



WINTER'S SNOWY BREATH has covered the fields with white but there's still lots of evidence to indicate there's a weedy pasture here with golden rod and brown grasses creating patterns. Already the sun has begun to mount higher,

the days are lengthening and the time can't be far away when we once again will hear the raucous voice of the crow. Then we'll know that Spring can't be far behind.—(Staff Photo)



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

Ray Argyle, the chap who syndicates this column, has written for about the fourth time asking for a new picture of yours truly to head up the column. For various reasons, none of them worth the powder, I haven't got around to having my "portrait" taken.

But I don't blame him. The old one does not do me justice. There's scarcely a hint of the bags under my eyes. There's little suggestion that I'm gray as an old billy-goat. The deep lines of suffering nearly 25 years of domestic warfare just are not there.

However, I have a good reason for not having a picture taken for a couple of weeks, at least. I have a black eye. That is, it was black. Then blue. Then purple. It's now a sort of mauve, shading into yellow.

I haven't had such a dandy since 1944, when some German guards gave me a going-over for being imprudent. That time it was both eyes. In fact, the first time I got a look in a mirror after the beating, I could have been mistaken for a fairly scruffy rainbow.

There's nothing quite so embarrassing as a black eye. It arouses the worst — in other

people. Loud and clear, "What happened to you, Smiley? Wife beat you up again?" And so on. Those inane remarks.

To people who ask that, I reply tersely, "Yes." They don't know where to go from there.

But to those who seem genuinely concerned, I try to find some more exotic reason, something to make them think I'm a devil of a fellow.

This one happened during the holidays. To the first few who came sniffing around, looking for scandal, I tried this gambit: "Do you realize that the cork from a champagne bottle can penetrate the plaster of a ceiling? Next time you open one, be sure the cork is pointing at someone else's eye." That shook them a bit, and they went away shaking their heads in admiration. Or something.

To the next few curious, I remarked of-fhandedly that I'd had a fight with a cop on New Year's Eve, that he was still in the hospital, and that I had to face charges as soon as he was released. They didn't really believe me, after a scathing look at my 142 pounds of pure snot, but they weren't sure. "He was just a little cop", I added. "I kicked him right in the gail bladder."

When this pulled on me, I swore I'd had a brawl with the paper boy when he said I owed him for two weeks and I said one. "He's a big paper boy."

For the ladies, I use a different technique. I tell them that this lady took a violent crush on me at a party, that I was holding her gently, patting her back and trying to quench her unrequited passion, when her vicious, jealous husband hit me right in the eye, right over her shoulder, with my hands tied up. They raise an eyebrow, sometimes two, but I can hear them muttering together and sneaking glances at me from the other end of the room.

To others, I relate that I was arm-wrestling with my daughter, and when she found I was winning, she punched me in the left eye with her left fist. Which she would.

I have lots of others. Hit my eye on the rear-view mirror when I collided with a snow-mobile and everyone else suffered terrible lacerations. Struck my eye on the end of the handle of the snow-shovel when I had my first coronary. Bumped head-on into the cat when we were both crawling around under the bed, looking for her.

But I will never, never resort to that oldie about running into a door. I've run into plenty of doors, and other objects, in my life. But it's a pretty cheap way of accounting for a black eye.

I swear my wife didn't do it. She was so ill through the holidays she couldn't have given a goldfish a black eye. What's your version? Drop a line.

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the Issue of the Free Press of Thursday, January 18, 1951

A central Civil Defense committee has been set up in Acton following a meeting of council and various organizations in the town hall last Friday. The first meeting of the committee itself was held in the Public Utilities office Monday. It was moved by Clarence Rognvaldson and seconded by Bill Denny that Ted Tyler be chairman of the committee. Jack McGeachie is secretary with the motion made by Jack Greer and seconded by Alf Fryer. On the committee of five are Mrs. A. Orr, Miss Alice McCallum, Charles Wood, Bill Denny and John Goy.

A questionnaire will be filled out on the facilities of the town. Organization into section chiefs and subsection chiefs was roughly planned.

Last surviving member of the family of the late W. H. Storey, Mrs. Jessie Dryen passed away at Flint, Michigan. Her father was the founder of the Storey Glove factory and the first reeve of Acton.

For the first time in the annals of municipal affairs in Halton county, a father swore in his son as warden of Halton County. William I Dick, crown attorney for 44 years, administered the oath of office to his son Kenneth of Milton.

William Clayton is moving to Toronto and Gordon Oder has been named manager of the Bank of Montreal here.

