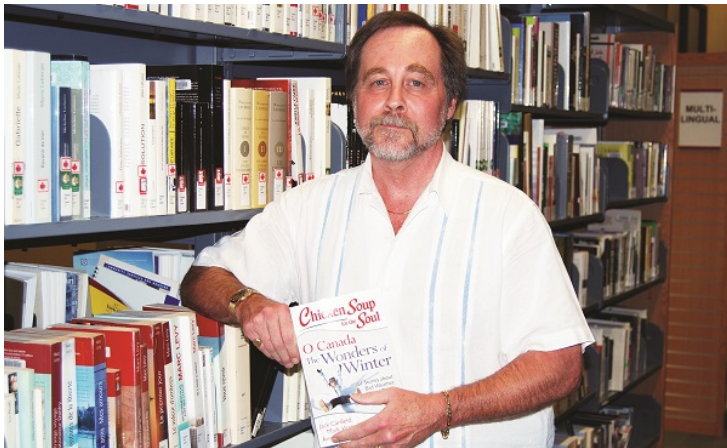


Aurora authors shine in latest story anthology



By Brock Weir

It had been over a decade since Jamie Yeo's mother succumbed to cancer.

Time didn't necessarily dull the pain for him and his father, particularly around the holiday season. Inevitably, this time of year always seemed to make things worse, although they simply went through the motions of the season, wishing for the New Year.

It was 1983 and Jamie, the son of theatre and television actors Leslie Yeo and Hillary Vernon, came from a close knit family, often accompanying his parents on theatre gigs, or to film the odd movie or TV episode, and while her death from breast cancer ultimately brought he and his father ever closer together, it left an irreparable void in their lives.

Living with a young woman and settling into domestic life, his then girlfriend did her damndest to make their first Christmas together one to remember and bring him back around to feeling festive during the most festive of seasons. It was a good effort, he says, but the harder she tried, the more he would remember.

After a late night of wrapping Christmas presents for family and friends, he settled into a restless night before finally getting up to do something productive. During the twilight hours, he flipped on the television and through the wonder of a grainy kinescope, received what he believes to this day was one last gift from his mother.

Mr. Yeo is one of four Aurora authors sharing their remarkable stories in *Chicken Soup for the Soul's O Canada ? The Wonders of Winter: 101 Stories about Bad Weather, Good Times and Great Sports*. The latest Canadian installment of the *Chicken Soup* series, once again helmed by Aurora editor Janet Matthews, shares stories that will invoke the tingle of a frigid January morning to the warmth of a hearth during a quiet winter evening.

The book was officially launched last week in Toronto.

"The story never came up with anyone else," says Mr. Yeo of why he decided to share his story with Ms. Matthews and, in turn, a much wider audience, noting it came up during discussions of some of those uncanny things that can happen in life.

"We used to travel to Spain frequently for summers because my parents being British, Spain had always been close for them and it was easy to get to. We kept that up when we got to Canada. One year my mother lost a gold earring and we came back two years later, went to the same little town and the same little stretch of beach, and sifting through the sand, I found her earring. My parents just looked at each other and shook their heads."

As the child of parents prolific on the stage and screen ? large and small ? one might think finding their work through a rerun,

DVDs, and YouTube would be easy, but that is not the case. Although Jamie frequently comes across his dad's work, his mother's body of work is much harder to come by.

So, when on that early Christmas morning in 1983, when he wheeled around after hearing a voice unheard for over a decade, a voice he had been longing so hard to hear once more, emanating from the flickering kinescope on his TV screen, it had a profound effect on him just when he needed it the most.

?I just remember her walking out of a barn and talking to two other people, but the details of it are just a blur because all I remember is walking away from the TV, hearing her voice, and stopping dead in my tracks.?

Whether the story strikes a chord with readers, or whether it strikes them as unusual, it is a story that outside of his family, the young woman he was living with at the time, and Janet, it is not one which he has shared with people ? until now.

?I'm lucky that I am still friends with a lot of my high school pals, so there are 10 or 12 of us still tightly in touch with one another, but of those, probably only two ever met my mother. Quite a few of them will be surprised by the story.?

Chicken Soup for the Soul ? O Canada: The Wonders of Winter is available now. Of the 101 stories, Aurora authors include William Bell, Deborah Kisinger, Sue England, Ms. Matthews, and Gail Sellers. The Auroran will continue its series on authors in the lead up to the holidays.