

# Free Press Editorial Page

## Fine budget, but . . .

Ratepayers in Acton generally will congratulate council in setting a budget slashing two and a half mills off last year's tax levy.

Acton council fell in line with the call to exercise restraint, postpone major expenditures and spread tax money around to gain the maximum benefit from the minimum amount of money.

It looks good to the average ratepayer who'll pay approximately \$7 less in taxes this year. But there are disturbing things about cutting taxes when the town needs so much in the way of improvements.

Postponing major expenses has often only succeeded in compounding problems and inflating costs when jobs finally must be done. It is easy to trace a pattern where major improvements are called for and put off until times and the climate for spending money are more salubrious.

Those times never came. There's always some emergency which requires large amounts of money in the developing town. Last year it was the new board of education, a sluice through Lakeview and various small emergencies.

This year the community centre requires a major repair job requiring at least \$21,000. Council allocated \$13,000 for repairs, a figure which

the parks and recreation chairman does not think sufficient to bring the arena up to safety standards.

Councillors, however, feel the building is not going to fall down and the \$13,000 is more than they originally intended to spend.

Who's right? This is no longer the question. The safety of the arena has been called into question and the public is entitled to know whether there is any doubt about the structural safety of a public building which is used by tens of thousands each year.

We think the steel beams in the arena are solid but we are not engineers. There's no doubt that the insides of Acton's main recreation centre are decaying rapidly and require attention if the building is not going to degenerate into the same condition it was in several years ago. Improvements have been postponed year after year in the name of economy.

Several members of council have said if the community centre needs the extra money to be brought up to safety standards then they'll find it. But who will they believe? They won't accept an engineer's report.

Who's going to tell us whether the arena needs that major repair job urgently?



OUTGOING CITIZEN of the Year Charlie Thomson looks back reflectively on the past 12 months as the waters of Lake Ontario surge up on the beach. A lover of all sports, Charlie attended Saturday's pee wee hockey tournament in Oshawa and a few minutes break in activity gave him the opportunity to relax. (Staff Photo)



## Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

What is middle age? If you're in your teens, anybody over 30 is in that category. If you're in your 30s, it's anybody over 45. At 45, it's people in their 50s. And if you're a hale and hearty 63, you just might admit, in a weak moment, that you classify as middle-aged.

What it is, of course, is a state of mind. Some people are middle-aged in their 20s, and others are young in their 70s. Or it's a time of year. I am extremely middle-aged in April and November; and I'm sure you are, too.

Right now I'm middle-aged or older. The snow hasn't quite gone from the shaded corners. Mud is oozing. The curling season is over and the golf and fishing haven't begun. There is no real promise of spring, except that my winter boots are leaking, always a good sign.

There's nothing to do but try to exist through this hiatus. And one of the best ways to make it possible is to think about how young you will be in July.

I can see myself now, at the beach. Take off the sunglasses. Stand up to my full height of five-foot-eight. And a half. Suck in the flab. Saunter to water's edge, glancing nonchalantly at bikinis, rumps and bosoms. Stride straight in. Swim like a paddlewheeler for 20 yards. Pretend to float on back while regaining wind. Stride out, tall, clean, brown, and not a day over 31.

Or on the first tee. Eight a.m. Smell of sun and grass. Flex muscles ominously. Three perfect swings that would make Arnold Palmer green. Step up to ball, ignoring admiring, awed looks of women. Zock! Straight down the fairway, 120 yards in flight and a 10-foot roll. Not a day over 28.

Getting younger every minute. Let's try the fishing. Drive to special spot with friend who knows where the big ones are. Fight through swamp and slash to dark, brooding pool behind beaver dam. Lie down on beaver dam till muscles stop

jerking. Bait hook with worm. No flies. They're for snobs. Casually, and beautifully, toss worm just above sunken log. Not sunk deep enough. Hooked. Break line. Swear a little. On next toss, caught in willows. Swear a little more. On third toss, third hook, tie into a real tiger. At least eight inches. Feel not a day over 25.

See? It's all in the mind. I can forget that my wife is nagging about cleaning up the cellar, that my kids are permanent pains in the posterior, and that another birthday is crawling toward me remorselessly.

Another trick that works is to get out the old pictures. There's the fighter pilot, with handlebar moustache, the deadly, whimsical, lifted eyebrow that used to slay the WAAFS, and the cocky look of a kid who can never be killed, grow old, or get married.

