These 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
CONGRATULATIONS, LILLY!

Lilly is one of six University of Minnesota employees being recognized for their contributions to the community. Her work with Writing Across the Curriculum and to MWP are examples of contributions and accomplishments that “must result in long-term and lasting changes for the public good and demonstrate an unusual commitment to the University and greater community.” On May 15th she will be honored at the University of Minnesota’s Outstanding Community Service Award Banquet because “her dedication has built a community of teachers of writing throughout the state with links to writing communities nationwide.”

“Dine and Discuss”

On Monday, April 15, MWP held its annual luncheon for the administrators who serve as our contacts in the institutional member school districts. The agenda focused on presenting an update on MWP initiatives and an opportunity for the representatives to share with us and each other on what has been happening in their school districts. Since many districts have or will be offering training on six-traits, the participants discussed what had been done and how they are designing follow-up. In these days of diminishing budgets and cut programs, schools are seeking ways of providing support to their staff, and the administrators attending were interested in sharing ideas with one another. Lilly shared ideas she had gleaned from a recent conference on international English and literacy held at Harvard; Muriel distributed the annual report and Marsha gave an overview of upcoming workshops including the summer open institute. As budgets tighten in districts, our partnerships with these member districts is even more key in providing quality opportunities for teacher learning.

ELL/ESL LUNCHEON

The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing (CISW) and the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) invited several University of Minnesota faculty to join us for a workshop luncheon on Wednesday, April 17, at the Radisson Metrodome. Bev Alsleben, MWP Fellow, Jean Braun, MWP Literacy Task Force, and Micheal Thompson, CFL Language Arts Specialist also attended. An informal conversation on various topics of concern to instructors of non-native speakers occurred. Some issues discussed were the changing populations of entering ELL students, services to support students who are NNS (non native speakers), preparation of NNS high school students, graduation standards’ effect on the entering population, and training/awareness of teachers. The purpose of the luncheon was to promote further collaboration among these parties.

Advanced Leadership Institute

During this school year, Muriel and Marsha have had the opportunity and privilege of visiting the participants from last summer’s Advanced Leadership Literacy Institute in their own classrooms. We wanted to recognize the leadership these teachers provide at their schools and the learning they are applying with their students. Each school has its own “flavor.” Our conversation with each teacher focused on what has been happening since our experience last summer. A number of teachers have shared learnings about literacy either with their whole school or with their colleagues at a grade level. Some have formed study groups around the text Mosaic of Thought. Others are using guided reading for the first time or are refining their management of these groups. Prereading was emphasized by several this year. Many reported more deliberate thoughts about how they approach reading with their students. Although many of these teachers are facing budget cuts and contract stalls, we found the teachers we visited to be energetic and committed to providing the best learning opportunities for their kids.

Thanks to the support of Micheal Thompson, CFL Language Arts Specialist, MWP was able to offer an opportunity for these participants to gather for a day of renewal at the Minnesota Humanities Center on May 2nd. Once again the sharing of ideas highlighted the importance of our continued networking.

Announcement: Special Event

Lauren Stringer, children’s author and illustrator, Guest Presenter
12th Annual Selective Institute
Wednesday, June 19, 2002
1:00 PM
Mt. Olivet Retreat Center
7984 257th Street West
Farmington, MN 55024
952-469-2175 or www.mtolivetretreat.org

All past MWP participants and friends are welcome!

Call MWP at 612-625-6323 or e-mail at mwp@umn.edu to confirm.

Attention: Check out MWP’s updated website (thanks to Sandy Hayes) at mwp.cla.umn.edu and JOIN THE LISTSERV to keep informed and participate in dynamic conversation.

The Minnesota Writing Project - 2
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.
THE MINNESOTA WRITING PROJECT
NEWSLETTER

published quarterly by
The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing
University of Minnesota
227 Lind Hall
207 Church St. S. E.
Minneapolis, MN  55455
ISSN 1061-6535

An Official Site of the National Writing Project
also funded by the
Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing
and the College of Liberal Arts at the
University of Minnesota

Minnesota Writing Project Co-Directors:
Lillian Bridwell-Bowles
Muriel Thompson

Outreach Coordinator:
Marsha Besch

The University of Minnesota is an equal
opportunity educator and employer.

Minnesota Writing Project
University of Minnesota
227 Lind Hall
207 Church St. S.E.
Minneapolis, MN  55455

A Very Big Thank You
We wish to express our gratitude to the following Sustaining
MWP Members, who generously contributed $50 or more to
the project in our membership drive: Marscha Besch, Karen M.
Christenson, Brandon Crawford, Penny Erickson, Louise Hinz,
Janet Johnson, Kathleen Keating, Gerry Lidstrom, Greta
Michaels, Elizabeth Nist, SuEllen Shaw, Steve Smarjesse, and
Muriel Thompson.

Minnesota Writing Project
Policy Board Members
2001-2002
Anne Andersen
Marsha Besch
Gin Besser
Melissa Borgmann
Lisa Christen
Lillian Bridwell-Bowles
Ann Browning
Kathy Fleming
Erin Harley
Louise Hinz
Kathleen Keating
Terry Klegin
Sandra Nesvig
Steve Smarjesse
Shelley Snell
Micki St. Sauver
Micheal Thompson
Muriel Thompson
Victoria Wilson

An Official Site of the National Writing Project
also funded by the
Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing
and the College of Liberal Arts at the
University of Minnesota