

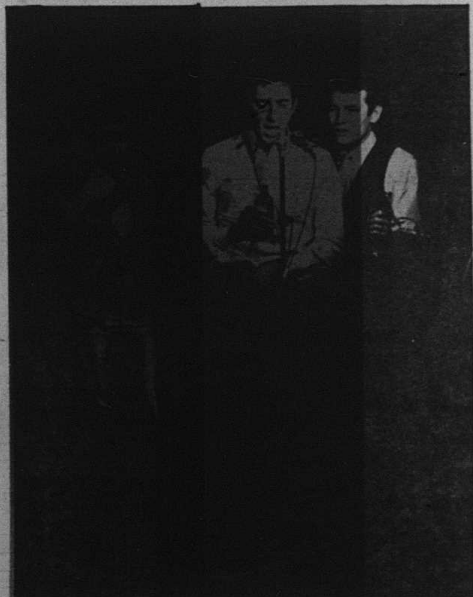
# THE VILLAGE

who what why  
when where

Story by Jon Ruddy, Photos by Ted Ring



Avenue rd. scene: 1



Ian Tyson, Gord Lightfoot at Village Corner party

You get all you can stand for 10 cents.

At the Webster Restaurant, an all-night hamburger foundry on Avenue rd., a dime buys a cup of coffee and a coffee of conversation.

At this moment in time, Webster's is the spiritual centre of Toronto's bohemian colony. Here the hippies gather like flies around a puddle of milk.

"Everybody in the Village," says a beard, "meets here at least twice a day."

Meets, but not eats. Villagers have no money, and anyway they would rather talk than eat. The average Webster's patron stays perhaps three hours and 37 minutes. The average take is a dime. An expression of surly resignation has settled upon the Grecian features of the proprietors.

While not the chef's choice, talk is the speciality of the house. On a good night, the talk flows out the door and away, past San Francisco and Mexico, past London and Rome, until it covers the whole vast span of the globe, and slants off into the sky.

The habits of Webster's talk of electronic painting; they talk of Zen; they talk of complex problems in romantic geometry (the old eternal triangle is from squaresville); they talk of impossible pads by faraway seas; they talk of the kicks you can get from consuming mashed morning glory seeds; they talk of dying from dissipation at 25; they talk of the blonde in thigh-length boots who banjoed a police constable on the ankle last August on Cumberland st.

And always, they talk of themselves.

"It's not that you're accepted here — it's that you don't have to be."

"I hadn't worn shoes all summer and I had this long dirty beard. So when I started wading into the Penny Farthing swimming pool this guy comes up to me and he says, 'You'll foul up our filtration system. Get out.' Lousy Philistine."

"You can do anything you want here, including leave it for ever, and nobody will give a damn."

"I figure the great freedom we have gained is the freedom to be prejudiced."

Who are these people?

To generalize (and I fancy I hear someone at Webster's muttering, "They have to wrap us in their own filthy stereotypes"), almost all Villagers have in common (1) youth, (2) dissatisfaction with the status quo, (3) poverty and (4) profound ineptitude at ingratiating themselves with the police.

In addition, most Villagers have a constitutional aversion to work and to getting up in the morning, and little good to



Jon Ruddy barrels

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(There is a fairly heavy smattering here of married but separated young people awaiting divorces — a group that in outside society finds itself in social limbo.)

Since the Village is not so much a location as a state of mind, it has gradually become anplace the Villagers go.

Last year, a hospital parking lot gobbled the core of the old Gerrard st.w. Village, leading to a kind of bohemian land rush into the territory north of Bloor st. on both sides of Avenue rd.

Here were acres of verdant cement already well planted with artisans (Yorkville st.) and folkniks (from the Avenue rd. clubs and coffee houses).

According to current estimates, the Village stretches from Bloor north to Dupont and Roxborough sts. and from Spadina east to Yonge st., a revelation that may not please local burghers.

