

# John Badger: budding writer grows up to be a publisher

By JOHN STEWART

"Books are good. They are one of the great, good things in our civilization — and that's no bull."

The added phrase of emphasis sounds strange coming in the luxurious English tones of Mississauga's only Arthurian poet, John Badger of Watersedge Road.

Badger has been addicted to the world of books since the age of eight "when my first composition was looked upon favourably." By the time he was 14, the budding writer had decided to enter the publishing business.

A Mississauga resident since 1959, Badger is the owner of the Pendragon House publishing company with 5,800 square-foot warehouse at King and Bathurst streets in Toronto; a 7,100-square foot shop in Palo Alto, California; and a new shop scheduled to open in Cornwall, England.

Pendragon began in Toronto in 1961, when Badger put up \$1,200. After a few weeks of subsistence living, he landed a large magazine contract. He was also hired for the sales promotion campaign of Encyclopedia Britannica in Canada.

"The other candidates told them they had to have a special Canadian approach," Badger says. "I told them the problem was that their whole sales approach was no good in the first place."

Badger's endearing frankness didn't help him much in February 1964, however, when a new Britannica regime came into power in the U.S. and he was one of the victims of a mass firing.

"By August, 1964, I envisaged escaping to Equador with hordes of creditors pursuing me hotly," Badger recalls with a laugh. But things did get better."

and runs two book clubs in Canada as well as some American clubs.

The bookshop in California is located just a half-mile from Stanford University where the major study centre on British government in the U.S. is centered.

Badger secured the rights to publication of documents from Her Majesty's Stationary Office, the official British government publishers, because he was not Canadian.

Following several attempts to secure the Canadian rights of publication, Badger was leaving in disgust one day when officials mentioned it was "too bad he wasn't an American."

"I turned around and walked back and applied for the American rights. I got the account and it turned out to be 17 times as large as the Canadian one," the publishing company owner says.

After deciding on Buffalo, New York as the site of his huge bookshop, Badger says he realized he "detested" Buffalo one day while having a haircut in Clarkson. "I decided right there that San Francisco was the American city I like the best and that's



JOHN BADGER

where I was going to set up."

As much as he enjoys publishing, poetry is Badger's obsession. "I've been a newspaper man and an ad copy man and writing poetry is by far the most difficult form of writing," he says.

He writes "in order not to think about business."

The Arthuriad, an epic poem of 56 sonnets with matching commentary in free verse, which Badger has been working one for 35 years, was published last year.

The book "is highly ideological", Badger admits, and hails a return to the values which Arthur represented. "It's the return of the Christian Militant Champion," he says.

A press release issued at the time of publication indicates Badger wrote the book first in journalese, then as a polemic, a third time as an academic piece and then as poetry. He plans to add an eighth canto and revise the entire work in the future.

Badger, 55, says the book was generally greeted by furious and insulting reviews. "I remember one man said I had invented two new forms of sonnet — both of which were terrible."

Peel Biog. - Badger John

July 4-73 HT Pg 1