



Basic Black

by Arthur Black

Long live the tabs

Lord knows there's an Everglades worth of strange and wierdling places in the state of Florida, but few more so than a veritable Twilight Zone near the town of Lantana known as Tabloid Valley. This is where, believe it or not, most of the lurid scandal sheets that grace supermarket checkout counters across North America come from (it must be some kind of tax dodge). The National Enquirer comes out of Tabloid Valley. So does the Weekly World News.

Or at least it did. It's hard to say what will become of the Weekly World News now that Eddie Clontz is dead.

Clontz was editor-in-chief of the Weekly World News for nearly twenty years. He's the guy responsible for the Elvis-Never-Died stories. He also had a hand in such classic exclusives as Space Aliens Back Bush For President and Bat Boy Found In West Virginia Cave.

I met Eddie Clontz in the offices of the Weekly World News about ten years ago. But it wasn't easy. I wanted to interview Clontz for my radio show, so I asked one of my old pals, an ex-tab reporter by the name of Harold Fiske, the best way to go about it. "Good luck!" said Fiske. Clontz, he told me, was a reclusive and deeply suspicious guy. Rumour had it he kept a pearl-handled .45 automatic in the top drawer of his desk. Reason? Death threats. From die-hard Elvis fans, mostly.

For a hard-nosed, foot-in-the-door newshound, Harold Fiske could be incredibly ingratiating. Over the next few days he called in some favours, twisted a few arms, greased a palm or two, and the next thing I knew we were in a Hertz-rent-a-car, bombing down the I-95 for a face-to-face with Eddie Clontz.

The offices of The Weekly World News are deep in the middle of the Florida boonies and at first glance seem utterly devoid of human life. There is no secretary or doorman or security guard in sight. What there is, is a closed-circuit camera mounted on a locked door with an intercom on the side. I thumbed the talkback button, leaned into the intercom and said: "Arthur Black here to interview Mister Clontz."

'STAND AWAY FROM

THE DOOR!" said a large voice which I presumed to be God's. Befuddled, I stood there stupidly and repeated my mantra. The Voice became noticeably agitated: "SIR! STAND AWAY FROM THE DOOR! NOW!" I backed up, raised my hands in the air and smiled weakly. I guess I convinced them that I wasn't a vengeance-bent Elvis fan because the door hissed open and suddenly I was in the air-conditioned Inner Sanctum of The Weekly World News.

I don't know what I expected - a bunch of grimy, boil-blighted trolls scuttling around with cigar butts sticking out of their mouths maybe - but it wasn't like that at all. The office was clean and neat, the equipment was state of the art, the desks were tidy and the people were well-dressed and exceedingly normal-looking. Hell, it looked like a Brandon branch office of Mutual of Omaha.

Except for Eddie Clontz. There was no mistaking Eddie, or the fact that he was in charge. He was middle-aged but fit, like a retired NHL-er. He had a brush cut and black button eyes that never blinked. His desk sat so that he faced the office door and I couldn't help noticing that his hands stayed close to the top desk drawer. If I had been a demented reader bent on violence, Eddie could've plugged me before I got to his In box.

I was disabused of a lot of my tabloid notions that afternoon. I learned that the tabs, despite their surface sleaziness are as cunningly thought out, written and published as any edition of the New York Review of Books. I learned that tabloid reporters are not rabid, red-eyed right-wingers or raving alcoholics riding out the nether end of a death-spiraling career. Most of them are young and bright and surprisingly serious. They need to be, because writing even a mediocre tabloid story is fiendishly difficult. You have to deliver a maximum amount of impact with a minimal number of words - and simple words at that. And nobody ever wanted to pass a mediocre story across Eddie Clontz's desk. Especially if he was sitting at it, with his hands near the top drawer.

Tabloids. The word originally referred to medicine

delivered in tablet form. As a reporter for the Weekly World News once said: "Readers want new hope. They want to think that UFOs will save us. It's medicine. We make people feel

good, so they buy us".

Hmm. All I know is, the headlines in my Globe and Mail are all about scandal in Ottawa, soaring prices at the gas pump, and body bags in Iraq.

