

# OUR CITY

Belleville author's novel is a hit

## First work is fabulous

By Bill Hunt

The Intelligencer

A Belleville resident's first novel has been chosen by Flare magazine as its pick of the month for its May issue.

Gilaine Mitchell's book, *Film Society*, has also received a positive review in *Chatelaine* magazine and is selling well at local book stores.

The book is set in Stirling, where Mitchell lived from age 11 to 18 and centre's around the lives of seven women who meet once a month to watch films and review their personal lives.

"That's my personal landscape," Mitchell said of Stirling. "The characters are fictional, however, I'll quote Alice Monroe...when you start with the unfamiliar, the familiar creeps in, and when you start with the familiar, the unfamiliar creeps in."



Gilaine Mitchell

For Quinte area residents, there is plenty of familiar locations in the book, such as John Meyers Road and Oak Lake.

The book began as a screen play 10 years ago but Mitchell set the piece aside and eventually rewrote it in novel form. The former radio copy writer quit her job at Quinte Broadcasting in January, 1997 to

write full-time. "Prior to this novel my only publication was in a couple magazines. My writing background is made up mostly of writing radio commercials, which I found helpful. Writing those made me visual and economical in my writing."

Mitchell rose each morning at 4 a.m. and wrote for four hours before switching to her role as mother, to care for her infant child. It took two and a half years to finish the book.

Mitchell was one of nine people to receive an Ontario Arts Council Works in Progress grant midway through writing it (the council's jury reads 60 pages of each book it considers before making its decision). The grant helped both financially and gave Mitchell the momentum and confidence to carry it through to the end, she said.

When it was complete, Mitchell sent it to two publishers and Dundurn quickly made her an offer. She had the satisfaction of telling the second publishing company — which contacted her a few months later with an offer — that they were too late.

In the snail-paced world of publishing, Dundurn's offer came quickly, with their receiving the manu-

script in June and a deal being signed in October. "It was very fast, almost unheard of in the industry," said Mitchell.

It has since been sent to 100 major daily newspapers across Canada for review and has received favourable reviews by *Flare* (May issue) and *Chatelaine* (June issue).

W & R Greenley Booksellers is hosting a launch of the book in the Belleville Public Library art gallery Wednesday, May 17 at 7:30 p.m. Mitchell will read from the book and sign copies of it. There will be a second book signing Saturday, May 27 at 1 p.m. at Chapters at the Quinte Mall and a third at the Village Platter in Stirling at 4 p.m. that day.

