

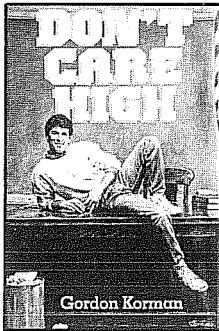
## GORDON KORMAN: ENTERTAINING AS EVER

**Don't Care High**, Gordon Korman. Scholastic, 1985. 256 pp. \$13.95 paper. ISBN 0-590-33322-4.

A new book by Gordon Korman is always a delightful event for his young fans. As a teen-age author, Gordon developed into a prolific, entertaining and imaginative writer for young people. Well, Korman, now 23, has done it again. His zany fall guys, his inept adults as well as his avid readers are all growing up simultaneously. Like his former books, *Don't care High* has us guffawing out loud at those characters who tumble from one comic scene to another complicated crisis.

How does a caring duo, composed of "new Canadian kid at American school, Paul Abrams" and veteran New Yorker, Sheldon Pryor, turn the apathetic student body of Don Carey High School, into a responsive militant brigade of concerned zealots? The students' initiative is awakened because of a subversive plan masterminded by our two heroes.

Paul Abrams from the Canadian prairies enters into mainstream Manhattan life in the midst of New York's garbage strike, only to find that not one student at his new school has any ambition. That's soon changed when



Paul and Sheldon announce a new school president, super cool mystery man Mike Otis, who himself is unaware of his new office. Who is the bizarre Mike? Where does he live? Where did he get his unidentifiable automobile, and why are all his school records false? The two detectives execute some hilarious sleuthing to solve the mystery. School improvements are all attributed to the bewildered Otis, who claims, "There are a lot of things at this school that I don't understand."

Korman's skillfully introduced characters are Runyonesque creatures. Rabbit Man, who dresses in a bunny suit and eats carrots by the pound at his apartment window, Feldstein, the locker baron, never-on-time Wayne-o-Stitsky, the Fifty Thousand Watt Family who tan together in a living room in Paul's apartment building, Slim Droy the tuba player, and the incredible La Paz triplets all cavort through the pages of *Don't Care High*.

The writer has been consistent in his treatment of adult authority figures. One thirteen-year-old endorsed the book saying, "I love it because I get a laugh on the teachers even though I know they're not REALLY like that!" It will be interesting to follow Gordon Korman and see his emergence as a writer who is beginning to blend comedy, sensitivity and the indications of a social conscience.

**Sonja Dunn** is a television writer, producer and performer who lives in Ontario. She is the author of *Butterscotch dreams*, and is President of CANSCAIP.

## TEENAGE EATING PROBLEMS

**I was a 15-year-old blimp**, Patti Stren. Irwin Publishing, 1985. 192 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7725-1538-7.

Patti Stren has found her voice. This is the most apparent and most important aspect of her latest book, which deals with three mutually opposing yet co-existing teenage problems: overeating, overdieting, and purging. They are, as we all know, one overwhelming and deadly problem because they stem from an emptiness in the pit of the stomach that just doesn't go away.

Patti has always been able to open painful situations to their core and lead us with gentle humour to embrace the way things really should be, only this time she does it with real people. She started out with cuddly animals, then moved on to dream-like people. Now she gives us a living, breathing, choking and hoping teen-age girl.

My mother says I'll have stubble for the rest of my life. You see, Maude, as I refer to her, caught me in the bathroom redhanded. She found me shaving my mustache off with my father's razor.

There might be something larger than life in the too-perfect fellow who loves Gabby through thick and thin, and something too mature in Gabby's coming-of-age and everything-coming-out-right scene, but that's the telescoping that art forces on a writer. Anyone who's ever watched time lapse photography in the original footage, or thought about it, knows that art imitates life only in its dramatic moments. Besides, if Patti had let anything permanently bad happen to that lovable Gabby, I couldn't have taken it.

Gabby is charming and funny and her desperation is fun to read because she struggles so hard. The book is a "ton of fun" and should be an overnight read for teenage girls, a day and a half for slow readers. I don't think they'll put it down.

**Sofiah Friesen** is a Toronto writer and reviewer.