

# Malaprop's gives wome

**M**alaprop's Bookstore on Haywood Street is the place where people fall in love over a cup of coffee and a conversation on fuzzy logic or the price of tea in China.

People don't just step in and buy a book at this quaint little bookstore. For that, the mall will do. Malaprop's offers something that is almost intangible to describe.

"Malaprop's caters to a tremendously broad population, lifestyles, dreams, and personalities. There are no hierarchies here," said Laura Hope-Gill, cafe manager.

"Malaprop's is a magnet for people. The employees in our store enjoy having conversations with people. I think that's part of the charm of the place, downstairs and upstairs," said Mindy Knott, a bookseller at Malaprop's.

Upstairs, readers can select from a diverse selection of titles ranging from the regional to the spiritual, all handpicked by Eموke B'Racz, the shop's buyer. Downstairs plays host to "the best cappuccino in town" in an intimate cafe setting.

"People from New York, people from California, people from Texas, people from Iowa come into this bookstore and say 'This is the best bookstore I've ever been in.' I think that's pretty remarkable considering the number of bookstores that are out there," said Knott.

Malaprop's also features several author events each month. For instance James Kilgo author of "Inheritance of Horses" will stop in on December 10 to read selections of his work and sign books.

The bookstore features film and musical events as well.

But perhaps the most interesting aspect of Malaprop's is an event called "A Cafe of One's Own." Started by Hope-Gill in 1992, this once-a-month happening gives women poets an outlet for their work.

In the cafe, Malaprop's gives voice to these women in the form of a microphone set up in the corner of the room. Organizers welcome and encourage men to attend as part of the audience.

"When I started 'A Cafe of One's Own,' a lot of people thought that this was a big political act, that we were censoring men. People even boycotted us. Everybody preferred to make up their own minds about what I was doing, but no one really asked me about it," said Hope-Gill, a noted poet herself in the Asheville poetry scene.

So I asked her. Why no men?

"I wanted to find out what would happen if women had the opportunity to talk about things that they thought were important. Would they come out at all? Or has it been completely erased from a woman's nature to speak out in public?" said Hope-Gill.

"I wanted to let the women choose their subject matter. It wasn't a political statement. It was just an experiment in language," said Hope-Gill.

The experiment worked. 'A Cafe of One's Own' has become a popular and well-known forum for women poets to bring their own original poems to share with an eager audience.

The main appeal of 'A Cafe of One's Own' is the fact that it attracts women who otherwise would not share their poems with the public.

"Typically, people have to work up their courage. That's the attraction of the small intimate set-up of the cafe. You feel safer than you would if you were 10 feet away from the audience," said Hope-Gill.

This is all the more important for those of us who appreciate poetry. Some poetry gets on my nerves. Sylvia Plath, for instance, has the same effect on me as nausea.

But then I'll hear a luscious arrangement of words that sucks the breath right out of me, sends it to the heavens to play with the angels, then blows it back into my soul in a gentle puff, revealing the truth of the universe.

Okay, so maybe I'm not a poet, but I could relate to the poems at last Friday's reading.

Unfortunately, fewer poets than usual turned up to read. Three poets took the mike including Hope-Gill.

She started with her poem "Think Like



**Heather Rayburn**

ALTERNATIVE LOAFING

Me  
po  
in C  
app  
The  
pler  
Wal  
com  
N  
read  
can  
Rev  
that  
her  
writ  
K  
she  
of a  
pret  
T  
don't  
print  
deal  
and  
ty b  
her p  
ence  
T  
ber 1



# men a place for poetry



DEBBIE CHASE JENNINGS

**Wendy Knott and Laura Hope-Gill are two of the friendly faces at Malaprop's, the popular downtown bookstore and cafe.**

in Order,' a political piece concerning the appropriation of Congressional dollars. Then it was on to Wal-Mart to buy a stapler, Germany for the fall of the Berlin Wall, and back to the coffee shop for a conversation between two deaf women.

Next, Mindy Knott took the mike and read her poem "Close Encounters," which can also be found in the Asheville Poetry Review. Since she hadn't expect to read that night, Knott decided to share a few of her favorite poems from other women writers.

Knott read from my old pal Plath. Then she impressed me with a poem in the voice of an Appalachian woman. Knott's interpretive accent made the poem.

The last poet was a second-timer. I don't know that she would want me to print her name. It obviously took a great deal of courage for her to take the mike and read her poems about the pain of nasty breakup. The honesty and distress of her poems broke my heart, and the audience seemed to have the same reaction.

The next 'Cafe' takes place on December 17. Go.

## CLUB NEWS

**MAN, THAT MUSIC'S SMOKIN':** For those who need to dance that extra piece of pie off the ole thigh from Thanksgiving, a Friday night trip to the Mountain Smoke House on Spruce Street is in order. At 8:30 p.m. the Four of a Kind band will dish up great bluegrass. At the same time Saturday, the Smoke House welcomes the Green Valley Cloggers.

**GREAT MUSIC, GREAT CAUSE:** Week nights are looking good at the green door on Carolina Lane, behind the Broadway Arts Building. At 8 p.m. Wednesday the improv comedy troupe Half-Past Funny will take the stage. \$3 for all the laughs you can handle. On Thursday night, same bat time, Anne Coombs will host Writers in the Round with performances by Malcolm Holcombe, Jan Anderson, Anne Lalley, and Nance Pettit. These talented people will perform at the benefit in recognition of World AIDS day.

*If you have news about what's going on with area clubs, music and the arts, give us a call at 704-252-5610, Ext. 444.*

Choose From Our Complete Selection Of

Beard