

# Twelve River RIPPLES

## A Writer's Life



*by Sue Foster*

I liked writing from the very beginning: finger trailing in sand trays; wax crayon patterning; following dots with a pencil; repeating patterns of zigzags, loops, balls-with-tails up and down. My first fountain pen was a sensual delight, many Quink stories written before, during and after school. So much of my childhood was spent writing that, by ten, a hard callous had developed on my long third finger, the pen-rest, of my right hand. I was quietly proud of this ugly lump.

I was kicked off A level English because of something I wrote – ask me sometime – I took the A in Art instead.

Before everyone typed essays, I masochistically always wrote more than was necessary, enjoying the process of 'getting it all down' and then cutting, amending and editing by writing, rewriting and then writing again in best! I distinctly remember writing an essay at Uni. about Levi-Strauss - the anthropologist, not the jeans. After having written the notes, the evidence, the arguments, the quotes which addressed the title, I wrote the essay out 'in best' five times at least, before I was happy with it. I have always had a waste-paper bin full of scrunched up balls of paper in my life.

It was at this time I began reading and writing poetry. It was my response to hardship, relationship disappointments, cultural and political movements in the 70s and the Merseyside poets! Writing poetry was also a break from writing essays for my degree in Religious Studies, which involved being able to write about philosophy, world religions, beliefs,

anthropology and ethics. I also began the habit of always carrying a little notebook and jotting down daily observations, lists, ponderings and the germs of poems. I still write notes every day and continue to use these jottings to inform much of my current work.

During my career I learnt very quickly that more actually got done if it was written down rather than just discussed in meetings. I was called upon to write something important everyday: letters, (later on emails), reports, schemes of work, action plans, appraisals, references, as well as writing regularly in school magazines, writing school plays and in theatre programmes. I was also a proof-reader (mainly plays for schools) for Heinemann Publishers for a few years, when I was also asked to write several book reviews.

Just as my parents did, I still enjoy handwriting letters - at least one a week to a friend or elderly relative.

Since retiring four years ago, I am able to read more and attend more poetry readings, workshops and the Suffolk Poetry Society's Festival and Poetry in Aldeburgh. Studying and writing poetry has become a major focus in my life and I am enjoying stretching my creativity by meeting regularly with several poetry groups and, over this time, have written over three hundred poems. I write every day and hope that, amongst the less well-conceived, clumsy, incomprehensible sillinesses, a gem of something well-crafted and meaningful will emerge.