Within this rectangle there is the



Avenue rd. scene: 2



Jon Ruddy barred from Mr. Tony's — no tie

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sound of guitar playing by night. Here, too, one is apt to encounter people in strange clothes walking at strange hours, and talking loudly of Sonny Rolins, Lao-tse or J. Buckminster Fuller.

Villagers scorn all forms of physical exercise, but walk farther and faster than anyone in Toronto, a fact to which photographer Ted Ring and I can readily attest.

Last Saturday night — ALL last Saturday night — we pounded from one far-flung pad to another in the company of Martin Dunn, an old school friend of mine who at 26 staged a complete though not altogether successful retreat from the front lines of his avowed enemy, a "conformist existence in suburbia."

Dunn is married but separated. He does not work. He lives on \$10 a week in a crowded flat above a Chinese grocery on Avenue rd., rolls his own cigarettes and reads philosophy.

"This is a refuge," he says. "I believe it is possible to run away successfully. I

feel alive here."

But he recently had his shoulder-length hair trimmed in the hopes of getting a writing job, and he talks of moving to Vancouver "where you can get welfare for the asking."

Dunn admits that status is prized in the Village. "Painters and writers are respected here," he says. "So are con men, which is why the Beatles are very big with the hippies."

(He says Villagers refer to each other as hippies, but don't like to be referred to as hippies by outsiders. Tender egos, these.)

According to Dunn, some dozen hippies are considered "the ultimate" in the colony. These chosen few have achieved a state of grace and take their pick of the women.

"The rest of us have our tongues hanging out most of the time," says Dunn.

The jazz hippies call the elite "soul people" and the larger folknik following uses the expression "beautiful people".

A few more definitions:

"Escapes" work in the daytime and live among the Villagers at night.

"Rounders" are young men wearing leather jackets and surly expressions, often observed in the Saturday night crowds on Yorkville st., where the police walk in pairs and grumble, "Move along, move along."

"Soul brothers" are Negro men going with white girls, a relationship still frowned upon by many Village males.

"Week enders" are well fed, often by their mothers. They make the scene for kicks.

The Village has its own newspaper (The Undiplomatic Courier, a monthly); its own clichés ("He can't tell the difference between a groove and a rut"); and its own kinds of snobbery (hippies avoid Yorkville st., which they say has been taken over by high school girls in half-acre sweaters and lady tourists with red berries on their hats).

My Saturday night tour started in a curious way. Ted Ring and I arranged to take Martin Dunn to dinner at Mr. Tony's, an establishment of the "commercial Village", on Cumberland st.

Dunn had found a tie for the occasion, but Ring and I, affecting a Bohemian air, were tieless. We were turned away at the door.

Hungrily we plunged into the nether world . . .

In next week's **SHOWCASE:** Footsore in the Village.

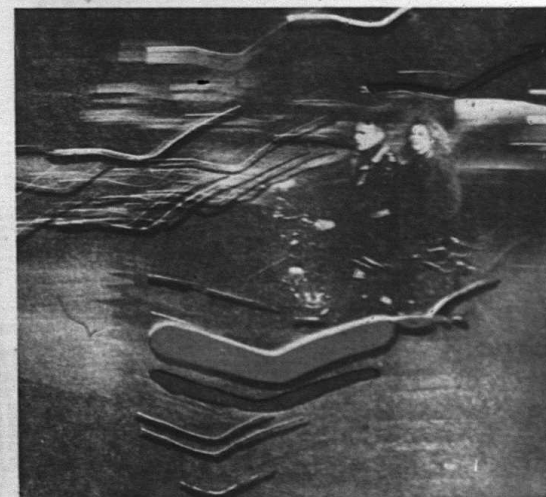


Martin Dunn at chess; Peter Martilla at guitar



Village face:  
Kig Vanderleek

Artist Rockney McKay in cellar studio



New kick in the Village: Japanese motorcycles

