

Startling accounts revealed

Book review

By CYNTHIA SMITH

Who doesn't like to while away a rainy summer weekend in a quiet spot reading tales of the unusual? This seems to be the year for the supernatural in anthologies. If only Mackenzie King were around today to see the flowering of literature on a subject so dear to his heart.

John Robert Colombo has produced his second book on the unexplained: *Mysterious Encounters: Personal Accounts of the Supernatural in Canada* (Hounslow Press, 116 pages, \$15.95).

A strength of this book is that it features the often startling accounts of ordinary people who are either Canadian or who had the experience in Canada. Very few of the stories are by well-known writers. Each story is written in the first person and the style is that of the narrator, only slightly edited by Colombo, who does provide an introduction to each piece as well as a long, clear preface. The 72 stories in the book (which is divided into nine sections of eight excerpts each) range from native lore to recent UFO sightings. The most vexing aspect of this anthology is the unevenness of the segments. Too often, the readers gets into a section only to be left dangling. Even the mysterious and unexplained requires a bit of amplification at times.

PHONEY WINDIGO

The sections on native mysteries and animal mysteries emphasize animism and pantheism. Hudson's Bay Company Factor P.H. Godsell, in *The Home-Made Windigo*, gives a first-class account of how he created a phoney Windigo and terrorized the native fur traders into abandoning camp and their furs, which were intended for Godsell's competitor. Godsell then appeared as a hero having "killed" the Windigo and purchased the furs for his company! Sad but true. And then there are the bear men (Sasquatches) of Charles Flood's *I Stood Still Wondering Great Stories*.

The spiritualistic mysteries would, I fear, disappoint Mackenzie King. The late prime minister would be only too sorry to discover the true reason behind the mysterious rappings of the infamous teenage Fox sisters who initiated the modern spiritualist movement. Ouija boards, seances - they're all there for every enthusiast of spiritualism.

The psychic mysteries section has everything for those interested in psychic phenomena, from the revelatory discussion to the precognitive dream, but the natural mysteries section disappoints - most of the phenomena have been explained away by

scientific developments. Human mysteries and ghostly mysteries provide good Canadian ghost stories; one, on Pape Avenue in Toronto, would provide a grand scenario for a Stephen King novel.

The visionary mysteries section, although uneven in quality, presents one great excerpt on "the twilight zone truck stop" - a surreal event experienced by a family travelling Highway 3 near Creston, B.C. In the middle of the night, they stopped for coffee at a vintage '60s Texaco truck stop. Only pro-

blem was that it wasn't there in the daytime. But what explains the coffee? The last section of the book is devoted, not surprisingly, to UFOs.

This book would be good to add to the cottage or camp collections. Taken at one bite, it suffers; nibbled, it satisfies.

- Cynthia Smith was the editor of *Sir John A.: An Anecdotal Life of Sir John A. Macdonald*, and associate editor, with J.T. McLeod, of the *Oxford Book of Canadian Political Anecdotes*.

- Thomson News Service.

Farriers compete against time

MILTON - Experienced and novice farriers will race against time to forge made-to-order horseshoes as the Ontario Agricultural Museum hosts its second annual "Anvil and Iron - Horseshoeing Competition and Equine Show", May 26 and 27.

The event, held in conjunction with the Ontario Farrier's Association, will involve skilled blacksmiths from Ontario, Quebec, and abroad. Competitors will have the opportunity to compete in four categories including a "live-shoeing" division. The competition will familiarize visitors with a skill now centuries old.

The weekend activities will also include a riding demonstration by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Mounted Unit.

The Museum features over 30 buildings and displays on its 32 hectare site. Costumed interpreters, tractor-drawn wagon rides, farm animals and more will

make your day in the country an enjoyable one.

The site is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, May 22 to September 23. Located 5 km west of Milton, the Museum can be reached from Highway 401 via exit 320 or 312 north and follow the signs.

Admission rates include \$3 for adults, \$1.50 for seniors and youths (6-17 years), \$7.50 for families.

Come and experience the sights and sounds of rural Ontario May 26 and 27 and be part of the Museum's second annual "Anvil and Iron" event.

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