

books

Choyce offering will bring a little zen to your life

**The Republic of Nothing**  
by Lesley Choyce  
Goose Lane Editions

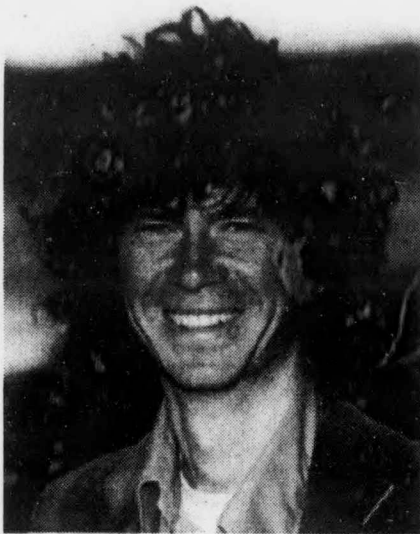
review by Mimi Cormier

The Republic of Nothing is the latest in a long and colourful line of books penned by Lesley Choyce. He has nineteen published books besides this novel, beginning in 1977 with Edible Wild Plants of the Maritimes, and ranging from non-fiction to poetry to fiction. I wouldn't be surprised if he has another one out by the time this review is printed.

Knowing a little bit about Lesley Choyce, the phenomenon should be helpful to anyone trying to get

a handle on Lesley Choyce, the author. His origins are in the USA, but his 1960's bohemian wanderings brought him to Nova Scotia, where he now lives with his family and reigns as a champion surfer. When he isn't writing, Choyce keeps busy with, among other things, hosting a literary chat show that airs on Vision TV, and running

Pottersfield Press. He also professes to be a transcendental anarchist, a philosophy which I haven't been able to entirely grasp myself, but since it seems to help Choyce write from an interesting perspective, I'm keeping an open mind.



The Choycean celebration of free-spiritedness inspires truly extraordinary situations in The Republic of Nothing. It opens with the Declaration of Independence of Whalebone Island (off the coast of Nova Scotia) by Everett McQuade. The declaration takes place on March 1, 1951, the day Everett's son Ian is born. The story belongs to Ian, who narrates, rather than to his father, but Everett is key to Ian's efforts to find meaning in life.

And life is strange on Whalebone Island. Everett follows proper diplomatic form following the declaration of independence. He notifies the relevant government representatives, but receives uncomprehending responses. Everett's goal is to preserve the Edenic purity of the island against the onslaught of industrialist-consumerist values

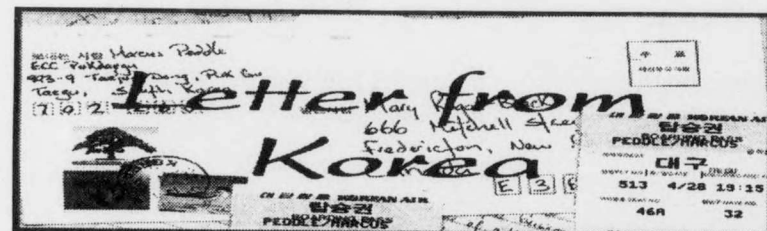
contaminating mainland life. This responsibility is Everett's legacy to Ian.

Meanwhile, exotic animals and even people wash up on the island's shores. Ian relates the mysterious circumstances of his parents' marriage (Everett found the future Mrs. McQuade adrift on the open sea with no memory of her background), and only gradually does he discover the somewhat unsavory past of his family. Ian tirelessly pursues a roller-coaster romance with his childhood sweetheart and island neighbor, Gwen, in the course of which he travels to the U.S. and witnesses the social upheaval of the 60's.

This novel is a boomer-

generation epic of Forrest Gump proportions but, mercifully, with less pro-American jingoism and more penetrating social commentary. Moral and cultural blight is symbolized by a decadent Nuclear Age America. Ian and others of his generation are confronted with the dilemma of how to reconcile technological progress with society's apparent lack of humanistic progress. The Republic of Nothing also offers food for thought about Western intolerance for societies that part ways with the "norm." Choyce has a leisurely way of telling a story, so the book is on the longish side (364 pages) for a typical novel. But if you need a little zen in your life, The Republic of Nothing is a good way to learn to extricate yourself from the beaten path and find the wonder of nothingness.

*This novel is a boomer-generation epic of Forrest Gump proportions but, mercifully, with less pro-American jingoism and more penetrating social commentary.*



June 1

Yesterday was a bad one. The academic director visited and asked me how my classes were going. I told her they were going fine. She asked me about my Middle School class (junior high). I said that the first couple of classes I had were not so good, but that they were improving. She told me that some students were leaving after the first hour of class (a Korean teacher teaches for an hour and then I teach for an hour) and she asked me why. She went on to say that my elementary classes are very good, but maybe I need to make my other classes more interesting.

I felt bad because I felt that I had failed as a teacher, but I also feel a little wronged because in my classes I follow the exercises given in the textbook and try to talk about things as they come up, but I am not much of an entertainer. My co-workers later told me that adults usually never stick around for very long and that they like to move from institute to institute. ECC is also twice as expensive as many places.

