

I recognized her "thick as marmalade" Scottish burr immediately. "I'm calling to tell you you've won the Margaret Collier Award," she said. "Oh, this is Margaret Collier by the way." I was gobsmacked, momentarily at a loss for words, but Margaret filled the silence graciously, telling me how pleased she was for me, putting me at ease.

I didn't know Margaret well and only saw her occasionally, but I always enjoyed our conversations. In spite of that trace of a stutter her manner was refreshingly crisp and to the point, and she was particularly nice to me. I think she liked saying my name, Douglas, with a hint of Scotland about it, which rolled trippingly off her tongue. I always felt she was one of my biggest supporters, but I'm sure countless other Canadian writers felt the same way.

I was at one of those screenwriting seminar dinners where Margaret chatted amiably with Michael Palin, while filling him in on the challenges faced in getting recognition and, yes, fair compensation for writers in the Canadian film and TV world, problems probably not faced by a member of Monty Python. But Margaret never missed a chance to beat the drum for her writers, no matter the audience.

A few weeks after her call, I took the stage at the Gemini gala to accept the Margaret Collier Award. I could see her smiling in the front row and I'm glad I had that chance to say a few words in tribute to her and thank her publicly for all she'd done.

Afterwards someone thanked me for the nice things I'd said about Margaret, but I'd barely scratched the surface. I wish I'd said more. I wish I'd said it more often. Thank you, Margaret.

Douglas Bowie

Kingston, ON

613-544-9596