

A 1969 series of literary supplements in the *Georgia Straight* was the genesis of New Star Books. Within a year the Georgia Straight Writing Series had published as books early works by Bill Bissett, Fred Wah, Daphne Marlatt and other now household literary names in BC. A later exodus of writers and editors from the *Georgia Straight* re-grouped under the imprint Vancouver Community Press where it was housed in the "York Street commune". By 1974 the collective shifted once more emphasizing non-fiction titles about current affairs and politics. *Two Roads*, a book by Jack Scott, one of the first westerners to visit the China of Mao Zedong and to write a positive account of the Revolution, lent to a new name for the publishing collective, New Star Books. Under then publisher, Lanny Beckman, the shift to serious non-fiction about politics was complete.

Rolf Maurer, a reporter and editor for *The Ubysey*, the *Province* and later the BC Teachers' Federation newsletter, was hired by Lanny in 1981. He became New Star Books' publisher and owner in 1990 when he returned the press to its literary roots, while continuing the important books on current affairs. He also expanded the list to include titles that define our west coast culture such as those found in the innovative *Transmontana* series, edited by Terry Glavin.

New Star Books under Rolf's direction continues to embody the notion of the collective writ large within the greater community of publishers and writers. Rolf has contributed enormously on boards that work for the greater good of our community as twice president of the Association of Book Publishers of BC, chair of the Literary Press Group and member of the board of the Association of Canadian Publishers. He has long been a director of the Kootenay School of Writing and is currently on the board of the People's Coop Bookstore. In the late '80s under Rolf's watch at the ABPBC, the Book Promotion Council, a think-tank of publishers, writers, booksellers and librarians midwived initiatives such as the Vancouver International Readers and Writers Festival, *BC BookWorld* and the BC Book Prizes, institutions that now define the literary landscape of our province.

New Star Books with Rolf Maurer at its helm continues to publish complex and often cerebral books that provide an alternative perspective to the prevailing culture. This is publishing that goes largely unheralded in the mainstream but forms the quiet conscience and intellectual heartbeat of our publishing culture.