She takes romance writing seriously

After many rejections, author now has book published by Harlequin

By CHRIS MILLS

RICHMOND HILL — After two failed novels and a drawer full of rejection slips from five romance publishing houses, one might expect her to give up writing.

Even the third novel languished in the hallowed halls of Harlequin Enterprises Ltd. for six months.

But after two years of long hours, rejection notices, bleary eyes, and being slumped over her typewriter, Elaine K. Stirling of Richmond Hill is a published romance writer in the true Harlequin fashion.

With a background as diverse as store clerk, statistician, immigration counsellor, travel consultant and, most recently, mother and homemaker, Ms Stirling began writing in Kitchener in 1981.

With her first child bubbling around the house and her husband in private law practice, she wanted an outside stimulus.

GOING CRAZY

"I was going crazy," she says. "I needed something to keep my mind alive. I could feel it just turning to mush.

"The reason I picked romance was because I wanted something I could write in a reasonable length of time, that needs some research to inspire me, but not years and years of it. Romance seemed like the logical solution. It's also a bit of fantasy. When you're stuck at home with a wailing baby, you like to escape to something a little more sensuous."

She credits her husband with pushing her into being a writer. But, at one time her writing experience was little more than essays for her Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and reports for the immigration department.

"I was dealing with refugee and humanitarian cases," she said. "The idea was to get civil servants to weep and to do it very succinctly, so I guess that was my training."

Before she married, her travels took her through Chile, Mexico, and the United States as she followed her geologist father. After school she toured Europe for six months and, as a travel consultant, she became in- separated), she takes on the world from behind her electronic typewriter.

But as a young, lonely child, she found most of her fulfilment in reading. She denies, however, having previously read romance herself, but instead found solace in the classics — Dickens, Hawthorne and contemporary Pulitzer prize winners — who she describes as her favorites and mentors.

Just this past summer, her novel, Emerald Deception (later renamed Unsuspected Conduct), won the 1985 Golden Heart Award fo a contemporary work over 70,000 words. One week before she found she'd won, sh sold the book to Harlequin.

Ms Stirling may well embody the lates wave of romance writers. At 31, she believe popular romance novels are changing fron the genre of teenage romance to the lifestyle which reflect the demographic figures.

"Yes, I would say the Baby Boomers ar moving into the industry full force," sh said.

Ms Stirling also said she regards th market of male closet romance readers as he "acid test."

"If I can write a book that a man will si and read cover to cover and not go 'Blech, i that mushy', then I figure I've written a de cent book," she said. "That's my own per sonal perception, however. I'm sure that' not Harlequin's marketing strategy."

NOVELS ARE FUN

"I take my writing very seriously, but don't take the books themselves seriously," she said. "They're not meant to change the world. They're not great serious literature It's just fun. It's uplifting. You know when you sit down with a Harlequin what you're going to get the way you know what you're going to see when you watch Dallas. It's entertainment."

With Unsuspected Conduct released just last week, Stargrazer scheduled for an early 1986 release, Midnight Obsession under negotiation and another in the stages of being written, Ms. Stirling sees a bright future.

Success for Ms. Stirling is hard to identify, but she hopes to one day be as well-known as writer Danielle Steele.

On the other hand, "To me, living happily ever after would be doing what I'm doing now. And if there's someone to share it in my life, that's good, too."

Elaine K. Stirling of Richmond Hill is the author of a romance novel *Unsuspected Conduct*. She admits that romance novels are not great literature but points out they do have value as light entertainment, as are soap operas on television. (Photo by Chris Mills)

STIRLING,
ELAINE K.