SPECIAL FOCUS

Young Writers' Day brought out no fewer than 112 eager 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th graders this year. That's not a bad turnout, for an event that, in our small school system, is only two seasons old. Most of the "Young Writers" came from Adams, Heritage, Hope, and South Holland Protestant Reformed Schools, but one of those in attendance hails from as far away as Redlands, California. Our observation was that they all enjoyed the day immensely. Swimming and pizza might have had something to do with that; but, judging from the caliber of the pre-writing activities which they carried with them from home that day, most of the writers took seriously the main business of the day.

Those pre-writing activities were intended, by the way, to make possible greater progress during the single day spent on the actual work of producing a finished product. One day, after all, just isn't very much time for teaching and for learning a skill so complex as writing. Better by far it is to spread the work out a bit, by assigning some of the preliminaries to be taken care of before the actual gathering for the workshop. So, there it was, **summer vacation**. . . *and a* **homework assignment!** *Isn't* **that** *the pits! But the troops, no doubt with some parental guidance, bore up well under such adversity and came, for the most part, well prepared.*

On the front cover you see Mrs. Joanne Bult, a sixth grade

The directors: Jim Huizinga, John Kalsbeek, Cal Kalsbeek, Darrel Huisken

teacher from Adams Street, giving to an obviously alert young writer advice concerning the objectives for the day — using specific details and putting them in correct chronological order. From the essays submitted at the end of the day it's evident that the young writers also picked up on the more general objectives, namely, that they try to be conscious of the fact that the Lord rules in all of the events of their lives, and that life's "turning points" occur not by chance but by His design, for their advantage.

Mrs. Brenda Regnerus was among those who drove from Illinois to Michigan for the day. She came as one of the 12 instructors, having picked up her very apparent teaching skills through several years of experience in South Holland Protestant Reformed School. She agreed to reflect on the Young Writers' Day experience for the benefit of our **Perspectives** *readers. Along with her article, which follows directly, we include a few pictures of the day's activities and several of the student compositions. We hope that the combination will give you a little of the flavor of the event.*

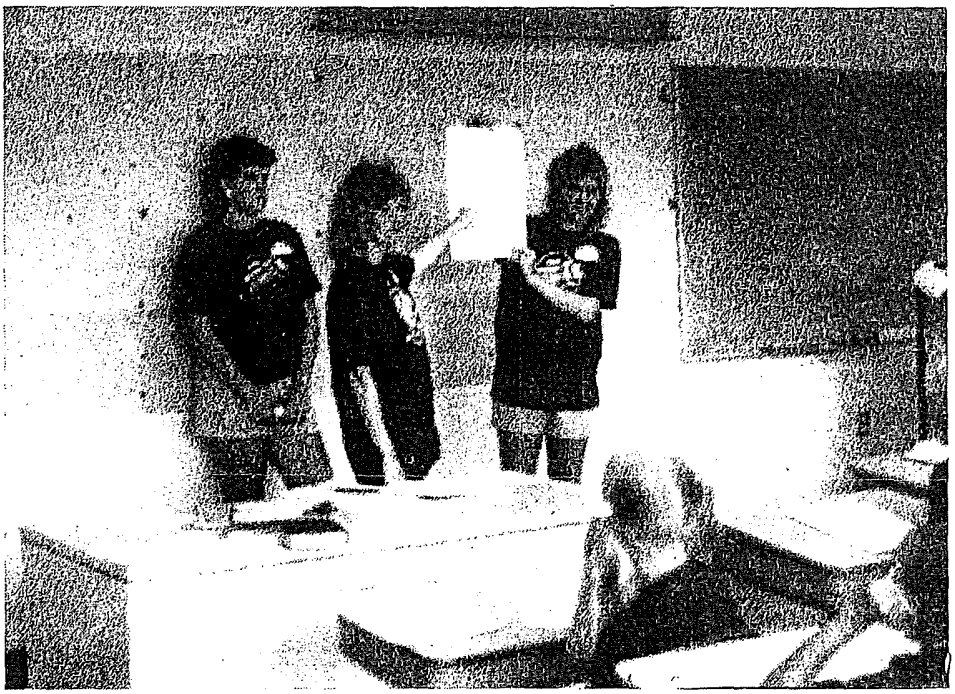
Young Writers' Day 1987

Brenda Regnerus

Young Writers' Day actually began long before the "official" day this year. Early in the summer, worksheets were sent out to the students in grades four through seven who planned to attend. The worksheets helped students to see how God worked a turning point in the lives of Biblical heroes. It also gave the students opportunity to work with their parents to find a turning point in their life and to record data about it. Armed with these completed pre-writing activities, the students anxiously awaited the "official" day.

July 10, 1987, found about thirty South Holland students gathering in their school parking lot at 4:45 AM. As mothers sipped coffee and students shuffled for positions in cars, the morning sun began to cast a few pink rays into the gray, eastern sky. By 5:00 a procession of five cars was headed to Michigan for Young Writers' Day.

Upon arrival at Hope Protestant Reformed School, the South Holland group joined with a throng of students from the Grand Rapids area. The activities began with an assembly in the gymnasium. Mr.



Brenda Regnerus makes a point

John Kalsbeek, from Adams Street School, led in opening devotions and then gave an inspiring introduction, vividly recalling what means God had used as a turning point in his life. With this boost of encouragement, teachers, assistants, and students headed to their designated rooms to begin writing.

Referring to their data sheets, students worked to transfer their information and thoughts to a written narration of the turning point in their life. Starting with placing the basic facts in a correct sequence and then adding details, the young writer moved onward. Encouragement, correction, and advice was handed out by the teachers and their assistants, who often marveled at the students' ability to perceive God's direction in their life. Some students had touched in powerful ways — as in the sudden death of a loved one. Others had felt His guiding hand in less dramatic experiences. Yet, all the students confessed that they had, in some way, felt the eternal plan of God being carried out in their life.

