

Main street offers plenty for Christmas shoppers



John Sommer
Ideas and the Arts

One afternoon recently I went to Main Street to see how the downtown merchants have prepared themselves and their street for the Christmas shopping season. It was a bright, cold day with some snow on the ground. Seen from the sidewalk in front of McCarthy's Tea Room, the street was a splendid sight, with gold and red decorations around every lamp post and innumerable lights twinkling in the many trees.

I dropped in at Oxbow Books where a book signing session was going strong. The book that was signed was "Plain Noodles," a wonderfully amusing story for children by Betty Waterton, with superlative illustrations by Joanne Fitzgerald. Ms. Fitzgerald happens to live in Georgetown, and here she was, quite young herself, surrounded by eager children and their parents, signing one book after the other in a distinctive handwriting that looks as good on the page as her fresh and buoyant illustrations.

She told me that she was born in Montreal, that she studied art at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, that she has worked for seven years as a free-lance illustrator for magazines and schoolbooks, and that she and her family came to Georgetown from Toronto four years ago. One day, the designer of the Douglas and McIntyre publishing firm noticed a spread of illustrations she had done for Chickadee magazine and brought them to the attention of his publisher. Soon after she was selected to illustrate Ms. Waterton's manuscript. She worked on the illustrations - day and night - from November 1988 to March 1989. "Plain Noodles" came out in Canadian book shops this month. Right now she is illustrating her second book, a story by Niko Scharer, due to come out in a year. I bought two copies of "Plain Noodles."

Next I went to Cachet, the best gift shop in town. I am always on the lookout for things that are not mass-produced. Cachet has signed one-of-a-kind pieces by Canadian glass blowers like Andrew Kuntz, minutely detailed wildlife sculpture by Christopher Gosset, mouse dolls by Vicki and decorative cats by Linda Egington, two ladies of this region. From other countries Cachet has fine Staffordshire dinner ware, Kashmir boxes and bracelets, crystal, and a riot of objects, too numerous to mention. For wrapping you can spend as much as for the gift you want wrapped, by

selecting the specially designed papers, boxes and bags available at Cachet.

My next stop was at Foodstuffs, a store where you are engulfed by the appetizing scents of dried fruit and honey and spices the moment you enter. The store is run by Ms. Margaret Dye and her daughter Marcie Dye. I asked about the exuberantly colored pottery in one of their windows and was told that Ms. Dye's sister-in-law Janet Dye of Ottawa is the creator of these attractive and inexpensive pieces.

On I went past many eye-catching shop windows with seasonal decorations, seduced more than once by striking goods offered for sale. Christiane, for instance, has knitted tops displayed in her window that I find irresistible. At The Final Touch, baskets of Niagara grapevines and filled with bunches of red and pink and white and yellow freeze-dried roses, the whole glorious arrangement the work of Andrea Nadherny-Borutin, caught my eyes. And a few houses further I found myself in Victoria Lane admiring handknitted children's outfits by Auntie Norah of Georgetown, smocked little girls dresses by Jacqueline, very sophisticated party dresses for girls around ten years of age, by Elen Henderson, and sweatshirts that come with tubes of color included, so you can paint them yourself. All of these wares are by Canadian designers. Also at Victoria Lane, the softest baby shoes I have ever encountered, from Spain.

And since these just mentioned items belong to the category of wearable art, let me name you two more designers that belong to this field. One is Maryjane of Georgetown who cuts and paints wooden figures and fastens them to tops for grown-ups and children. Whole scenes and landscapes appear on her garments, attached in

such a way that everything can be taken off when the garment is washed and afterwards replaced again. The other is Ann Suzuki, a batic artist who works with silk exclusively. She has designed stupendous dresses that, together with Maryjane's wearable art, are exhibited at House Sol, on Charles Street to Dec. 10 of this year.

Seasonal suggestions

The Annual Bookish Alphabet from Downtown Georgetown's

OXBOW BOOKS



Here are a few gift ideas for seasonal gifts. Thousands of titles in stock.

