

## entertainment

## Mays confides to student writers



Bryon Johnson

by Gord Graham

One New Year's Eve six years ago, John Mays resolved to become a writer.

It was his only choice, he told 25 would-be writers gathered in Calumet Common Room recently, "because I had no money for paints, hadn't played the piano for years and was no good at business."

Today, working as Calumet's student liaison by day — and writing by night, Mays has a novel and several stories published, and his book reviews appear frequently in *The Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's*. All in all, he seems to have kept his resolution.

Mays shared some of his views on writing at the December dinner meeting of the Student Writers Association, a loose grouping of

interested students based in Calumet along with York's Creative Writing Program.

Mays started his writing career at 31, fresh from a motorcycle tour of the States where he met and married his wife. Unsure exactly how to begin, he said, "I used to go to bookstores and ask browsers if they were writers. I got some pretty rude answers from that."

Eventually he met Frank Davey (now head of York's writing program) and contributed an article to Davey's *Open Letter* literary journal.

"After I was almost slapped with a lawsuit for that piece, I began drifting into other writers," Mays said, "and realizing that writing isn't an isolated activity." Writers need to trade ideas with all the other arts, he suggested.

Writing criticism led him to try original fiction. Several of his stories were published, prompting avant garde Toronto publisher, Coach House Press, to ask him for a novel. The result was an impressive work, *The Spiral Stair*, issued in 1977.

There are three cardinal rules to becoming a writer, Mays said, "Start early, have a nervous breakdown, and never stop.... You must be absolutely true to your own process and believe in it."

He stressed how writing is just a workaday activity like carpentry, not some exalted and prophetic calling. On his own working habits, Mays said, "I made it like a job. I sat down, put in my hours, then took an hour for lunch no matter how eager I was to write."

Work on schedule and co-operate with your own habits, Mays advised, but "above all avoid that fatal human tendency to push the deadline off for another week — which of course turns into a month or even years."

He cautioned that "very few in this room will ever make a living from writing" and that it demands "a commitment to a kind of work that doesn't pay off very soon — you have to decide that all the other things will take second place to writing."

Queried about his family life, Mays explained how his wife and single daughter leave his time clear for writing. It's best if you can arrange your home life this way, he said, joking that "one good novel's worth three of four daughters anyway."

To further questions from students, Mays commented that "we are all fortunate to be living in Toronto, where there's more new art in all directions happening right now than in any other city in North America." He added the media were always hungry for freelancers and Toronto-based writers have the advantage of face-to-face contact with editors.

The Student Writers plan further dinner meetings this term with other published writers among York's faculty.

## Ron Mann director on the rise

By Michael Korican

The re-opening of the Funnel at 507 King Street East, Toronto's only experimental film cinema, mirrors some of the contributions young independent filmmakers are making to Toronto's film community. "Toronto is in a formative stage and young filmmakers can do a lot," claims twenty-year old director Ron Mann.

Mann, who has recently finished *Depot* with David Fine, has been involved in film since he was twelve. Although he currently takes Arts at York, he has studied film and its philosophy at Bennington College in Vermont and taught at Toronto's Alternative Independent Study Program. He believes in film's determinism and that its meaning is inherent.

Mann's list of short films is impressive. *Depot*, his latest work, is a visual essay of impressions from Toronto's Bay and Dundas bus terminal. "We wanted to capture the essence, the mood essence, of the terminal," says Mann. Inspired by Tom Waits' song *Depot*, *Depot*, the film's themes range from transiency to

old age and despondency. One purpose of the film is to document the terminal's spontaneity and mood and to assert its existence. Mann says, "It's great, it's one of the best places to eat lunch in town."

*Depot* was photographed by David Fine, Mann's long-time collaborator. Despite his young age, Fine, who has just received his driver's license, has extensive background as an animator. *One Man's Meat*, a North York Board of Education production he worked on, recently received the student film award at the Chicago International Festival. Fine spent last summer at the National Film Board where he produced two short animated commercials.

The documentary genre has attracted Mann and Fine because they "want to know more about the subjects." Mann puts it more succinctly: "because that's what I enjoy." Perhaps his most ambitious film to date is *FLAK*, a 54-minute black and white documentary he produced when he was eighteen. *FLAK* attempts to depict the political demise that

transpired in this decade by showing the reactions of a group of men to the pollution of a factory in their neighbourhood. The flak referred to in the title is this poison and also, more importantly, the meaningless rhetoric that arises when action is devalued. *FLAK* was selected for the Canadian Film Festival 77 in Peterborough and received an honourable mention at the Canadian Student Film Awards.

