

He only performs to subsidize his first love

Peel County B10g Bk. May 17-78 MT

Mississauga's Jim Betts, a lyricist composer, has a new musical cabaret, Stagefright, that will play in Niagara-on-the-Lake at the Buttery from mid-June to Labor Day. To see it, reserve early at 468-2564. Betts played there last summer to sell-out crowds in "I'll Tell You Mine, if You Tell Me Yours."

"It's ironic that I've been using my talent as a performer to subsidize my writing, when several performers do dish washing to subsidize their performing," says Betts.

Currently Betts is working on a cabaret for Young People's Theatre in Toronto and a musical based on Mid Summer Night's Dream. Some songs from the musical have been circulating and have sparked interest in Toronto, New York and Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Betts has always wanted to write, although his first show wasn't written until he was in university. Even then, he thought of writing as an enjoyable past time and intended to continue post-graduate studies in English.

The producer of the Tommy Hunter show discovered Betts performing at the Muskoka Sands and Betts became part of the OK Corall. "I made a lot of contacts there," says Betts, "and now consider my writing has potential as a career."

Betts has set the goal of five or six

years to evaluate his work and make decisions. "I'd like to be writing musical theatre by then and see some steps towards showing in New York.

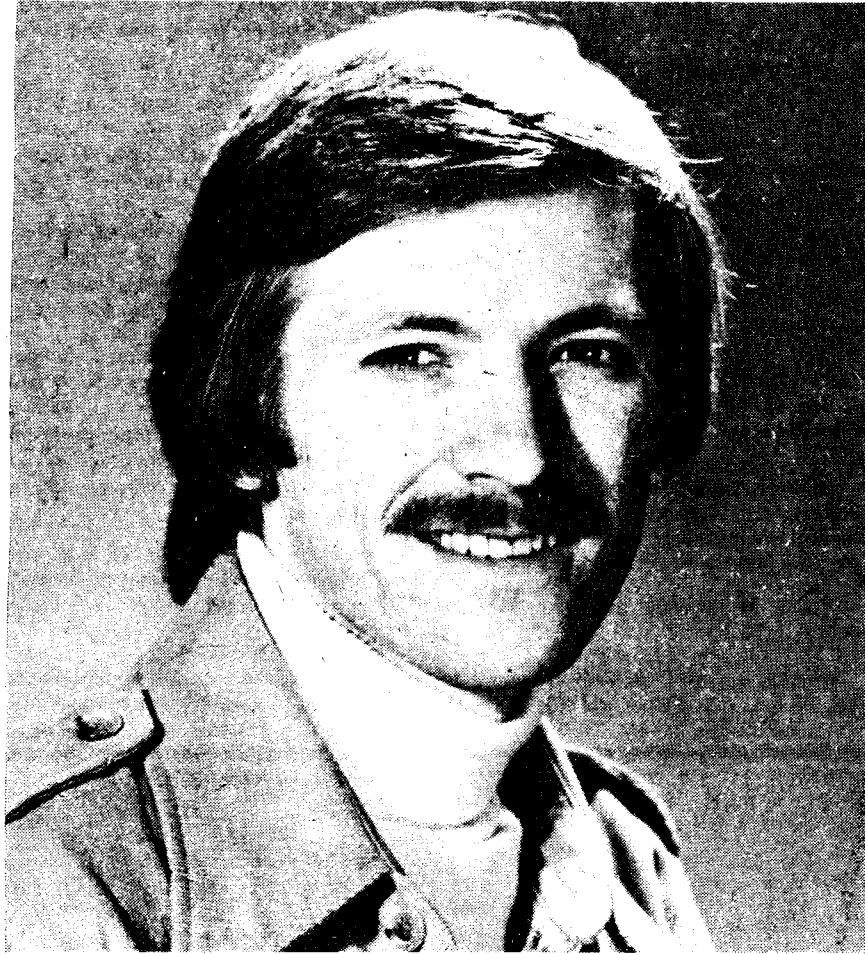
"If I don't feel I'm growing towards that, I may change my attitude and let it become a hobby once again."

Chances are that Betts will make progress. Lehman Engel, a well-known New York critic conducts a monthly workshop in Toronto sponsored by Professional Rights Organization (PRO). He has been interested in Betts' writing and has promised to push his current show in New York when it's completed.

Royalties on the new show in the Buttery will begin soon but times are getting a bit tight. Betts has applied for a Canada Council Grant.

He was one of the 30 performers out of 1,500 that were termed outstanding Canadian performing artists in the DuMaurier talent search held this year. The honor was accompanied by a cheque for \$500.

Betts attended Gordon Graydon High School and performed in two or three shows at school. Between performing and sports, there wasn't much time left. "Performing takes away energy needed for writing. I'm working on getting material written and on stage," says Betts.



No stage fright

Jim Betts' beginnings were here in Mississauga, where his parents still live. His talents in writing musical cabaret and musical theatre are taking his most recent work, called Stagefright, to the Buttery at Niagara-on-the-Lake opening June 17. Betts hopes to have his work appear in New York within a few years. Currently he's working on a musical based on Mid Summer Night's Dream.