

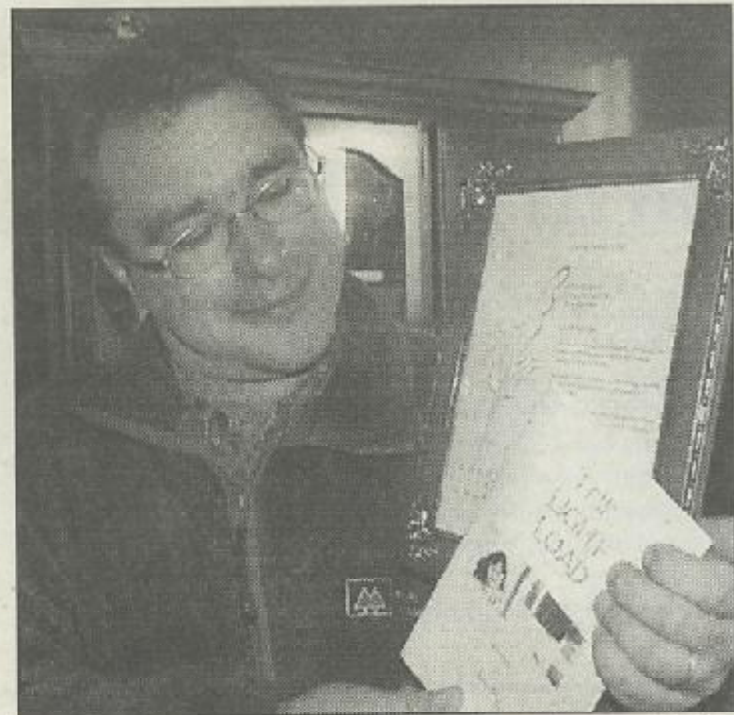
The Light Load

I used to carry him as an infant
 wrapped in blankets
 between the bare pear trees,
 between the branches
 like old fingers ready to snatch us
 out of the moonlight,
 sky and night forged
 into a sharp January blade
 that cut through our coats.

The grape wires sang
 every meadow bird's song,
 whispering like
 the sound of stars stretching apart.

I'd walk all the way
 to the neighbouring raspberry canes,
 slow-chant to him
 until he fell asleep. I could feel his weight
 drop as though staying awake
 required lifting the sky up
 for everyone to pass under.

Through the days, months, years
 he grows thicker with each sleep.
 This simple vow:
You will never be too heavy for me to carry.
 Asleep in my arms,
 I take him up the creaking stairs
 of an old man's back,
 and lay him down into
 the soft cup of night's fingers. —Jim Slominski



NOTL resident Jim Slominski recently took second prize at CBC Radio's Canadian Literary Awards in Montreal for his collection of poetry, *The Light Load*. A selection of his poems will be read on the CBC radio program *Between the Covers*, during the week of April 1 to April 5. The collection consists of 12 new poems about his son, Jake, 11, who has Muscular Dystrophy, Jim's emotions as he watches his young family grow, and their efforts as a family to cope with the disease, including raising the awareness of others around them. The best sources of information for those interested in learning more about MD, Jim says, are the official websites: mdausa.org, and mdac.ca. For those who want to read more of Jim's poems, contact him at 905-468-3715.