There's the football picture. "Bill Smiley, h.b." That means halfback, not half baked. Close my eyes and I can feel the clean smack of the ball into my hands as I leap for a high pass. And drop it. Not a day over 19.

Now, don't carry this to extremes. Don't get out your baby pictures, or the one of your Sunday School class. You'll weep at your lost innocence and sob over your smeared purity. Like everything else, the cure for middle-agedness should be taken in moderation.

But take it. In the cold, dull damp of April in Canada, we all need something to prevent us from going mad. Neither booze nor barbiturates will help. Just think young.

I've lost at least 20 years just writing this column. I'm not even afraid to go and look in the mirror. I know that behind those dewlaps, that gaunt and harassed look, lies a light-hearted youth of not more than 24. A smile and the wrinkles turn up, instead of down. A wink, and I'm ready to go out on the town.

## Off the cuff . . .

"Communications" run this life - With less and less 'twixt man and wife!

Traveler: "I just got out of prison this morning. It's going to be tough facing old friends."

Fellow passenger: "I can sympathize. I'm just getting home from the House of Commons."

Days get longer and longer.

Crocuses are opening petals in many flower gardens; another sure sign of spring.

Soon be time to wind the clock an hour ahead. Along with it will come loss of an hour's sleep.

## Salt and Pepper



by hartley coles

Some people think of wildlife as being in Acton on Saturday night.

Not me.

Wildlife for me is moles—the type that surreptitiously burrow tunnels in your lawn while snow drifts cover up their mining activities.

Our back lawn looks like a miniature set for the first great war with trenches, upheavals, shell holes, bomb craters and enemy observation posts occupying the portion I fondly referred to as the "billiard table" and in rare exuberant moments spoke of as a "green". It was my pride and joy, the one patch of grass that defied dandelions and grew the fewest weeds.

During the winter it wore an ermine white covering, betraying no evidence of activity underneath.

Spring slowly advanced up the lawn, snow banks receding like my hair—gradually, with a few strands left behind. As the white stuff melted it revealed large gobs of earth rolled in balls. Then came the tunnels, then craters.

I observed this all from my bedroom window with increasing consternation as the snow receded.

"Those blankety-blank blind moles," I testily observed to my wife one bright morning. "They've chewed up our back lawn."

"Call the pest exterminator," she calmly replied without missing a wink of sleep.

How the devil do you get rid of moles, anyway? Trap 'em, chase 'em, poison 'em? Neighbors suggested we call someone who knew what to do; one anxious eye on the proximity of their lawn to ours, and the ability of moles to multiply. But we aren't even sure the burrowers are moles. We've never seen them, just taken the word of knowledgeable amateurs, wildlife observers who pointed to the tunnels and said:

"Those tunnels were made by moles! The holes might have been made by mice."

With evidence like that and authorities of such repute it is difficult to say they aren't moles. And we aren't unique. As the snow receded on our nearest neighbor's lawn it was obvious the blind moles had also stumbled on his premises and looked for gold among his Kentucky blue blood grass as well as my lower class "twitch".

Relating my wildlife experience to bowling lane proprietor Ken Hulford Monday morning, he didn't bat an eye.

"Son," he pontificated from behind the safety of his glasses, perched perilously close to the end of his nose, "you think you got troubles. At our house the deer are eating up all my fruit trees and the mice are gnawing what's left. Waddya gonna do about that?"

I admit to being stumped for one horrible moment. Deer certainly presented a larger, more complex problem, the game laws being what they are and him living over the border in Nassagaweya.

"Why not," I said uncertainly, "put up some No Trespassing signs. That might keep 'em out."

My face was straight.

Back shot the answer. "But I'll have to educate the mice," he observed, "and I just haven't got the time. With these words the ash fell off the end of his butt, adding emphasis to emphasis.

I crept out of his establishment with more than gentle on my mind and the mole question still paramount. How could I solve it?

One of my hard of hearing relations asked, "You got moles?"

"Yep," I said.

"Get the doctor to remove 'em. Hardly hurts at all."

For those who discreetly inquired whether the saga of Maggie Stittlegs had its counterpart in true life I'd like to state now very emphatically characters in the "plot" were fictitious and any similarity to persons living or dead was purely coincidental.

To the lady who asked whether my daughter wrote it, let me state unequivocally she wouldn't even read it, let alone write it.

To the gentleman who wondered exactly where just plain Bill went over the limestone cliffs, let me explain it was just by the telephone pole with the woodpecker hole five feet, six inches from the top.

