

## **Still writing: Childhood disability no obstacle to writer**

**By Sue Edward, Sun Staff Reporter**

With his trademark black, peaked cap perennially perched atop his head, Dwight Droz sits at the cluttered kitchen table in his 1907 vintage farmhouse examining his latest literary endeavor.

The prolific 91-year-old master of verse and prose is writing his first operetta — it's about mice and men, with a touch of "Die Fledermaus" and Gilbert and Sullivan thrown in.

"A friend took me to see a Gilbert and Sullivan opera and I fell in love with it," says Droz. "The lyrics for this just came to me in a dream right after that and I got up and began writing them down."

In the past seven years, he also has written a humorous, autobiographical book with his wife, Pauline, called "One for the Weather, One for the Crow," a book of prose called "Arizona Bound," a four-book series called "Culture on the Cuff." The last contains serendipitous selections of his art, poetry, short stories and essays. And he has written a book of poetry called "The Midnight Poet".

"Culture on the Cuff" contains stark, realistic, often haunting portrayals of people and events. One such story is "Roy's Café", about his college days in Pocatello, Idaho, during the Depression.

The story vividly describes the hardscrabble people and the café's unappetizing 25-cent meals. Droz has some hard-earned change in his pocket and looks forward to consuming a daily special, only to discover something black and rope-like in it. His roiling stomach overrules his brain so he can't finish the dish.

This series also provides delightful passages about his farm boyhood in Declo, Idaho, where he describes " the musky fume of yellow skunk cabbage, the honeyed scent of white clover blossoms and the damp-decay of river moss seep over us."

"The Midnight Poet", one of Droz's favorite selections is a whimsical rhyming tale about a purple tiger consuming a preening pony in a style reminiscent of Lewis Carroll.

Droz has been avidly reading and writing as long as he can remember. He credits his mother, a Swiss-born obstetrician, with giving him an early interest by reading to him every night. When the young Droz entered school, he immediately was advanced to the third grade. But his childhood also was marred by a severe injury when he was about four that developed into a crippling osteomyelitis. He suffered both emotionally and physically for much of his life though he feels his condition contributed to his writing ability.

Pauline, his wife of 66 years, always has recognized Droz for the bright talented man he is. They met in business school in Boise and Droz says, "She attracted me because she wasn't like all the other primping girls and could type 100 words a

minute without error. I wanted to marry someone smarter than I am."

The couple moved in 1942 to work in the Bremerton Naval Shipyard, where Pauline was immediately employed. Droz himself initially was turned down because of his disability, but the hiring officer gave him a graveyard job that involved a lot of walking. Droz later transferred to an office job.

At age 40, he went to the Mayo clinic, where, after 90 days in a hard cast, his body was finally straightened.

The couple had five children, two of whom were stillborn. The other three were raised primarily on their five-acre working Scandia farm. The farm was especially popular around Halloween when busloads of school kids would come in to buy pumpkins.

Though his path hasn't been easy, Droz always has found time to help others and his writing always has reflected his droll sense of humor and an incisive look at love, life and its foibles.

"Besides being a terrific writer, Dwight is a wonderful friend and a total inspiration to me and many others," says friend and neighbor, Larry Bazzelle.

CQ: Dwight and Pauline Droz, Die Fledermaus, Larry Bazzelle, osteomyelitis, Lewis Carroll

SIDEBAR 1: Dwight Droz's books are available from Scandia Patch Press at <http://scandiapatchpress.com>

SIDEBAR 2: From "The Midnight Poet" by Dwight Droz

The poet got up in the mid-of-the-night  
And dug for a tablet in frenzy to write.  
No notice he paid to his nightcap askew  
Or how bold the wind through his cold attic blew.

By Sue Edward  
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