

Sheldon Bull

Returning speaker for the 2011 TSC

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(One day after the 2010 Toronto Screenwriting Conference)

<http://blog.sheldonbull.com/2010/04/12/a-great-time-in-toronto.aspx>

A Great Time in Toronto

I've just returned from the first annual Toronto Screenwriting Conference, which was held at Ryerson University in the heart of downtown Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Several thoughts come to mind as I sit back at my desk here in Los Angeles:

First, I left too soon. I didn't know I was going to have such a good time, so when I was given the option weeks in advance of the conference for a one or two-night stay in Toronto, I opted for the single night, figuring that if my presentation really sucked I could get out of town fast. What I did not expect was to meet so many writers to whom I took an instant liking, and to meet so many wonderful young people who volunteered to make the event happen. I also did not expect to so thoroughly enjoy myself in Toronto, a city I had not visited since 1971. What a great town, the little I had time to see. I'll have to go back and see more. I was having a wonderful time, and just as I was finally relaxed, feeling that my presentation had gone well, it was time to get on a plane and go home.

Second, my deepest thanks and appreciation to and admiration for everyone involved in staging this very professional and useful event. My very special thanks to Glenn Cockburn, the head honcho at Meridian Artists Literary Agency in Toronto. This conference was Glenn's idea. He, his partners at Meridian, and a host of tireless volunteers did a stellar job of organizing a great weekend for writers to get together, give each other support, share ideas, make new friends, and learn a thing or two from each other in the process.

More thanks to Bryce Mitchell, Jon Davis, Quinn McCutcheon, and all of the other volunteers who steered me skillfully and gracefully through my brief stay in Toronto and through my presentation on Saturday. Third, my deep appreciation to the new friends I made at the conference. In chronological order: Pam Douglas, who lives in Los Angeles and ended up as my traveling companion to and from Toronto. I've now spent more time in airports and on airplanes with Pam than I have with anyone other than my wife. After a successful career as a TV writer, Pam now teaches at USC. She's bright and funny and insightful. If you're interested in writing the one-hour TV format, I'd look Pam up on the internet.

Ellen Besen, a teacher and animator in Toronto, who graciously organized a very enjoyable evening on Friday for us MWP authors. I was tired when I got to Toronto on Friday night, and frankly a little nervous. What a pleasure for me, after checking in at the hotel, to come down to the restaurant and find Ellen waiting there, as she had promised. I made an instant friend, and had a wonderful conversation about writing, animation, films, education, the arts, philosophy, you name it. Thank you, Ellen. You got my very short stay in Toronto off to a great start.

Jennifer Van Sijll, a writer, educator, and MWP author, joined Ellen, Pam, and me on Friday night. Though Jennifer now lives in the San Francisco area, she is a Toronto native, and treated me to a walking tour of downtown Toronto on Saturday morning. What a pleasure for me. I would have just stayed in my hotel room brooding about my upcoming presentation. Instead, I got to see a bit of the city with a bright, talented, fascinating fellow writer who will remain my friend and colleague.

Rob Sheridan and Rhett Reese joined Glenn and me for lunch on Saturday. These guys are two very successful and talented writers. The four of us barely had time to talk before I had to rush back to the conference to give my presentation. I hope to get to know both of them better. I extend my best wishes to two of the other speakers, Dara Marks and Linda Seger, who I met only briefly. Thanks, also, to Ken Lee at MWP for making sure copies of my book were waiting at the conference for me to sign.

My only regret is that I missed the presentation of my good friend, Ellen Sandler. Ellen was scheduled to speak on Sunday and came in to town on Saturday as I was leaving. The conference attendees were professional writers who asked great questions. I had a wonderful time speaking to them and listening to them after my presentation.

If you're a writer and you live anywhere near Toronto, make sure you attend the conference next year. A final thought: During the winter Olympics from Vancouver, I heard and read so much about how friendly the people of Vancouver had been to visitors. I can say that the people of Toronto that I met were equally warm and welcoming. I can't wait to get back to Canada.