

# time & place

BY ANTON ZUIKER

## Back on Square One

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 7:30 A.M., SHAKER SQUARE

Eleven steps down, two doors out and a few paces along North Moreland Boulevard, Richard Gildenmeister strolls out from the book-cluttered apartment where he's lived for thirty-four years. In 1976, he was similarly stepping out, on his way to the first day of The Richard Gildenmeister Bookshop on the Square. This morning, not as slim but just as feisty, he's on his way to another new bookstore.

But first, he walks around his beloved Square, stopping to admire the trees he planted in the median in the mid-Eighties, and to inhale the inviting aroma of chicken paprikash already wafting from Balaton Restaurant. He says hello to a dozen acquaintances, nods at the RTA driver tooting her horn, gazes west down the tracks toward rural Bellevue seventy-five miles away. Ever since that day in 1942 when his parents brought him to Cleveland to see Santa and the holiday lights on Shaker Square, he has been in love with the city, and especially the Square.

Stopping before 13214 Shaker Square, he remembers Dorothy Fuldheim with yellow roses, ready to cut the ribbon to his namesake bookshop, while Mayor Ralph Perk proclaimed the store an important beacon in the revitalization of the depressed Shaker Square. Later today, Joseph-Beth Booksellers will take up that mantle as the cornerstone in the Square's redevelopment. It fills nearly the entire northeast quadrant once partly occupied by the Stouffer's restaurant.

With a glass elevator, spiral staircase and central fireplace, the independent Joseph-Beth megastore will be a 36,000-

square-foot redoubt of literacy, stocking 122,000 book titles, as well as luggage in the travel section, candles in the aromatherapy aisle, and birdbaths in the gardening corner. Kids will have their own realm, and live local musicians on the second floor signal the CD section. The attached Brontë, a bistro-style café, wine bar and coffee den, seems a good place to settle with an armful of magazines.

Richard, the newly appointed Master Bookseller, will enter the store before it opens, step through the aisles, caress the bookcases, straighten hardbacks on the new fiction table. He's ready to brandish a comprehensive knowledge of the store, and to mentor the sales staff in the fine art of bookselling. "The serious bibliophile just wants to be shown to their specialty area and left alone," he says. "Another customer may have only the vaguest clue about some title or author and need your best detective skills." It has been forty-five years since he moved to Cleveland and went to work for the Higbee Company Bookshop. Neil Van Um, a St. Ignatius graduate who owns other Joseph-Beth bookstores in Cincinnati and Lexington, heard that Richard knows books and hired him on the spot.

The doors will open in a moment. Richard's thrilled to be back on the Square, though he'll say he really never left. Before long, he'll be helping you find a book, maybe a favorite title or that hip new novel you heard about on TV. To put it in your hands gives Richard all the reason he needs to tie his shoes in the morning, step out of his digs and walk across the Square.

*Anton Zuiker, who shares a passion for books, is a former editor of Live.*

