

# Living

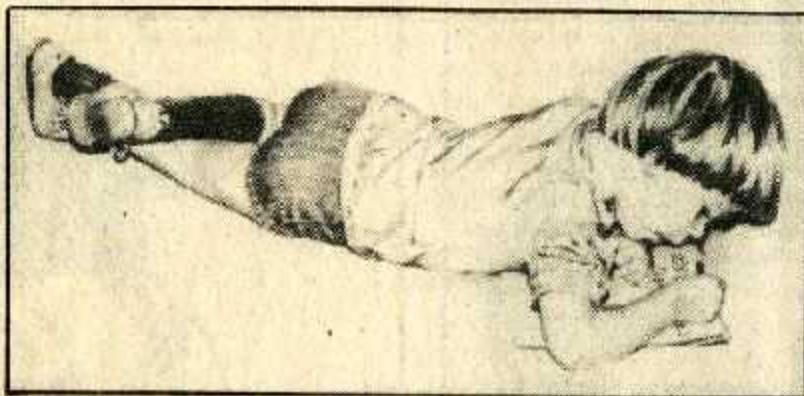
PAGE THREE

## How problem kids helped Bernard brush up on his art

When Bernard Poulin finished a 16-hour day teaching delinquent youngsters, he used to go and paint to unwind. So it is hardly suprising that the Canadian artist now focuses his artistic talents on children.

Mr. Poulin, who is from Sudbury, Northern Ontario, was in Bermuda recently for a vacation and also to talk to the Bermuda Society of Arts at the City Hall about his drawings and paintings of children.

"Anyone can draw or be taught to draw," said the 38-year-old artist sitting back lightly sucking on his pipe. "But it is the feeling you try to convey which makes you an artist. With children I have found that adults either look upon them as being cute or sad but childhood is far more complex than that something which I found while teaching



A child is the subject of this greeting card drawn by Mr. Poulin.

delinquent and rejected kids."

Mr. Poulin, on his third visit to Bermuda, has also penned a cartoon book about a youngster called Mig and he has just written a play called *Flannel Lined, Elastic Wasteband, Corduroy Pants* which he said is for pre-teens. "It deals with kids being dragged into the in-group. I want them to appreciate who they are and who everyone else is."

The play was written or-

iginally in English although it is now playing in Northern Ontario in French and English since 37 percent of Ontario's population is French.

Although Mr. Poulin has taught delinquent and problem kids for many years and is often asked to lecture to social workers and teachers, he said that most of the money he makes is from painting portraits. "Strangely enough, there are not many good portrait painters in Canada," he said.

When he was 15 years old, he started selling his paintings on the street in order to make enough money to go to school to study to be a teacher. He said: "I have always got along with kids. I found regular teaching a bit boring and I was subsequently handed the delinquent and rejected kids, who at that time were all put in institutions.

"They were between the ages of two and 21 years old and while people said that they were problem children it did not worry me. After all if you were locked up in an institution you would be a little crazy too! Back then in the early 1960s it was very normal to lock up a child who was a bit of a problem."

And it is through his work with those kids that Mr. Poulin came up with the character for his cartoon book called *Mig*. "Those kids have given me a lot and not just for the book but also for my drawings. I do not use professional models for my drawings of kids because they know how to stand and position themselves. I want a more natural look and an



Canadian artist, Mr. Bernard Poulin

artist must really study the anatomy of his subject to get across just the right feeling and children have a special anatomy."

The more he comes to Bermuda, the more Mr. Poulin loves the Island. At the time of this interview it was pouring with rain outside but he just smiled and said: "I don't care if it is raining here. The Island is just beautiful especially the colours you have here. I have just come back from very drab colours in Canada."

Mr. Poulin was most impressed with the varied talents of artists in Bermuda. He said: "I have seen quite a bit of work by the local artists and photo-

graphers and it is simply top notch. You have some very talented people down here."

When he gets back to Canada Mr. Poulin has 25 portraits to do. "I have so much work in advance that I thought it would be a good idea to take a rest first," he said.

His work is displayed in more than 200 private and corporate collections throughout Canada, the United States, England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Africa, Germany, Australia and Bermuda. Mr. Poulin's solo exhibitions are also sell-out events although they are rare because most of his work is privately commissioned and sold immediately.