I felt bad all that afternoon until I had my middle school class. It went well, and at the end of the class I asked them if there was anything I could do to make the class more interesting. Besides one fellow saying "bring some candy again" (I brought a bag one class), they said the class was fun and fine. I felt better after that.

I bought a Korean-English English-Korean dictionary this afternoon, and am ready to begin my lessons on Tuesday. I have taught myself most of the Korean alphabet by studying signs with both English and Korean on them. It's going to be difficult to learn because many of the sounds are foreign to English and there are six combinations of polite and formal ways of speaking. Julie has a degree in education, however, so I'm sure she will teach me well.

My roommate shaved off his beard tonight. I hardly recognised him after he did it. The reason? Quite simple, really. One of the other teachers told us today that he would be more attractive to Korean women without facial hair. It makes sense, I suppose, since Korean men rarely have facial hair.

Chris, a foreign teacher from another institute, Brian and I are going to Pusan next weekend. Brian and I are going to get tattoos. I've wanted to get one for a long time but just never did. I'm not sure what I want to get yet, but I think I will get it on my forehead upper arm. I have to be careful in choosing a tattoo parlour, though; I wouldn't want to get sick from a dirty needle (though apparently there's a guy in the fish market who can fix you up for any nasty diseases).

Oceans.  
Marcus.

Examination of child sexual abuse in Canada: gripping, factual

**Our Little Secret: Confronting Child Sexual Abuse in Canada**  
by Judy Steed  
Vintage Canada, Random House

review by Jethelo E. Cabilete

"Child sexual abuse is our problem; it is not little and it should not be a secret."

This opening statement by Dr. Marcellina Mian, one of the contributors to the book, introduces the reader to the gripping and shocking subject of child sexual abuse in Canada.

Recent years have witnessed growing sensitivity and social outrage at sexual abuse of children; observe the reactions to the Kingsclear case. The subject of child sexual abuse is a controversial one, and more often than not, it is the victims and their supporters who are forced to explain themselves, rather than the offender.

Judy Steed, an award-winning journalist, has compiled a series of cases that bring to light several important findings with regard to this issue. The book is a powerful chronicle of the lives that have been shattered because of child sexual abuse. These are the

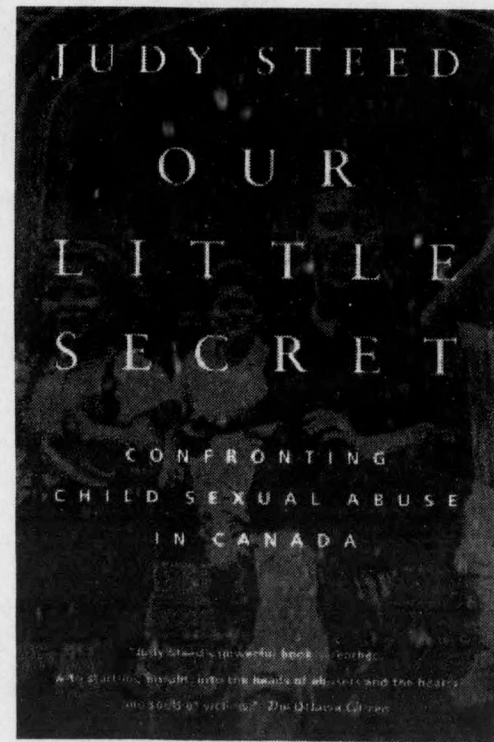
stories and anecdotes of the victims, their family and friends, and the police, doctors, counsellors and other social agents who have been instrumental in bringing child molesters to justice.

However, Steed does indicate that the cases brought forth in *Our Little Secret* are those that contain clear cut evidence to the

*Our Little Secret* is a factual, honest response to the issue of sexual exploitation of children. It is not written as a horror story, nor is it meant to place blame upon anyone. The book provides patterns, examples, fact-based accounts, and possible social changes addressing the underlies the problem. It provides clues that may alert people to the dangers posed by this problem, and gives the hope that others have survived this form of abuse, and have dealt with their problems.

Judy Steed's collaboration sends the message that we can not just sit back and pretend it does not exist, or "can't happen here." Child sexual abuse is prevalent, and unfortunately can remain hidden for years.

This book is for parents, teachers, counsellors, anyone who is interested in stopping child sexual abuse. We need to accept that this problem exists, and listen when children indicate that something is wrong. As Detective Wendy Leaver states, we have to "stop ignoring kids."



Free books!

We give you a book, you give us a review, everyone goes away happy. Do I have to call up Muffy and Fish? Come to The Bruns Friday at 12:30 p.m. and your kneecaps have no need to worry.

perpetrators' crimes. As she states, "child sexual abuse is such an explosive topic that I have selected cases typifying situations...in which the accused have pleaded guilty or been convicted, where the facts are not in dispute." There are no false allegations contained in the book, nor are the cases limited to particular groups in society.