

Tells tales of her work

Mississauga's bird lady turns to the books



By IRENE GENTLE
Special

For years, Bernice Inman-Emery has been affectionately known as Mississauga's bird lady.

If she has her way, though, it will just be a matter of time before the independent owner of a 3-acre bird and small animal shelter in Sawmill Valley will also be known as the book lady.

That's because Inman-Emery is now putting the finishing touches on her first book, *If a bird answers the phone, don't hang up!*

The soon-to-be-author gave a sample of things to come recently during a reading of poems and stories by the Port Credit Writer's Group at Vino! Cappuccino! on Lakeshore Rd.

Inman-Emery's appearance was the last of the authors series that featured guest readings and off-the-cuff talks by local authors. For Inman-Emery, it was just another opportunity to do what she loves best — talk about her animals.

"I've always written down information about the animals and the book just evolved from that," said Inman-Emery. "It all comes down to that, I just love talking about my animals."

It's a love she developed naturally. Raised in Calgary, Inman-Emery has childhood memories of being in awe of her mother's relationships with small creatures.

"My mother was like this with animals and I was lucky enough to inherit it from her," she said.

These days, it's Inman-Emery herself to whom the birds flock. Her sanctuary now houses everything from great horned owls and other wild birds

to budgies, opossums, raccoons and deer.

"You must be gentle," said Inman-Emery on her rapport with the animal kingdom. "Short, sharp noises always mean danger in nature."

It was when Inman-Emery arrived in Ontario and entered into her second marriage that she began collecting the wounded animals that make up her sanctuary.

Widowed now for eight years, she now works alone helping injured animals — with a little help from a concerned public, of course.

"The number of animals I have varies. In the spring time they really pour in, but I'm trying to keep it down as low as possible," she said.

"Now if people bring in a wounded animal, I keep them involved. I have a lot of foster parents now. It really changes their lives. They become very involved."

Meanwhile, Port Credit Writer's group chairman Lawrence Cornett was happy to get a sneak preview of the book. "We've had six writers come in so far and now I guess we'll get together and decide if we want to keep it local or go outside for other authors," said Cornett.

The group also allows neophyte writers to try out their works on an audience that has swelled to a high of 40 listeners in the two-years since the group was formed.

"There are some who want to be published, but there are others who just want an audience for their work," said Cornett. "That's something you just don't have when you're writing at home. It's really a form of entertainment that's free for everyone."

PEEL BIOGRAPHY — INMAN-EMERY BERNICE The Miss. News Nov. 1/96