- A** Announcing Jake & The Kid (W. O. Mitchell); After The Applause (Colleen & Gordie Howe); All My Best Friends (George Burns); Antiques - Collector's Price Lists.
- B** Baby Sitter's Club; Beano; Bridesmaid (Ruth Rendell); Rosemary Brown (Being Brown, A Very Public Life); Business & Corporate Affairs.
- C** Calendars-including Advent; Calvin & Hobbes; Canadian Living Rush hour Cookbook; Canadiana; Cassettes; Classics.
- D** Dandy; Day in the Life of China; (Spy Line); Desk Calendars; Diaries; Drawing of the Three (Stephen King).
- E** David Eddings; Ellie & the Ivy (Allen Morgan); Embroidery; Empire of the Bay (Peter Newman).
- F** Fantasy; Dick Francis (Straight); French language Children's books; Friendship Book; Frigates of the RCN (Ken Macpherson).
- G** Gardener's Encyclopedia of Garden Plants & Flowers; Gift Stationery; Grand Hotels of North America (Catherine Donzel); Martha Grimes (Old Silent).
- H** Harrowsmith Cookbooks; Ronnie Hawkins (Last of the Good Ol' Boys); Sherman Hines (Canadian Landscape Portfolio); House is not a Home (Eric Nielsen).
- I** In a Canadian Garden (Nicole Eaton); Inventing the Future (David Suzuki); Italian Phrase Books & Dictionaries; Interior Decorating.
- J** Joy of Life; Jaguar Woman (Melanie Watt); Joey Smallwood (Harold Horwood); Joy of Curling (Ed Lukovich).
- K** Karsh; Art of the Portrait; Tracy Kidder (Among Schoolchildren); Stephen King (Dark Half); Knitting; Gordon Korman (Radio Fifth Grade).
- L** Latest Morningside Papers (Peter Gzowski); Margaret Laurence (Dance on the Earth); Les Miserables (Victor Hugo); Jean Little.
- M** McMichael Canadian art collection; James McNair (Pie Cookbook); Roland Michener (Last Victory); Robert Munsch; Muskoka (Judy Ross).
- N** Natural Curiosity (Margaret Drabble); Nature; Night of the Mary Kay Commandos (Bloom County); Norman's Snowball (Hazel Hutchins).
- O** Margaret Oliver (Cookbook for Seniors); Onley's Arctic; Ottawa Inside Out (Stevie Cameron); Out-of-print Books; Ozone Crisis (Sharon Roan).
- P** Pal Hal (Dick Beddoes); Paper Crafts; Photography; Plain Noodles (Janet Waterton); Picture Frames.
- Q** Quick-meal Cookbooks; Quiet-time Activity Books for Children; Quit Smoking Books.
- R** Radical Mandarin; Memoirs of Escott Reid; Mordecai Richler (Solomon Gursky was Here); Royal Family; Running West (James Houston).
- S** Second World War 50th Anniversary; Self-help; Cameron Smith (Unfinished Journey, Sweet Valley High and Twins); Stationery.
- T** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles; That Old Black Magic (Arthur Black); Thomas the Tank Engine; Times Atlas of 2nd World War; Towards a Just Society (Pierre Trudeau).
- U** Ultimate Prizes (Susan Howatch); Under the Sun and Over the Moon (Kevin Crossley-Holland); Peter Ustinov (The Disinformant).
- V** La Varenne Pratique (Cookbook); Vegetarian Cookbooks; Voyaging with the Whales (Cynthia D'Vincent).
- W** Waldo; Eric Wilson; Wooden Toys; Woodworking; Max Wyman (Dance Canada: An Illustrated victory).
- X** \$30. Gift Certificate for the first correct answer: Which comedian came out with: "Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read."
- Y** Paul Yee (Tales from Gold Mountain); Scott Young (Home for Christmas); Youngest Goalie (Brian McFarlane).
- Z** Dr. Zed (Science Surprises). And - put zip in your life with a good book!

DICK BEDDOES AT OXBOW

Dick Beddoes will be at Oxbow Books for a chat and to sign copies of "Pal Hal", his new book about Hal Ballard.

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