

Reaching its potential

York literary magazine makes new waves

By KEITH NICKSON

York's literary magazine *Waves*, has had an unspectacular career thus far, marked by steady fluctuations in quality. But those days now appear to be gone. The most recent edition contains a diversity of material that will tingle the literary taste buds and leave the reader thirsting for more.

The sole piece of fiction in this edition is Terry Kelly's low-key but compelling story entitled 'Prairie Kaffeelatsch'. Combining meticulous attention to detail with an ability to flesh out characters in a few short descriptive bursts, Kelly manages to subtly lure the reader into his brief tale.

CITY HALL REPORTER

The story begins in the provincial town of Elk Brain at 5 a.m. where the narrator, one Randy Gogarty, has just arrived to begin the job of city hall reporter on the 'Tribune' newspaper. Since he has arrived a few days early, Randy explores the bars in Elk Brain and goes to a party at Nick Zudwicki's (the editor) on Saturday night.

The progression of insignificant events is obviously of secondary importance to the variety of characters Randy encounters. In a blunt, sparse style of prose, Kelly sketches characters through the eyes of the narrator and with Randy

as the catalyst, the figures interact to produce an effervescent potpourri.

It is this steady, occasionally explosive mingling of personalities that drives the story along and inevitably draws the reader into the mosaic that is created.

This rich texture is punctuated by the narrators introspective ramblings which reveal that while Randy has travelled to Elk Brain to begin a new job, the narrator is simultaneously questing into himself.

POEMS AND PHOTOS

The most unique feature of *Waves* is a prose poem and photography sequence by Chris Hurst called 'Searching for the Sacrificial Laugh'. Beneath each of the four photographs are verses of the poem accented by the refrain "Certain survival mechanisms" deeply ingrained from early childhood may be impossible to erase". As the poem gradually enters the inner realms of the narrator's body with all its bizarre implications, he 'cuts loose from logic' and finally finds himself in a place where 'the halls of mirrors held uncompromising, lewd grins'.

The black, grainy photographs of a male face steadily shift from that of a schizophrenic to become jarring, disturbing depictions of a

possessed man, complete with 'lewd grin'. The powerful multi-dimensional effect projected by this combination of poetry and photography is certainly worth commending and encouraging.

Yet another outstanding aspect of this edition is the critical essay on 'The Function of Women in the Fiction of Robertson Davies' by Gail Bowen.

Bowen initially demonstrates her understanding of what Davies believes the function of fiction to be (to feed the mind and move it to action) and subsequently describes the metaphysical framework of his novels (man's coming to know and accept all parts of himself).

WOODEN WOMEN

Within these contexts, Bowen examines the role of Davies' allegedly 'wooden' women and fits them partially into Jungian philosophy and partly into her own categories.

At all times Bowen's investigation is written in a lucid, carefully documented style that systematically considers the full range of Davies fiction and arrives at a variety of worthy insights.

The calibre of Bowen's writing is such that those who have not been

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exposed to the work of Robertson Davies will be immediately intrigued by the world of potential wonder that lie in his fiction.

The poetry of twenty three unknown writers fills out the remainder of *Waves* and it is this section that is perhaps the most disappointing of the entire magazine. Certainly there are many worthy contributions, but too

often the poems are uninspiring, obscure, or lack coherence.

Joe Rosenblatt's 'Chairman Ant' is a lengthy, pulsing prose poem that effectively employs an ant colony as a metaphor to parody lofty Marxist ideals. The numbing rhythm of the poem is punctuated by several carefully chosen capitalized words.

When these are combined with the continually changing shape of the poem, the entire work becomes a satire of socialist realism writing while simultaneously transcending those stifling guidelines.

DEAD COYOTE

Other fine performances include Dale Zieroth's 'Coyote Pup meets the Crazy People In Kootenay National Park' which considers man's lack of compassion when faced with the death of a coyote pup and E.J. Carson's refreshing and perceptive 'Moon' poem.