The new lounge at the Y has been much in use since it has been finished. There are 12 in the Basic English class, from Yugoslavia and Poland.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, January 20, 1921

The members of the Epworth League held the first organized skating party in the new skating rink on Monday evening. About 60 of the young folk took advantage of the opportunity.

The musical revue and operetta "The Gypsy Maid" given in the town hall last Wednesday evening under the direction of the Junior I.O.D.E. provided an unusual musical treat. The operatic quartette presented numerous much appreciated numbers. Miss Pearl O'Neill, who is no stranger to Acton, gave a series of delightful elocutionary numbers. The dancing in "The Gypsy Maid" was regarded by experts as a feature of skill. In this section, however, there was manifestly too studied an effort on the part of the dancers to display the intricacies of the laces and frills and furbelows of their underwear on altogether too generous a scale. At least that opinion is freely expressed by many who attended.

In a few days the institution in Guelph known as the Speedwell hospital will revert back to a jail farm. Some prisoners will be brought from Burwash and about 200 from county jails. The "crime wave" is filling up the jails and the overflow will be sent to Guelph.

Mr. D. C. Russell has re-purchased from Mr. N. H. Brown the grocery and dry goods business which changed hands last summer. In Georgetown a deputation of unemployed waited on council asking for employment.

Acton Hydro Commission has been organized with George Hynds chairman and Miss Ethel Starkman secretary-treasurer.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, January 9, 1896

The mellow sound of wedding bells floated through Rockwood village on New Year's Day when Miss Jenny Jolliffe and Mr. Roy Guild, of Rodney, were united in wedlock by Rev. D. Strachan. Miss Mamie Pasmore was bridesmaid and Mr. O. Jolliffe supported the groom. The bride and her maid wore travelling dresses, the bride's of blue and the maid's of brown. The couple left for Rodney on the 6.17 train that evening.

The mercury registered 18 below this week.

Mr. Robert H. Watson, former of Acton, sends \$1 for his subscription and writes from Tampa, Florida; We have ripe strawberries. There is not a month of the year that we do not mature some kind of vegetable. We think it would be most tedious now to go back to Ontario to have but one crop a year. This part of the country is just the place for poor people and thousands are coming in. When we settled in Tampa four years ago the population was but 10,000; now it is 20,000.

The annual election of this municipality is over. The battle was fought in the best possible spirit. The council for the present year will be composed as follows: reeve George Havill; councillors J. H. Matthews, William Brown, Isaac Francis and A. E. Nicklin.

The personnel of the school board are James McLam, T. H. Harding, Robert Wallace, W. H. Storey, Geo. Hynds and Robert Holmes.

Off the cuff . . .

A published report that representatives to County Council from from Oakville and Burlington met in advance of the inaugural meeting to decide who they would support for Warden are distressing. We thought most intelligent county councillors had buried the "north-south" hatchet but now we have evidence a "Southern Caucus" may be in the making. The county and county business will suffer if parochial views are to be reflected at the county council table. Is there now to be a "Northern Caucus?"

Here's probably the shortest but catchiest safety slogan of our times: He looked, she didn't. He is, she isn't.

Free Press Editorial Page

Bouquets for new warden . . .

It must be a real source of satisfaction for Acton reeve Dr. Frank Oakes to have achieved the highest political office open to municipal councillors — the warden's chair. Recognition by one's peers is the sincerest form of flattery and in this case there was no doubt of the support he had in the form of votes.

Opponents were faced with a record of 33 years of public service in almost every committee you can name and a flair for politics, a formidable combination.

Dr. Oakes has been mayor of Acton, reeve, deputy reeve, councillor, a member and trustee on the school board, a hydro commissioner and very active in community affairs. His record speaks for itself. He has established a reputation as an able financial administrator which has led to being named as head of the business end of budget sessions, both at the local and county levels.

This record has been accompanied by a diplomatic manner which has



always been open to hearing the other side of an argument. However, as many are aware, his opinions when set aren't apt to be swayed when he has made up his mind on a subject.

It is some measure of the man that he declined nomination for the office last year because he felt another year's seasoning was needed. This year he announced he intended to run for the office on the evening he was confirmed as reeve by acclamation.

So the warden's office has not come by chance or impulse to Dr. Oakes but rather after a long apprenticeship in all levels of municipal politics.

The honor of being warden is also a reflection on the community which elected him to office and sent such an able representative to the senior council tables of Halton.

We extend our congratulations and wish Dr. Oakes a successful year at county council tables. This could possibly be one of the last or the final term in the event of the advent of regional government.

Christmas lighting delight . . .

