies, and trees bearing the remnants of cherry blossoms. At the Capitol, however, I got my first glimpse of changes put in place since September 11th. Concrete barricades blocked off parking, and guards/police were outside every drive-up entrance. NWP participants were asked to assemble in one area by the north door. As we entered, we were required to show photo identification, have our purses searched, and go through a metal detector before assembling for a briefing by the National Writing Project.


The warm welcome that Mary Ann Smith, NWP Co-director, gave to all participants helped to put aside my thoughts of terrorism. It was reassuring to know that this year's spring conference had the greatest participation ever from all over the United States. I immediately sensed our common bond and strong belief in the mission of the writing project. As participants from Mississippi and Pennsylvania introduced their senators, I began to realize what it means to belong to a national organization. Listening to these men talk about their belief in the teaching of writing and their willingness to support us with legislation made me see the Minnesota Writing Project as part of a much bigger picture.

During the day we were fortunate to meet with someone from the offices of all 10 senators and representatives from Minnesota between 11:30 and 5:15...it was exhausting, because they occupy different buildings, which are the size of fortresses. Screening and metal detectors greeted every entrance. When my husband and I were here several years ago, we were able to ride the underground shuttle between the Capitol and the office buildings, but that will never happen again -- it's closed to the public now. So, Muriel and I spent a good deal of time walking...and walking...and walking.

We were able to see Paul Wellstone, who declares "I'm for the little people, literally and figuratively;" Betty McCollum; Oberstar; Sabo; and Guteknecht in person; for the rest, we met with their education aides (which is pretty common, I guess). Although everyone was warm and welcoming, I felt intimidated to express the scope of our work and really amazed at what a difference it can make to take the time to personally plead your cause. Our request for the National Writing Project is very small in terms of the national budget (like 1 cent out of \$100.00), so although the recommendation has passed both the House and Senate and has been appropriated

for the next 6 years, President Bush has not included it in his bill. Apparently, the President has the power to put it in or leave it out; it's important to keep the issue in front of our congressmen so that they can press for our continued support.

I was also surprised at how much power the legislative aides have in getting the information to the legislators. I'm sure all are under 30, and most under 25, and yet they are the people in charge of reminding the legislators how they voted last time, what the issue is about, and how they should vote this time.



In addition to the political agenda, we also had fun trying out the restaurants and just walking around the city in beautiful spring weather. Although this was my fourth trip to Washington, I have to say I enjoyed it the most and didn't feel quite as overwhelmed by the immensity of the city. Muriel is a great traveling companion, and the nice thing about being with writing project people is that they make you feel right at home. As in Minnesota, the people representing NWP all care about kids, the teaching of writing, and hands-on professional development. How nice it is to know that this commitment runs throughout our nation. Thanks to the Minnesota Writing Project for a great experience!

-Micki St. Sauver

Minnesota Writing Project Reunion

12 Years: 1990-2002

*Celebrate ourselves
as writers and
teachers of writing*

Saturday, September 14, 2002
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Radisson Hotel Metrodome

Reservations accepted now!
Send \$25 (includes lunch) to:
MWP
227 Lind Hall,
207 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

<http://mwp.cla.umn.edu> for more information



Toward Creating a Bridge Between High School and College Writing

On Wednesday, April 24, Dr. Lillian Bridwell-Bowles - MWP Co-director, and Pamela Flash - Associate Director for the Center of Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing, conducted the workshop **School to University: Preparing Students for Academic and Professional Writing**. Twenty high school instructors from several school districts in Minnesota participated in the day-long interactive workshop, held at the Minnesota Humanities Institute in St. Paul. With the success of this workshop, MWP hopes to offer future opportunities for teachers.

July 15-19

July 22-26

Instructional Strategies to Improve Student Writing

Focus on narration, description, clarification, and problem-solution modes
Emphasis on conferencing and revision techniques

Reading/Writing Connections

Focus on achievement
Emphasis on comprehension strategies

In both workshops participants will

- Reflect on their own writing process as they write, share their writing, and participate in a community of writers.
- Consider the theory and practice of writing instruction.

Facilitators:
Marsha Besch, MWP Outreach Coordinator
Steve Smarjesse, MWP Teacher Consultant

Place: University of Minnesota **Time:** Monday-Friday, 9:00a.m.-3:00p.m.
Cost: \$250 per session for participants NOT sponsored by an MWP Institutional Member District
Credits: Two University of Minnesota graduate credits available for an additional fee

FOR MORE INFORMATION :
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Registration 2002 Open Institute
Mail to : Minnesota Writing Project, U of M, 227 Lind Hall, 207 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455

Name _____ Grade/Courses Taught _____
School _____ District _____
Home Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Email address _____ Home phone _____

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