

# First novel gives a whole new twist to life in Stirling

**Belleville** - A lot of people dream about writing a novel at some point in their lives but few ever give up the security of their day jobs to do so. For Gilaine Mitchell thinking about writing her novel for 20 years was long enough. In 1997 she finally threw caution to the wind, quit her job writing

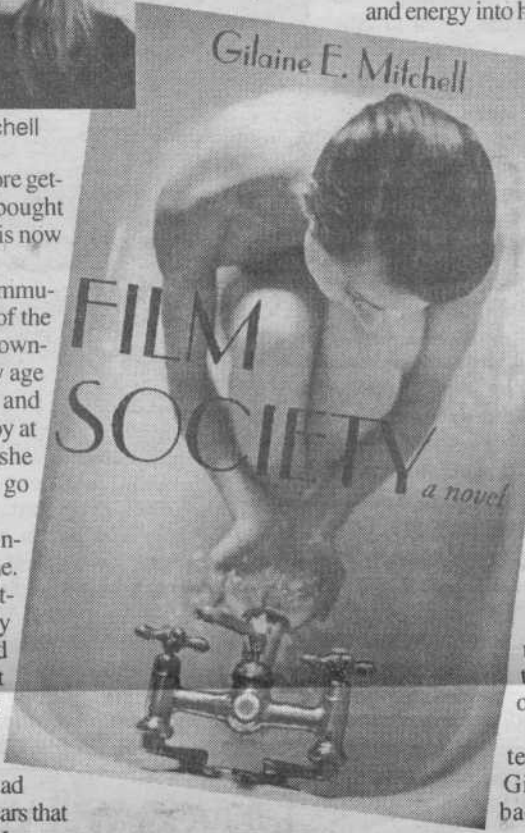
commercial copy at CJBQ radio in Belleville and committed herself to chasing a dream. Gilaine's first novel, *Film Society*, was published on April 29, 2000, with Dundurn Press in Toronto printing an initial press run of 3,000 copies and was recently reviewed in the June issue of *Chatelaine*, the *Globe and Mail* and was *Flare* magazine's pick of the month in May. "It all happened pretty fast after I finished

writing *Film Society* in May of 1999," admits Gilaine. "I presented it to the Dundurn Group in Toronto myself, they read it and bought it. It was kind of surprising after listening to authors talk about all of the initial rejections they have had to overcome before getting anything published. Dundurn bought the rights in October of 1999 and it is now on book shelves across Canada." Gilaine has roots in the Stirling community having come to live just north of the village, on Concession 5, Rawdon Township, when she was 11 years old. By age 18 she was ready to move south and landed a job writing commercial copy at CJBQ radio in Belleville, where she stayed until deciding to resign and go into writing on a full-time basis. "That big change in my life was interesting to say the least!" says Gilaine. "Once you have made the commitment by quitting your job you really are compelled to put your heart and soul into it. In the book I explore what happens if one ignores an emerging creative passion in their lives and I guess you could say that parallels my own experience. I risked a lot but I had thought about writing for so many years that I really had no choice but to try it. My routine evolved into getting up every morning at 4 a.m. and writing until 8 a.m. And then I was mom for the rest of the day." Gilaine describes her method of writing as "stream of consciousness" style. Getting up at 4 a.m. and letting the words flow when the rest of the immediate world around her is still sound asleep removes her own consciousness only a small step from her dream state. This routine subjected Gilaine to some mild ribbing from her friends who suspected any novel written under this regimen, moving each day from dream state to writing in the wee hours, is bound to be laced with sexual adventures. Gilaine does not disappoint them. "When you consider that the story follows the lives of seven women who get together once a month to drink wine, watch videos and catch up on each other's lives it would be pretty hard to exclude sex from the equation," says Gilaine with a laugh. "My early morning writing is a kind of purging of emotion for me. The voices are very intense and only later in the day can I do a rewrite to refine my raw material." "These are all fictional characters for sure with Sadie, the pure hedonist, acting as narrator. She is a natural storyteller and the keeper of the Film Society stories. Her own love life, always a subject of discussion among her friends, takes the form of a jacket made of patches of fabric she has snipped from the clothes of her many lovers. Of course, my friends in Stirling try and peg my inspiration for the characters on people



Gilaine Mitchell

they know but none of my characters follow the lives of the living. They are purely fictional. And once they emerged in my writing they really did take on lives of their own." Gilaine had originally thought of her writing as a script for a film. She wrote the character profiles first and later found their lives wove together naturally based on their monthly congregation in the living room, and bathroom, of the old brick house at the end of Anne Street in Stirling. At 38 years old Gilaine has shifted her concentration and energy into her second novel. Although reluctant to give any hints as to the theme of this work Gilaine does easily admit that it also is set in Stirling. "It may seem strange to some people to base my novels in the village of Stirling," says Gilaine. "But it is natural for me. You could say I'm familiar with the neighbourhood. In fact, I believe I have seven novels to write, and they are all centred on Stirling." And for readers interested in meeting Gilaine she will be back in Stirling at 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 27, at The Village Platter on Front Street, where she will be happy to autograph copies of her book. Books will be available for sale as well. She will also be signing books at Chapters in Belleville at 1 p.m. the same day and copies of *Film Society* are available at both Greenley's and Chapters in Belleville. Who knows... perhaps the Hollywood film crews will soon follow her to Stirling.



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