Mann annually travels to Cannes for its prestigious festival, where he sleeps on the beach. He has written for *Motion Cinema Canada* and *The Varsity* and is currently working on the second draft of *Anson Minor*, his script of a Northern Ontario legend. He has a grant from Wintario to make 35 mm shorts promoting physical fitness via adolescent humour and another from the Ontario Arts Council to make a documentary on world famous violin maker Otto Erdesch.

Mann's interests also range from the theatre to literature and he is currently researching *The Great Big Ice Cream Cone Book*, a

definitive study of ice cream, which Fine will photograph. Also, he envisions a film co-op and restaurant called *Ciné-Pizza*, where the pizzas will be shaped like film reels.

However, and as if his various activities did not keep him fully occupied, Ron Mann still finds time for a part-time job — as a projectionist for an Atkinson film course.



David Fine

York filmmaker Ron Mann

## Horseshoe duo push Egerton's over the Edge

By Evan Adelman

New Year's Eve '79 with all of its party hats, favours and celebrations, also gave rise to the initiation of a major new venture by Gary's Cormier and

England, the "dynamic duo" have returned home to Toronto with fresh, vital and outstanding new ideas which will be channeled into *The Edge's* entertainment policy. Their trip to Britain was co-

like to feature a lot of local and imported talent," Cormier says. The main objective of the club will be to provide Torontonians with the best possible entertainment at the lowest price. The reaction to

"no cover" nights has been overwhelming and has encouraged plans for special matinee programs. Already featured in this format have been Epic recording stars, Teenage Head.

Egertons has been a hot-spot in Toronto for over six years and although the name has been altered somewhat, the good entertainment, good food and good times still remain.



Evan Adelman

Gary Cormier and Gary Topp open "The Edge"

Topp, the former driving forces behind Toronto's Roxy and New Yorker Theatres and The Horseshoe Tavern. The location of their newest establishment is at the corner of Church and Gerrard and once housed this city's most progressive and flourishing folk club, Egertons. Today, with renovations complete, a welcomed addition to the Canadian entertainment circuit is ready to make its mark — *The Edge*.

After a month's sabbatical in

ordinated so that they could participate actively in various musical happenings, attend selected meetings and largely in order to search out talent suitable for Toronto audiences. The outcome of this scouting venture will be showcased over a period of the next few months via performances by England's Ultravox, the Police and X.T.C. who complete a three-day engagement this evening.

"We're going to book jazz, folk, rock and blues acts. We would also

And they're poems written for poets. Let's face it: if you offer a poem to the public, it ought to have something about it that'll jolt the reader. Either something entertaining, or something that kicks the reader in the groin, or something experimental. No sense giving us poems that have been written many times already — too many poets around for that. And there's no sense limiting your audience so drastically. Sell out, or who are you going to reach? I'm

## Handouts written by poets

By Stuart Ross

*Handouts from the Mountain*, an anthology by the York Poetry Workshop '78 edited by Irving Layton. 44 pages, \$2.25 paper.

The problem with workshop anthologies is that their purpose is to print their poets. It's not so much that the poems need to be published. Maybe this is why reading through *Handouts* becomes dreary; the poets don't seem to want to entertain.

not suggesting mass metamorphoses into Rod McKuens, but poetry is like any other art form (it isn't just singers who go to the opera.)

A few of the poems really stood out for me ("Leonard" by Gail Weinberg, a couple by Randy Cloak, Francine Corcos, and the

poems by Kersti Simonlatser) but there's not much else that can't be read in countless other similar anthologies. A bunch of well-crafted (and many not so) poems does not make for a good collection. However, it may be fine for other student poets writing student poems.

## Film dept screening

Three free screenings come to York. As part of a new regular series presenting some of Canada's most famous directors and their films, Allan King will speak, show films and answer questions. Today, 12 noon, S137R.

On Friday, Jan. 12 from 1:30 - 3:30 pm in S137R FM 201 will be having a Super 8 screening. The film production class promises action-packed shorts.

The films of Satyajit Ray are known and studied in film courses, respected by professionals, and loved throughout the world. At 4 pm in the Common Room of Calumet College, five films by Ray will be shown on successive Mondays, beginning Jan. 15. The first is *Saga of the Road*.