Now that the Christmas lighting controversy has died down, it is time as the new Chamber of Commerce president has said, to meet the cost of past and future Christmas lighting programs.

One of the delights of the Christmas holiday season has always been the light display along town streets and on private homes. It is an attraction that encourages shopping and certainly adds something to the holiday season.

The hydro commission has announced its intention to set up prizes for the best decorated homes in Acton next year so it would be reasonable to assume that streets in town should meet the same high standards as private homes will likely continue.

Work on repairing the strings of lights and "sputniks" the past season restored much of the original lustre to lighting but there are areas along the business section on Queen St. and Yonge as well as entrances to town along Main St. N. which lack holiday lighting. Some effort should be made to provide holiday lighting there as well, since merchants in those areas would be reluctant to contribute to any fund that made no provision for them.

We also would think the public would be willing to make some contribution to town holiday lighting from taxes to ensure that Acton's streets looked as colorful and inviting as those of neighboring communities.

It has been the responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce to provide Christmas lighting in the past, although expenses took up a major share of the annual budget.

It is time perhaps for industry and public to share in the load since all share in the visual delight the lights afford. It is for this purpose that the Chamber of Commerce has established a fund to provide for holiday lighting and we think it is a worthwhile project that certainly does something for the town during the holiday season.

Our only regret is that the lights could not be turned on for the entire winter but, this would be a costly project far beyond means available.



and Pepper

by hartley coles

What kind of reaction would you have if your children arrived home from church on a Sunday morning and announced in matter-of-fact tones that their mother and father sure don't do much that's exciting?

My first response was indignant surprise. But after a cooling off process I began to wonder if there wasn't something to the charge.

What had my distaff side and I done that would peel the paint off a barn lately?

Nothing, absolutely nothing.

It is true we attended our share of the holiday parties and arrived home almost as late as any of our friends.

It's true I danced the Watusi to the strains of Scotland the Brave and thought it was the highland fling. But what had we done to deserve this square image from our progeny?

That's easy, said number one son. You drive a four door sedan that's ready for the boneyard and looks like a composite image of all the "family" cars in town. Why not sharpen up and get one of those Dusters or Magnums, so I don't feel like a rectangle driving down the street.

And your clothes! They look like they were bought in the depression when all styles were dowdy. Why don't you get with it — bell bottoms, some sharp colored shirts and back comb your hair?

Delighted wife who smiled while I was on the receiving end of the verbal dart, had her comppance, too. They turned on her.

What's the matter with brightening up your image? They asked. Dust off the squares and look alive!

Some know-it-alls have declared that your true image can be discerned in the remarks of your children. As you can see we have to make some improvements or we are going to widen the generation gap into a cavity that would hold the Rocky Mountains with the Niagara Escarpment for top dressing.

Meanwhile, I've been brimming with ideas about how to improve the old image so the kids can approve of their ma and pa. It looks like we would have to throw out all our clothes and start over. The bucket of bolts must be exchanged for a spanking new sports car with four on the floor, sliding roof and a motor that throbs with power when we rev it alongside the house.

It is the distaff side that's going to have a problem. She won't know whether to hang onto her duds or take the mini-mid-maxi route. Maybe she can settle for a pantsuit, that answer to the woman's prayer while the fashion moguls strive to produce something that will take everyone's fancy and use plenty of material to boot.

And then we'll have to do something for excitement.

Got any ideas?

Maybe we could take a run down to Montreal and interview some of the FLQ. But the weather is rather distressing in Quebec at the moment. And someone told me they were wearing guns. So I'd just as soon postpone the trip until they confiscate all the popguns in the province.

How about a trip to Hawaii? Blissful basking in the sun while the grass skirted damsels weave in and out shaking posterior to the strains of steel guitars or whatever it is they make music with in the islands.

But have you ever figured what these things are going to cost? Thousands and a bit of change.

It puts a different complexion on the whole thing. If it takes that kind of money to adopt a swinging image I think I'd rather stay square and on the outs with the kids.

We can still have some excitement. Although it might not suit the offspring there's nothing like a good Montreal-Toronto hockey game on TV with a refrigerator close by for fill-ups at the commercials. Or how about a run downtown to look in the store windows on a Saturday afternoon?

That's not so exciting, you say?

Maybe not, but it's not so expensive either, and you gotta have the money, honey, as they say at the Wednesday bingos, or you might as well stay at home.



AN OLD PICTURE left in the CN station showed H. Holmes, H. Kennedy and a Mr. Signer, and was dated 1921. The railroads were thriving then . . . also the crop on the lawn, apparently.

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