Even though the primary objectives of the day were to help students recognize God's working in their lives and to write about that recognition in a clear and meaningful way, some secondary objectives were also met. Students and teachers renewed old acquaintances and new friendships were started. Teachers and assistants gained valuable experiences

in working with students – recognizing their frustration and learning to help solve problems.

Attention was also given to the students' (and teachers'!) physical needs during the day. A snack time with bars, cookies, and fruit punch was provided for a morning break, and pop and pizza for lunch. Fans were placed in rooms and Mr. Huisken kept the thirsty occupants supplied with ice water on the warm day. Spirited games of kickball were played at noon and everyone went swimming after closing devotions.

After the long eventful day, a teacher reflects on its successes. It was encouraging to work with the students again – delightful to see their awareness of God in their lives. We express our sincere thanks to the Federation for sponsoring Young Writers' Day and to those who organized it. Most of all, a heartfelt thankfulness to God is felt for covenant children and the working of God in their lives. ■□■

Cal Kalsbeek gets a piece of the action

A Special Friend

It was the summer of 1982 when I met a kind, warm-hearted friend. This friend is from Singapore. He traveled all the way from Singspore to Michigan to go to college to be a teacher.

When this friend first came to Michigan I was excited. My brothers and sisters and I brought

him flowers to welcome him. He was living in my grandpa's house which is near my house. This friend's name is Kok Eng.

I like this friend very much because he turned to be a Christian. When he was little, his parents raised him to worship idols or even his ancestors. I also like Kok Eng because he gave me birthday cards and sometimes even a present.

At that time I thought I was big for knowing a Singaporean and I often showed off. I also sat on his lap a lot.

Because of Kok Eng I realize that I should be thankful for a Christian home, school, church, and most of all Christian parents. Also because of Kok Eng, I met some Chinese people which go to our churches in Singapore or here. Their names are Michiel, Catherine, Fransise, and Rev. Mahtani and his wife and sons. I'm happy that I met Kok Eng, and I'm happy that God put this turning point in my life, even though I don't know why He did.

Dorothy Kalsbeek

Loss of a Loved One

Something happened to me when I was seven years old that made me feel sad and I cried. It made me wish it had never happened.

My dad was a loving, kind person. Whenever I needed him he was there. I love him. He was a car salesman. He loved God. He loved his family.

One day we learned that Dad had cancer. He was taken to the hospital for a long time. After a while Dad came home. He stayed in bed quite a lot of the time. Later he went back to the hospital.

He died in the hospital on August 21, 1986, ten days after my birthday.

God is good. God is great. God is merciful. God is loving. It was in God's plan for my dad to die.

The death of my dad was a turning point for me because now I don't have a dad anymore.

Philip Reitsma

Something happened to me every other year that made me feel pretty good when I got used to it. Eric, B.J., Alex, and Erin are my brothers and sister. Eric is 8; B.J., 5½; Alex, 3; and Erin, 2½. We live in Zeeland on 88th. It's a middle-sized, white house.

The kids were born every other year: '79 – Eric, '81 – B.J., '83 – Alex, '85 – Erin. I was born in '77. That made me the oldest. When my mom had Erin I had to help a lot. I didn't like it really well. I had to do more work. I think God did it to make me more responsible. And to help out a lot. I had to clear the table with my brother, and set it. I had to watch the kids sometimes.

A pause that refreshes

When my brothers and sister were born it was an experience for me because my mom made me learn to set the table and I had to take up a lot of responsibilities.

Ryan Mowery

Last summer when we were on vacation we went to Ohio and we went to Canada. In the morning when we woke up we put all our stuff back in the van and drove off. Later we stopped at the hotel restaurant. My dad went to talk to someone. I emptied the wastebasket and my dad jumped in the van and drove off without me. When I came back I couldn't find the van. I was very SCARED when I looked and saw them leaving! I ran after the van but it had already left. Then I began to run the fastest I have ever run before. But I couldn't catch up with them. I ran to a gas station and started to cry. The man said that they might come back. I jumped up and down. THEY WERE BACK! I was so happy. They picked me up and drove off to Cedar Point.

Being left at a hotel was good for me because God wanted me to love my family more. Sometimes bad things happen that turn out good.

Dawn Kalsbeek

The Security of Light

This happened two years ago. It made me realize that God is the only light I can trust in.

Instructor Karen Buiter gives one-to-one help

It was a Sunday night in February and my parents were going out for coffee. Since the sky was dark and cloudy and a wind was blowing up, I asked them not to stay out too long. I went inside

Sharon Hauck, one of 13 assistants, lends a hand

as they drove off.

As I got inside I heard my six-month-old brother, Seth, crying. After twenty minutes of trying to get him back to sleep, I finally got him up.

So we went downstairs and played in the living room. Hearing the wind get stronger, I looked out the window and saw that it was raining hard and the rain was freezing on everything. It looked beautiful but I was getting concerned because the lights were flickering. I found a flashlight on the refrigerator, then went back to playing with Seth.

In a few minutes I had a tape going and was reading a book. Seth was happily playing with his toys. Suddenly the lights went off and the tape stopped playing. My brother whimpered and I was terrified. I got the flashlight on and went to comfort Seth, but after a while he started giggling, thinking it was all a game.

I took Seth to the front window to watch for my mom and dad to come since it was late. After waiting for a long time I decided to call them. But when I saw that the buttons on the phone were unlighted, I thought the phone was dead. So I waited some more. Finally my parents came home. They comforted me then put Seth and me to bed.

From then on I realized that there is only one light that will never fail. And that is the Lord.

Jessica A. Lanting