

RICHARD MIRABEL

POETRY

Book launch

October 14, 2012/ 3 pm/ Zack Gallery/Jewish Community Centre

The book will be on sale. All proceeds of sales will go to charity projects conducted by the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

The poet Richard Mirabel who used to live in White Rock, B.C. (he died in 2007) never tried to publish his poetry. In fact though, he had been writing poems all his life.

Richard was born in Warsaw. He acquired his primary literary training while he was working as a reporter for a unique newspaper, *The Little Review* (1926-1939) master-minded by Janusz Korczak, a Polish-Jewish educator, writer, and pediatrician who is well known as a champion of children's rights.

The Little Review was a paper written mostly by children for children. Richard was 12 when he started to contribute to this newspaper which became his real school of life; school of righteousness, intellectual pursuits, and respect for the written word. This was where he started mastering his practical writing skills.

Richard's character had also been formed in fiery discussions on political issues with other young idealists. As a teenager he joined a radical leftist youth organization. For those activities, he was expelled from a prestigious Warsaw high school. More severe persecutions could have followed, so Richard's father decided to send his son away from temptation - to Canada. It was 1937.

In Montreal, Richard intended to continue his education in the field of Arts.

But WWII broke out and Richard, a resident of Canada still holding a Polish passport, volunteered for the Canadian Air Force. As a pilot he participated in a mission that aimed to support Polish resistance in the days of the Warsaw

Uprising. For his extraordinary service during the war he received not only the Polish but also the British Commonwealth, and the Canadian Volunteer Service awards.

At the end of the war, Richard still believed his family to be in Warsaw. Alas, they were not. Not a single member of Richard's family survived.

Korczak, with all of the children under his care, - perished. Most of Richard's boyhood friends - perished. So many others- perished. My youth perished in flames, Richard once said.

After seven long years of fighting, Richard returned to Canada.

The earliest of Richard's poems that were preserved in his files had been marked with the date of the end of the war. He started writing his poetry in English; this required considerable courage but Richard was used to challenges.

A highlight of his poetry is contemplative, and at the same time passionate, thinking. His unceasing and almost obsessive desire to comprehend what a human being is was certainly his moral imperative, and that was what he had in mind whenever he took up his pen or rather, if you wish, whenever his pen took him up.

Perhaps in the diverse reality around him Richard loved culture most of all. He himself felt secure in the inter-literary and inter-cultural space. In this sense, Richard was a perfect Canadian, *le Canadien absolu*, who preserved his own heritage and manifested his open-mindedness to any other culture.

Heartbroken though most of his lyrics are, they are more about his great need for love than about his frustration. That is that need for love that Richard chiseled into his poems. These are the best things that he left us, and in essence, the only ones.

Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo