

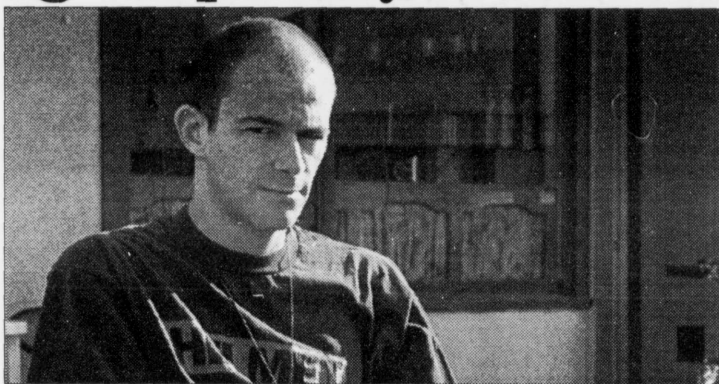
Speaking of poetry – PG's reading revival

Prince George has never been a slouch city for poetry, with the likes of Barry McKinnon and Barb Munk. Now a new crop of poets is developing. They are young, they are inexperienced, but they are establishing poetry as a youth movement in the city. There is a poetry club at the university, poetry recitations at the Urban Coffeehouse, and one young scribe is even publishing his own works.

Richard Krueger is a UNBC student in his early 20s. He has self-published two books of his own poetry since early 1995 and is about to release a third "as soon as I can get my hands on a stapler that will penetrate these pages." He won last year's UNBC Poetry Prize for his work and is a feature reader wherever he recites.

"It's really draining to read, to walk up there and throw yourself into it and then walk off the stage embarrassed even if everybody is clapping," he says. "It's really personal. That's why I like it; I can be personal with people."

Lisa Drysdale thinks that she has an even harder time on stage than Richard, but



Krueger: 'When you write you know people are going to read it, so they may as well hear it too.' FRANK PEEBLES/FREE PRESS

feels compelled to do it, like a swimmer needs water.

"I'm a closet poet. This is a big thing for me," she says of reading her works. "There isn't a lot of opportunity to read poetry in Prince George. I'd like to do it all the time, but it's a lot of work."

Lisa, along with the five others on the UNBC English Club executive, organized a public recital earlier this month that included Barry McKinnon and Ross Leckie reading, while jazz ensemble Something Else added the beat touch.

It was a huge success with good attendance. Two days

prior another large turn-out happened for a reading by prodigal PG personality Har-

vey Chometsky. The Urban Coffeehouse held a spoken-word evening about the same

time. The pattern is becoming tangible. Poetry is reviving.

"It's a good idea to keep having these readings," says Richard. "If more people read then it's a good idea to have them frequently, but if only a small group does it maybe the audience will get bored."

It's hard to get bored when the poets offer such a personal vulnerability through their words. Lisa, for example, recited a poem that snatched a moment from her childhood, a moment similar to what many of us felt as children, that was particularly unpleasant.

"I only invited you because my mom said I had to

invite all the girls..." she recalled for the audience. The ending was somewhat triumphant, but certainly not 'happy.'

Poetry doesn't restrict itself to the pleasant. It dwells in the private, and makes that public.

"I write for an audience. I can't escape that," says Richard. "When you write you know people are going to read it, so they may as well hear it too. I'm not saying I write to a specific group, but I wouldn't spend so much time editing and refining if I thought nobody else would see it. It must be for someone else too."

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