

## When the power goes out ...

By Kate Gilderdale  
Stouffville Free Press

In a world where everything is divided into neat categories, *Mystic Trudeau: The Fire and the Rose* is in class of its own.

B.W. Powe's book takes the reader on a fascinating journey into the mind of a man whose mythic status, fierce intelligence and charismatic personality made him a renowned international figure. But this is no ordinary biography. Powe weaves together, with poetic language and his own extensive knowledge of literature, poetry and philosophy, a moving and vivid portrait of a man who often craved solitude, embraced books and ideas, and was, at the end of his life, devastated by the loss of his beloved son, Michel.

Powe, an English professor at York University, not only gives us intriguing insights into his notoriously elusive subject, but also offers a very personal analysis of the man and the influences that shaped him. Anyone with an interest in Trudeau's life and times will find much to enjoy, ponder and absorb in this delightful and somewhat quirky memoir.

The author, who began meeting with Trudeau in 1985 after the latter's retirement from politics, moves seamlessly from conversations during their many lunches together to ruminations on Trudeau's influence on the Canadian psyche. Along the way he illustrates how modern communications shape our perceptions by bombarding us with images and information, thus adding to the mythic quality of iconic individuals like Trudeau himself.

Powe seems genuinely mystified that this enigmatic and sometimes difficult man chose to befriend him, but as their relationship progresses the author becomes more confident in his ability to understand and sometimes challenge his

subject. It also becomes increasingly clear that a love of literature and philosophy, as well as a deep connection to family, are elements that forge a strong bond between the two men.

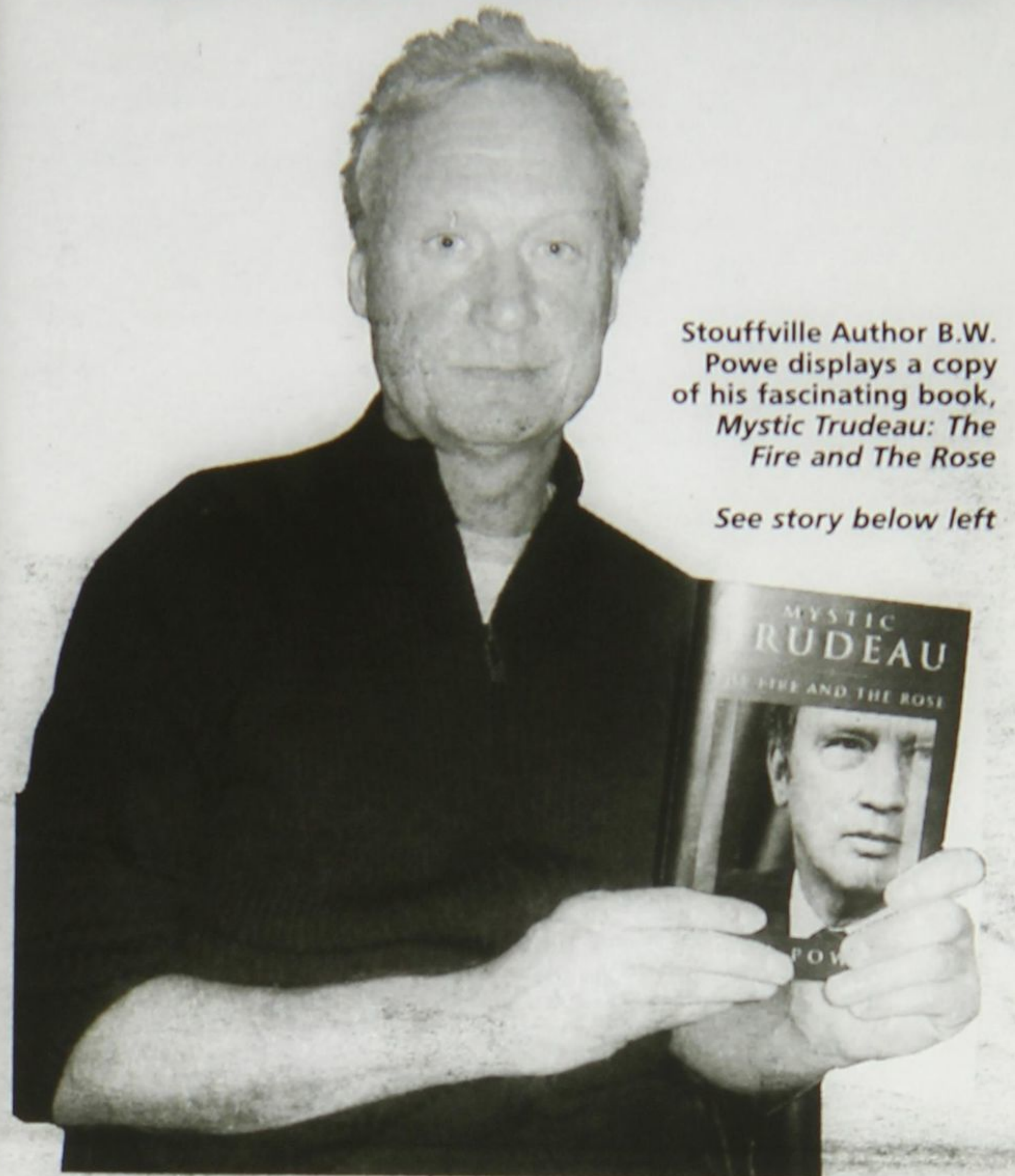
"Books, I would find, were his constant companions in retirement," writes Powe, who often came to their meetings armed with books for his friend's perusal. "He always had a book on his mostly uncluttered desk. (Why should we be surprised to find a political leader reads? Perhaps by now it's a surprise to find that anyone reads by choice?)" These are telling comments, not only about Trudeau, but about the world of sound bites and spin, and the contrast presented by a leader with intellectual depth and a reverence for difficult ideas.

Powe talks about Trudeau's constant search for a just society, in which people could co-exist, if not in perfect harmony, at least with a tolerance towards other people's differences. "You try to balance conflicting theories so that they are not so much conflicting as complementary," said Powe. "Canada is ahead of the game; other societies are striving for what we have managed already."

No matter what their view of Trudeau, he said, "People talk about him as if they had met him." And the author of this book, who not only met him but got to know him better than most over a period of 15 years, underscores the fascination that still surrounds the man who, for many, put Canada on the world map.

B.W. Powe, author of *Mystic Trudeau: The Fire and the Rose*, is a professor of English at York University. His other works include *The Solitary Outlaw* and *Towards A Canada of Light*. Powe, who has also written a novel, *Outage*, and a book of poetry entitled *The Unsaid Passing*, has lived in Stouffville for the past 10 years.

## MYSTIC TRUDEAU: The Fire and the Rose



Stouffville Author B.W. Powe displays a copy of his fascinating book, *Mystic Trudeau: The Fire and The Rose*

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