

## PROLOGUE

**Peter Mohan:** I remember Rob Forsyth on set one day telling me about an American producer who told him, “Boy, I love working in Canada. You don’t have to pay the writers!”

**Chuck Lazer:** It’s not that there wasn’t a Guild back in the 1980s; there was, there was even a Guild before that. It’s that the Guild was part of ACTRA then and there were less than 1,000 writers in a Guild of 8-9,000 actors. Now I love actors and I’ve worked with actors but I don’t want actors running my life.

**Sarah Dearing:** Maureen [Parker] and I were in the office after hours having drinks with the senior staff person at ACTRA. He was talking about negotiations and how one of his performer members had dramatically said they were entitled to all sorts of raises because actors save lives in the work that they do. And this staff person then dramatically said, “So the next time I have a heart attack and I’m lying in the street, I’m going to say,

‘Call for an actor!’” And that epitomized why we needed to separate from the performers because that was the level of dialogue at the negotiating table.

**Fred Yackman:** Everything came to a head at the ACTRA AGM in 1990. Our concerns were not the actors’ concerns and why should they be? We wanted more control over our affairs and our ideas didn’t go over very well. Basically they shouted us down.

**Andrew Wreggitt:** Some of the younger folks think the Guild is this big bad organizing thing they have to give money to and they don’t get a choice in it and they just have to do this stuff. They don’t quite understand that when you hear how the Guild got started way back, it was pretty rock n’ roll, you know? We’re going to do *what?* You want me to sign up for *that?* But it happened because people put themselves out there and believed in it and took a chance. It’s no different now. The issues are still big. They’re still trying to kill us out there.

## IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

- **Peter Mohan** is a Toronto based showrunner and national forum delegate from 2004-08; 1998-99.
- The late **Rob Forsyth** was a Toronto based screenwriter.
- **Chuck Lazer** is a Vancouver based screenwriter and pacific region councillor from 2004-12.
- **Sarah Dearing** has been a WGC staff member (full time and part time) since 1991.
- **Maureen Parker** is executive director of the WGC.
- **Fred Yackman** is a documentary screenwriter and western region councillor from 1992-2006.
- **Andrew Wreggitt** is the vice-president of the WGC and western region councillor since 2007.
- **Bill Williams** is former vice-president of the WGC (1991; 1994-98).
- **Jack Gray** served as WGC president from 1991-93.
- The late **Linda Zwicker** served as central region councillor from 1991-93.
- The late **Tony Foster** served as a WGC councillor from 1991-94.
- **David Barlow** is a Toronto based screenwriter and member of the IPA bargaining committee from 1995-2008.
- **Sharon Corder** is a Toronto based writer/producer.
- **Jack Blum** is a Toronto based writer/producer.
- **Briane Nasimok** is a Toronto based screenwriter.
- **Pete White** was president of the WGC from 1995-2003 and vice-president from 1992-94.
- The late **Phil Savath** was a member of the 2000-02 IPA bargaining committee.
- **Hart Hanson** is a television writer and producer.
- **Rick Drew** is a Vancouver based screenwriter.
- The late **Michael Mercer** served as a WGC councillor in 1991.

- **Susin Nielsen** is a Vancouver based screenwriter and pacific region national forum delegate from 2000-05, 2012-15.
- **Denis McGrath** is a central region councillor and member of the 2012-14 and 2015-17 IPA bargaining committees.
- **Leila Basen** is a Montreal based screenwriter and Quebec region councillor from 2004-08.
- **Cal Coons** is a screenwriter/director and national forum delegate from 2004-08; 2011-12.
- **Mark Farrell** is a Halifax based showrunner and member of the 2012-14 IPA bargaining committee.
- **Simon Racioppa** is a Toronto based animation writer, national forum delegate, and member of the IPA bargaining committee since 2010.
- **Bruce Smith** is a Montreal based showrunner, national forum delegate, and member of the 2006-08; 2012-14 and 2015-17 IPA bargaining committees.
- **Mark Ellis** is a showrunner, and central region councillor since 2010.
- **Stephanie Morgenstern** is a showrunner.
- **Deanna Cadette** is the director of the Bell Media Diverse Screenwriters program.
- **Lienne Sawatsky** is a Montreal based animation writer, national forum delegate, and member of the 2012-14 IPA bargaining committee.
- **Jill Golick** is the president of the WGC and a central region councillor since 1994.
- **Dennis Heaton** is a Vancouver based showrunner, and a pacific region councillor since 2012.
- **Konrad von Finckenstein** is former chairman of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) from 2007-2012.
- **Laurie Channer** is director of industrial relations for the WGC

## THE EARLY YEARS (1991-1999)



Clockwise from top-left: Sam Marinucci; WGC Top Ten Awards party, circa 2001; Margaret Hollingsworth; WGC newsletter coverage of Top Ten Awards, 1998

**Bill Williams:** The groundwork for our dispute with ACTRA had actually been laid two years earlier, at the 1988 AGM. We proposed changing our name from the ACTRA Writers Guild to the Writer’s Guild of Canada. It had worked for the Writers Guild of America (East and West) and the Writers Guild of Great Britain, so why not for us? But ACTRA took it as a slap in the face and emphatically rejected the proposal. That wasn’t a very smart move.

**Fred Yackman:** In February of 1991 at my first meeting as a national councillor we — Jack Gray, Linda Zwicker, Bill Williams, Tony Foster and myself — were sitting around the table and we said, well, it’s time to be the Writer’s Guild of Canada and time to say goodbye to ACTRA and we said let’s vote on it and that was it.

**Chuck Lazer:** It’s like when I moved out of my parents’ house when I was 16. To school. But it was time for me to get out of the house. I see us getting

away from ACTRA as the same thing. We — some of us, anyway — were ready to go live on a park bench if we had to.

**David Barlow:** I was directing a half-hour pilot written by Sharon Corder and Jack Blum for YTV. We were in a forest near Bracebridge, Ontario. Chuck Lazer and Briane Nasimok came walking through the trees. We were just about to break for lunch. Chuck has always had exquisite timing. At lunch, he and Briane revealed that they and some of their colleagues believed it was time for Canadian screenwriters to form an independent Guild. He and Briane were signing people up. I asked what the freight was. Chuck said, “It depends. Since you’re working, it’ll be a hundred dollars.” I wrote a cheque. Chuck gave me a small lapel button. Black with white letters — W.G.C. Best one hundred dollars I’ve ever spent.

**Chuck Lazer:** The working writers were tremendously generous. All the big earners in the