

Third 'Loops and Lattes' focuses on Dufferin trails



By Constance Scrafield

For her third hiking book, Nicola Ross was hosted by Al Pace and Lin Ward at their Farmhouse Pottery on Hockley Road, the launch of *Loops and Lattes, Dufferin Hikes*, for which there are 32 loops.

The pottery shop/cafe is partially an art gallery a favourite haunt of Sharon Wadsworth-Smith who designed and painted the cover for this edition of *Loops and Lattes* and who was there.

'In Dufferin Forest, I stuck to the wider trails and stayed off the mountain bike trails,' the author said in talking about her new book. 'They're narrow and rough and the bikes are on them.'

As she hikes during the weeks for the most part, she remarked, 'In fact, I hardly see people riding or anyone.'

However, she enjoys taking her young dog with her: 'There are places where dogs must be on leash, some places even where they're not allowed. When I'm walking those, I leave the dog behind.'

Her book is dedicated to her mother, Doris Mary Sturdee, who died in July, and who took her young Nicola and siblings on hikes where they lived in Caledon, an inspiration to her daughter when it came time for her to write about what matters to her.

In her introduction, Ms. Ross comments about the passing of the old Dufferin of dirt roads that were not maintained in the winter, the easy country attitude of the people, the crystal-clear streams, those remarkable hills.

She writes that she discovered the towns, valleys, hills; she 'revelled in its geology,' sampling the many restaurants, and 'met long time residents, fellow hikers, deer, geese and osprey.' In short, she 'fell in love [with Dufferin].'

As before, Ms. Ross' new book, *Dufferin Hikes, Loops and Lattes*, is fabulously detailed.

Her initial chart, pages 16 and 17, discusses precisely location, distance of the walk and the time it should take to walk it, degree of difficulty and parking, with notes about needing a pick up at the end of one trail that is not a loop.

It is not simply a matter of the mechanics of the walks that make Ms. Ross' books so endearing; it is the details of the history of trees, rock formations, land use and her insistence on giving exact details for seeing these things and understanding more about the land than you were ever going to learn in books.

Her first loop proves the value of the rest on an 'easy' level hike: Ancient Cedars Loop, Mono Cliffs Park. She directs the reader to climb the metal stair case half way into the hike for the view: '...the ancient Eastern white cedars...To see what a 1,500-year-old cedar, a tree that sprouted when the Saxons were invading Britain...'

Such perspective and fascinating approach to hiking virtually re-defines the activity as much a history lesson, environmental understanding and connecting with our surroundings in so many ways.

The book is replete with maps, so cleverly laid out and defined, sign posts clearly differing one function from the other. From the map that generally defines Dufferin from the point of view of its hiking loops (page 15) to the individual maps of the loops, the tidiness and precision of detail is remarkable.

Not that she lays claim to have done it all herself but gives full credit those who walked some of the trails, checking up on her findings and her left and right turns, the community at large that sponsored her, giving credit to and promoting the businesses that help her make this happen.

To purchase *Loops and Lattes, Dufferin Hikes*, you can visit www.nicolaross.ca. They are also sold at BookLore on First Street, Orangeville.