The remaining poems suffer in a comparison since they fail to titillate the mind or jarr the reader with valuable insights.

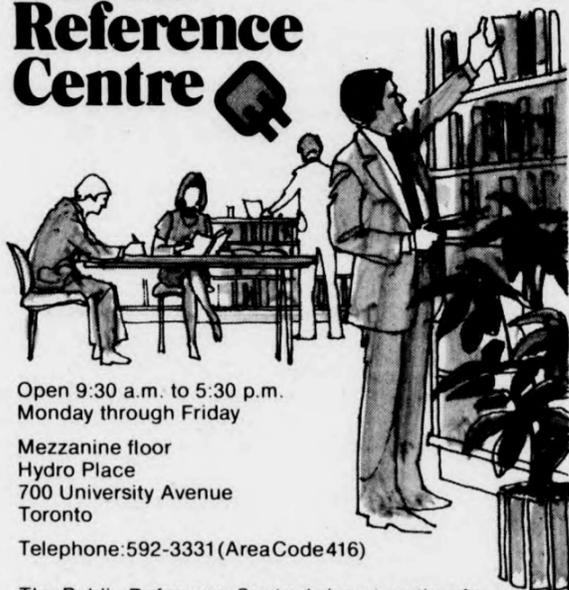
The many sparkling highlights of *Waves*, however, easily outshine the uneven poetry section and make a positive contribution to a York Literary magazine that is finally reaching its full potential.



No Kiss centrespreads, please? There's going to be a new Canadian Rock magazine. Called Record Week News, it will appear as a weekly condensed version of the Record Week trade paper. The first issue of the rag will appear this week on newsstands, sell for 35c., and will feature Mick Jagger and Keith Richard (and maybe Maggie). It will be the only publication carrying the CFTR Top forty chart.

Up Cripple Creek . . . The Band has recorded a new studio album, which should be out soon. However, it is believed (by the people who care to believe these things) that the album will be preceded by a release of The Last Waltz, recorded live. Helping the Band on the studio album will be Neil Diamond and some turkey who used to be called Zimmerman.

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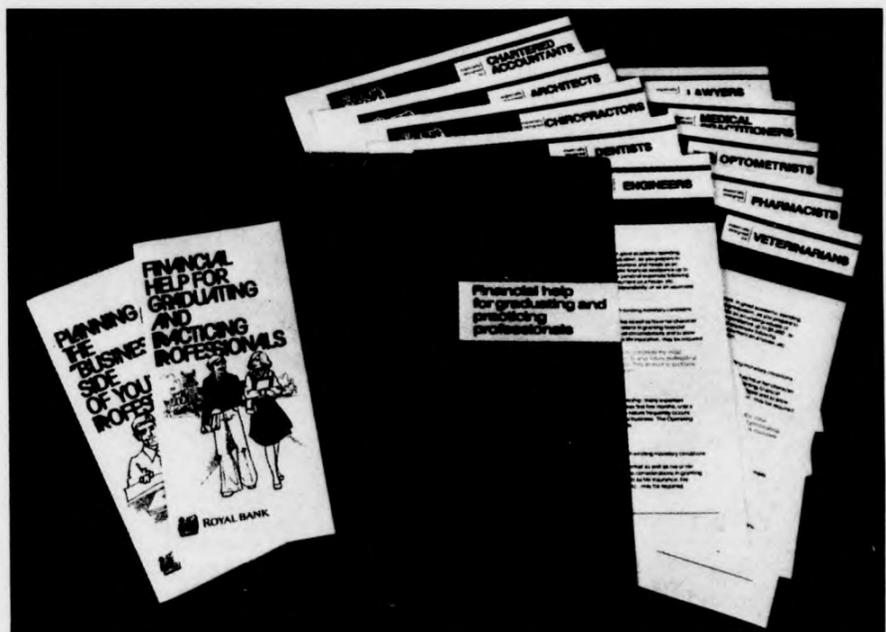
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