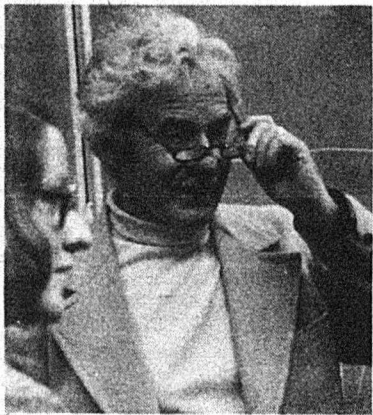


Scribe of the prairies...

"Every Canadian owes allegiance to the King...and the Beaver"



"The" W.O. Mitchell...

Sitting in anticipation, I watched the people flow into the room. The small classroom on Cromdale Campus was obviously going to be jam-packed. Then, there he was, sauntering into the room, stopping briefly to chat with a few familiar faces. His tousled gray hair was complemented by twinkling eyes and a casual grin. So this was W.O. Mitchell, the famous writer of *Who Has Seen the Wind*.

Mitchell was in town to give a reading in connection with the Canadian Authors series at Grant McEwan Community College. As Mitchell, a graduate and former professor of Canadian Literature at the U of A was introduced, the crowd broke into generous applause. The respect and admiration this man generated was unbelievable. Upon reaching the podium he produced a pair of half spectacles which he rested comfortably on the bridge of his nose before peering at the audience to see just who had come to listen to him. He was pleased with the fact that many of his former students were among them.

The woman sitting beside me described Mitchell as being "beautifully crazy", and during the course of the evening he did not disprove this. W.O. Mitchell is so vibrant, vivid, dramatic and truly down to earth in his approach to life that one can not help but be proud he is Western Canadian.

Before beginning his readings he shared a few of his "passionate thoughts on censorship", as he calls them. For those of you not familiar with his

novels, a word or two occasionally pops up that is not usually found in Webster's New Word Dictionary. Censorship can be a very touchy matter among authors. Thus it was that when Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* was described in detail as being filthy, garbage, and trash several years ago, Mitchell immediately sent a letter to Ernest Manning berating such action. The language used was of necessity, he wrote, to create an element of life in the novel. Besides, it was not fair that his work had not also been censored. It was just as filthy and trashy as *Catcher in the Rye*, he commented, and Salinger was not even Canadian.

Mitchell received what he calls "official recognition" last spring. It came in the form of a letter printed in the Calgary Herald by a B.C. couple who did a splendid put down of Mitchell's novel *Who Has Seen the Wind*. Mitchell was thrilled, sold an extra 37,000 copies, he claimed. He did mention though, that the couple should listen to Dave Barrett sometime because "he makes Trudeau and myself look like charter members of the Holy Name Society."

The readings Mr. Mitchell gave at Cromdale Campus were broken up into several sections. First was a series on farmhand characters from his novels. The characters were not entirely fictitious because he points out that when he sits down he writes "whatever floats to the top of consciousness which makes for a more significant lie." As a native of Weyburn, Sask., Mitchell is quite familiar with workings of a prairie farm. His stories are based on his experiences as a young boy, of which there were many. Some of his lovable work hands include Jim, who told him, while riding in a buggy, that when the horse lifted his tail he was taking the boy's picture. Then there was Ben, who encouraged him in the discovery that it took 8,836,459 oats to stretch from the house to the grainery. Of course it was different for wheat and barley. At age twelve there was Jeff, who played the mandolin, his favorite song being "Where Do the Flies Go In The Wintertime?"

These workhands comprised some of Mitchell's best friends as a youngster for they all seemed to have one foot in adulthood and the other in childhood. Which brings us to the most famous workhand, Jake Trumper, around which Mitchell's novel *Jake and the Kid* is centered. This man knew everything about everything and was in the Boer War as well as fighting "Looie Riel".

Another topic dealt with in the reading was Canadian-American relations. This stemmed from the fact that as a boy he spent some time in the States. His mother enrolled him in Madame Brocklebanks school of Dance, Music and Elocution. He was not especially pleased with this, but did meet some interesting people. One was Dora Finch, "a girl who didn't get up from a chair, she bloomed. She grew into quite a spiritual woman, 99% spirit, 1% woman. Then there was her bosom, which was 99% woman, 1% spirit."

Every year Madame Brocklebanks held a school concert, "School concerts being incestuous affairs, only attended by blood relatives." Mitchell could not decide what

to contribute, being torn between his allegiance to Canada and the U.S. For as he remembered "Every Canadian owes allegiance to the King... and the Beaver." He came up with the perfect solution - he memorized the Gettysburg Address, with thirty-nine slight changes. Instead of reading "Four score and seven years ago our forefathers..." his version read "Four score and seven years ago YOUR forefathers..." When it came time for his speech he had forgotten the whole thing and had to ad-lib, Lincolnized fashion. He received a standing ovation. One thing he learned - everyone has heard of the Gettysburg Address, but nobody knows the Gettysburg Address.

W.O. Mitchell's warm, earthy humor has a homespun flavor that is easy to relate to. Mitchell also has a flair for the dramatic, as was revealed by his readings.

Besides being author of *Who Has Seen the Wind* and *Jake and the Kid*, he has also written *Vanishing Point*, another excellent novel with some interesting philosophical insights.

