

'Foxdale Miscellany' allows retirees creative literary outlet

by Lindsay Chew

For some people, retirement might mean long afternoons knitting and evenings of "Murder She Wrote" reruns. But for the writers of the *Foxdale Miscellany* life is full of exciting new literary exploration.

The *Foxdale Miscellany* is an all-volunteer publication produced and distributed within the Foxdale Village Retirement Community in State College.

Ranging from retired English teachers to retired lieutenants of the U.S. Navy, the writing staff of the *Miscellany* brings to life this quarterly publication with short essays, short personal narratives and poetry. The publication also includes children's stories as well as pet profiles, creating a surprise for the reader every issue.

"Miscellany really *means* miscellany," said Charlotte de Lissovoy, a writer, copy editor, and typist for the *Miscellany*.

The *Miscellany* staff builds an atmosphere of community between all the residents at Foxdale by abiding by a mission statement that facilitates the sharing of thoughts, ideas, and feelings in creative works, as well as inspiring every resident to take up a pen and let their creative writing skills come to life.

"It is a nutritional atmosphere," said William Toombs, a regular contributor.

The staff meets the fourth Monday of every month to read their pieces aloud and help one another improve.

"We all make suggestions and we'll all talk about it," said de Lissovoy.

"When we started out, there was no editing," said Bunny Moon, a writer. "And now we proofread again and again."

Such a thorough editing process would not have been set in place without the guidance of de Lissovoy. Acting as a backbone for the *Miscellany*, de Lissovoy, a retired English teacher, has taken a leadership role in the *Miscellany*. Not only does she write for every issue but also proofreads, types and edits the publication.

"She takes a story, prunes it, changes it, develops it," said Toombs.

Not all the writers for the *Miscellany* intended to become writers when they joined the Foxdale community.

Paul Bixby, Foxdale resident, familiar to most *Miscellany* readers, had no intentions of writing.

Bixby said he started when a university student came to Foxdale looking for anyone interested in walking with her as a part of a class assignment. Bixby volunteered and it became a regular habit to walk with her. However, once she graduated Bixby had no one to walk with.

"I tried to walk alone for a while...and started to think about things I could write about," said Bixby. "It has been fun. Some make sense, some don't...but



Photo by Lindsay Chew

Members of Miscellany writing staff collaborate on stories. From left to right: Bunny Moon, Amy Weber, Paul Bixby, Charlotte de Lissovoy and William Toombs.

I enjoy it all the same."

Others on the staff, however, came onto the *Miscellany* scene with a resume filled with previous experience.

Amy Weber, a retired secretary and writer, fell into place as a regular writer for the *Miscellany* when she moved into Foxdale. Weber, who wrote for her hometown paper in her youth, has applied those skills and painted the pages of the *Miscellany* with colorful detail and witty phrases.

"I was always interested in newspaper writing and that is how I learned to write," said Weber. "The five Ws in the first paragraph and go from there."

Many of the pieces found in the *Miscellany* come from the writers' personal lives and experiences. The latest edition, titled "Historic Moments Relived," gave the entire community a chance to depict their memories through their pens and garnered a particularly strong response.

"We got stories from people that have never written before," said de Lissovoy. "It gives us more in depth awareness of each other."

Recalling a loved one's greatest attributes with a poem or remembering a personal hardship through a short narrative, the writers of the *Miscellany* allow themselves the share these memories with other residents.

"There is a lot of reminiscing," said Toombs, who explained that it is easy to say an event happened, but harder to explain what happened. It is how you saw the event that makes the difference, he said.

The memories of the residents bring the past to life in the *Miscellany*. The heart of the publication lies within each of these writers and their willingness to forgo their fear of sharing and to embrace their words.

"Your memories, as you get older get very sharp," said Bixby. "You may not remember the exact words but you remember the images. It is my memory...It may not be the same as the person next to me but it is what I remember."