To those who said they got much enjoyment from the story, happy days—and to those who realized the opposite, better luck next time.

## Free Press

## back issues

### 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 6, 1950.

The Farm Radio Forum broadcasts for the season have drawn to a close and the Halton committee with the forum representatives met at the council chambers in Milton to conclude business for the season. Mr. R. S. Heatherington was in the chair. Twenty forums had answered a questionnaire on poultry. The 22 old forums were operating successfully with two new forums at Hornby and Boyne.

The high quality of music taught in our schools was again praised by adjudicator George Smale, speaking at the inter-township festival this week. The opening was at Stewarttown on Monday with the Nelson township contest Tuesday and Trafalgar Wednesday. In many of the solos and duet classes it was not unusual to see as many as 15 entrants.

First place choirs in Esqueping were Quatre Bras, Pinegrove; Patricia; best singers Margaret Morrison, Mary Sosnowski, Sherlock Aitken, Donnie Curry, Grant Surbey, Earl Burt, Marilyn Souther, Maureen Hepburn, Peter Pomeroy, Gordon Brain, Marjorie McDonald, Doreen Howden, Patsy Carney, Nancy White, Margaret Stark, Charmaine Wood, Leonard Binstead, Dale Sedore, Margaret Bird, Nancy White.

Mrs. Edwin Cripps, an aged Acton resident, died in Guelph General Hospital as a result of shock and severe burns suffered in a fire at her home. The men at Thompson Motors rushed to her assistance. She and her husband farmed in Eramosa.

### 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 8, 1920.

The interesting drama Cricket on the Hearth was successfully portrayed in the town hall by the Young People's Guild of Knox church. The various characters were well portrayed by Mr. Roszell, Frances Hurst, Florence Robinson, George Anderson, L. Worden, Nellie Anderson, Mr. D. Ritchie, Myrtle Clarridge and May Robertson. On Good Friday evening after Passion Week service the congregation of the Methodist church held a social hour in honor of Inspector Stewart and family who are shortly removing to Milton, and Mr. and Mrs. William McNabb and family who left Tuesday for their new home in Toronto. The Stewarts have been 17 years in Acton and Mr. McNabb 30 years, his

wife from infancy. Rev. Moyer spoke followed by Mr. H. P. Moore representing the church and Sunday School, Mrs. A. T. Brown for the W. M. S., Miss Minnie Bennett for the Epworth League, Miss Bettie Speight for the Intermediate League; Mr. John C. Nelson for the Ladies' Aid and Mrs. Moyer for the ladies of the church.

The bazaar being conducted by the Acton G.W.V.A. is proving very successful. Attendance is especially good in the evenings and with three of the best days of the week still to come the affair, from a financial standpoint, will reach all expectations.

Easter Sunday gave some boisterous winter weather. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Mainprize are removing to Acton from Orillia. Mr. Mainprize has secured a situation here.

Great sorrow came suddenly to the home of Mr. David Ross, Main St. when he was called away after only a few days' illness. When his symptoms became alarming a physician from Guelph was called in but no human aid was availing. He leaves his wife and three sons.

### 75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 4, 1895.

Acton is proud of her six tanneries turning out sole leather, harness and upper leather and belting, all classes of glove leather including buck, antelope, mocho, horse, cow, russett, sheep and kid; the largest glove and moccasin factories doing a considerable business and also two other glove factories. During the past week or so two new industries have been launched - Mr. A. E. Nicklin has commenced the manufacture of moccasin and shoe pacs, and Mr. W. D. Frick who does satisfactory and durable work.

Mr. D. D. Mann of Montreal was here last week to spend a few hours with his father, Mr. Hugh Mann, prior to leaving for the North West to enter upon his contract in the construction of the Hudson Bay Railway. For years Mr. Mann has been one of the most successful railway builders in the North West. He was also one of the contractors of the C.P.R. short line through the State of Maine to St. John N.B. His firm, Mann, Isbister and McKenzie, have secured the contract of building the 750 miles of the new Hudson's Bay railway from Winnipeg to Hudson's Bay at \$3,000,000, the road to be completed in three years. His Acton friends were glad to see him and congratulate him on his gigantic enterprise.



## Photos from the past

BACK TO SCHOOL after Easter holidays half a century ago took the pupils walking up the muddy school lane to the old school with its steeple and bell. The school is gone

but the Robert Little school stands on the same location, with the bell in a cairn. This photograph is lent by Mrs. Gordon McKeown.

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