Helen King



...warm, earthy, beautifully crazy

Saskatoon pulls a switch on Playboy

The Saskatoon Women's Calendar Collective *Herstory* 1976. Hurtig Publishers. Coiled Paperback, \$3.95. 112 pp.

The perfect gift for a strong, virile Canadian male who believes (1) that Canada has no heritage, and (2) that an adult female should be kept barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen.

Well, perhaps not... and yet, it might provide an interesting alternative to the usual Playboy gift subscription.

This book/calendar, released in October by Hurtig presents short biographical accounts of 48 famous female figures of Canada, past and present. The articles, often accompanied by photographs, are placed opposite the calendar pages and represent Canadian women from the 1600's right up to our day.

Listed on the calendar pages themselves are quotations concerning women's rights, and, under specific dates, details of the past concerning women in Canada. Such details include the facts that women were not granted the vote in Quebec until April 25, 1940 and that on April 24, 1928 the Supreme Court of Canada decided that women were not persons under the terms of the B.N.A. Act and therefore could not be senators!

To Edmonton readers ignorant of the lives of some of this region's more famous women, *Herstory's* accounts of Julia Kiniski and Winnifred Stewart will be of particular importance.

Compiled by a group of seven women, this is the third edition of the calendar. It is set together in book form to include an index, a bibliography, and a selected reading list for those wishing to pursue the subject further.

Just as an addendum for amateur philologists, the word history is not sexist as the title of this work might imply. That is, it is not from his-story, but is instead from the Greek historia, used by Herodotus in the fifth century B.C. to mean inquiries into the past.

Kevin Gillespie

... HOT FLASHES ...

THEATRE

Dame Peggy Ashcroft, the internationally acclaimed British actress visits the U of A Drama Department Fri. at 12 noon, in the Thrust Theatre of the Fine Arts Building. *Sleuth*, presented by Walterdale Theatre through till the 29th.

Bird bath, at Northern Light Theatre until Dec. 5. Mon. through Fri., 12:10, Thurs. and Fri., 12:10 and 1:10. Admission \$1.50.

La Mouette, (Chekhov's "The Seagull"), performed by Theatre Francais, Fri., Sat., and Sun. at College St. Jean. *Stage West* performs *Once More with Feeling* until Nov. 30. Tuesday through Saturday, 6 p.m. Sunday at 5 p.m. Dinner followed by production.

Citadel Theatre performance *Dear Liar* featuring Dame Peggy Ashcroft and John Neville. Play continues until Nov. 29.

MUSIC

Loggins and Messina with the FlyingBurritoBros. tonight, 8 p.m. at the Coliseum.

Musical America, An Edmonton Symphony Promenade presentation. Directly from Broadway, the same group who brought you "Gilbert and Sullivan, a la carte" now bring you "Musical America". Today and tomorrow, Jubilee Auditorium. Tickets are \$4.50, \$5.50, and \$6.50.

Guarneri String Quartet, presented by the Edmonton Chamber Music Society Wed., Nov. 26, performing music by Haydn, Beethoven, and Schumann. Convocation Hall, 8:30 p.m. Student membership rates: \$6.

Art Gallery Classical Concert, a saxophone quartet led by Marvin Eckroth. Today, Edmonton Art Gallery, 8 p.m. Admission free.

Stringband, at the Hovel Friday night. This popular trio returns with good folk music from their two records and more.

Huckle and Paul of Perth County Sat. and Sun., and *Ben Russel* Mon., all appearing at the Hovel. Doors open at 8:30, show starts about 9:30.

The Mahon Trio, chamber music at the Central Library this Sun. at 2:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Contemporary music for piano with Toronto pianist Lybomyr Melnyk. This Sun. at 8:30 p.m. in Convocation Hall.

CINEMA

Students Union Cinema presents: *Nashville* Fri., Sat., and Sun.; and *Day for Night* Wed. Nov. 26. Shows at 7:00 and 9:30 p.m. Advance tickets (available at the SU Box Office) \$1.00, \$1.50 at the door.

Mexico - Land of Colour and Contrast (16 min.), *Chile* (15 min.), *Peru* (17 min.) and *Caribbean Holiday* (10 min.) presented by the Provincial Museum in relation to

Alberta World Reflections. This Sat., 2:00 p.m., admission free.

Days and Nights in the Forest, (International Series) Mon. Nov. 24, SUB Theatre 8 p.m. and *Phantom Lady plus Detour* (Film Noir Series) Wed., Nov. 26; presented by Edmonton Film Society. Admission by series membership, available at the door.

Trout Lake Cree tomorrow at 12:15 p.m., Central Library Music Room. Admission is free.

Voice of the Hurricane, 80 min. color feature starring Muriel Smith at the Library Music Room Fri., Nov. 21, 8:00 p.m. Sponsored by Moral Rearmament. Free Admission.

OTHER

Native Crafts Demonstration of porcupine quill weaving and moose-hair tufting. Provincial Museum, 1:30 - 3:30 daily until Nov. 22.

Matt Cohen, author of "Wooden Hunters" and "The Disinherited", and writer-in-residence at the university, will read at Cromdale Campus (80 St. - 118 Ave., Rm. 117) Wed. Nov. 26 at 8:00 p.m.

Alberta Ballet Company Program 2. Last performance tonight in SUB.

Alberta Contemporary Dancers, at the Provincial Museum this Sunday, 3 p.m. Free Admission.