A wise woman once said "the news is a disease that masquerades as information."

Call me escapist, but I think I'd rather read about the latest Elvis sighting.

Paid Advertisement



Moving Ahead

Have your say about moving low-level radioactive waste away from the lake at Port Granby

Over the next two weeks Clarington residents are invited to attend Open Houses on three different days in three separate locations to discuss the Port Granby Long-term Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Project. A 20-month assessment has recommended moving historic low-level radioactive waste now located in southeast Clarington further away from the shore of Lake Ontario. Superior long-term safety and environmental protection would be provided by relocating the waste from its existing shoreline location into a new state-of-the-art aboveground engineered mound on nearby property owned by Cameco Corporation.

Process included public

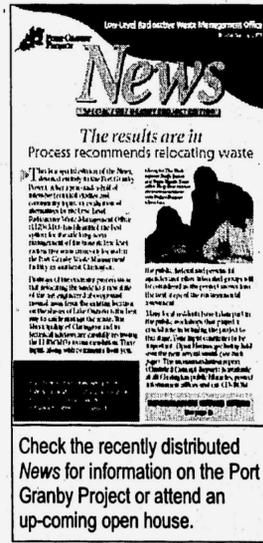
In June 2002, the LLRWMO began a process to seek out, investigate and rank alternative means of providing safe, long-term management for the historic low-level radioactive waste stored at the existing Port Granby Waste Management Facility.

Public workshops in October 2002 and March 2003 fed both community ideas and values into the technical review process. Open Houses then presented the results of the technical process for community comment.

The process compared alternative means of carrying out the Project with the original community concept whereby the low-level radioactive waste would be managed within the existing site boundaries using groundwater diversion, shoreline erosion protection and an impermeable cover system to keep the waste dry. The relocation of waste into a new engineered waste management facility further away from Lake Ontario ranked highest in this comparison.

Significant advantages of a new state-of-the-art management facility include:

- No need to deal with shoreline and bluff erosion or groundwater diversion requirements;
- Complete encapsulation of the waste and therefore superior environmental performance;
- No bluff stabilization work or construction of a 12 metre high berm in Lake Ontario with the associated potential to disrupt aquatic habitat;
- A much lower volume of construction materials transported over public roads;
- A reduced stewardship burden on future generations due to lower long-term operation and maintenance requirements;
- Greater experience and precedents for managing waste this way;
- Less obtrusive visually;
- Easier to monitor and a lower risk of facility failure;
- The lakeshore property could be turned over to alternative uses;
- Shoreline linkages for wildlife and human activity could be re-established.



Public Consultation Continues

A new Port Granby Project Information Exchange has opened every Friday afternoon in the Newcastle Village Hall. Come in and express your thoughts on the best waste management option for the environment — today and for generations to come.

The LLRWMO continues to meet with a variety of community groups and individuals to provide information and gather questions and comments on the Port Granby Project and the recent recommendations.

Drop in to the Orono Hall Open House on Wednesday March 31 from 6 to 9 p.m. with a presentation at 7 p.m. An all-day (noon to 8 p.m.) Open House on Tuesday April 6 in Newcastle Village Hall will offer presentations at 4 and 7 p.m. On Wednesday April 7th the Open House in Newtonville Hall will be from 6 to 9 p.m. with a presentation at 7 p.m.

Visit the Port Granby Project Information Centre, Newcastle Village Hall

Noon-5:00 PM - Fridays

Open Houses: March 31st in Orono, April 6th in Newcastle, April 7th in Newtonville
Call 1-866-255-2755 or (905) 885-0291 Visit our website: www.llrwmo.org



Corporation of the Municipality of Clarington
NOTICE OF PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

COMMUNITY INFORMATION FORUM

Date: Thursday, April 1, 2004
Time: 7:00 - 9:30 PM
Place: Newcastle Community Hall
20 King Avenue West, Newcastle
Corner of Mill St. & County Rd. 2

You are cordially invited to attend and participate in this new initiative that brings the Clarington Town Hall to your community. Staff and Elected Officials will be available to discuss programs and services in your area.

For more information, contact:
Communications & Marketing, Municipality of Clarington: 905-623-3379