

# Margaret Laurence

1926 - 1987

Peggy Wemyss was orphaned at 10, and brought up in the home of her grandfather (“a tyrannical autocrat”) and stepmother (“a great encourager”). At 18 she couldn’t wait to leave Neepawa for college in Winnipeg, 125 miles away, and there she married John Laurence, a hydraulic engineer, three years later. They moved to England and then to British Somaliland. In their seven years (1950-57) in Africa – they moved to Ghana halfway through – “she made contact with an alien culture in a way that few Canadian writers have ever done,” wrote Robert Fulford.. Her first book, *A Tree for Poverty*



(1954) was a translation of Somali prose and poetry. Her first novel, *This Side Jordan* (1960), was set in Ghana, as was her short story collection, *The Tomorrow Tamer* (1963). All this before the series of books (1964-74) set in the fictional town of Manawaka (modeled after Neepawa), starting with *The Stone Angel*, made her truly famous.

In 1973 she returned from seven years in England to a home she made in Lakefield,