



Fence line by moonlight

(Photo by Bill Stuckey)



Sugar and Spice by bill smiley

Even a winter sour-puss like me cannot but be affected when we hit one of those rare and perfect winter days.

Today is one of them. Snapping twelve degrees. Sun grinning down like an old, yellow lecher as fresh snow lifts virginal, blue-white, pleading hands. Sky as cold and blue as Mr. Benson's heart.

Ugly, fallen-down fence in back yard has vanished until spring. Picnic table is a loaf of white bread rising. Big spruce by the garage holds with dignity, in sagging, blue-green arms, the big lumps of heavy white cotton.

In the country, evergreens are startling black clumps of contrast. Ancient rail fences with jaunty, snow-capped posts run their erratic charm through the bluish drifts. So do the snow-shoers.

Skiers whiz down like gulls swooping for scraps. And the damned snowmobiles grunt and bellow about like bulls in a chaotic china shop.

There, I knew something would spoil it. Don't worry. I won't go into a diatribe about the stinking things. I consider them beneath my dignity. I wouldn't ban them if I had the power.

They're a wonderful machine for farmers, trappers and others who need to get places they couldn't before. Some of the kids at our school, who live on islands, 'way out in the bay, cross the ice on the things, catch the school bus, drive forty minutes to school, then make the return journey in the afternoon. You can't knock that.

And they're fine for recreation, too, if they're used with some sense. But there's the rub. As a cabinet minister remarked recently, on the subject, "You can't legislate against stupidity." And some of the most stupid people I know own snowmobiles. (Not you, gentle reader, not you.)

You don't go flying solo after an hour's instruction. And you have to pass a fairly stiff test nowadays to get a car driver's license.

But it seems that any nyurp of a kid (or adult) who can get one of the THINGS started, and not necessarily stopped, is free to go out and commit mayhem or suicide.

When I see some kid belting along at full throttle, on an icy road, or trying to pass a car on the right, I shudder. And when I see mature, middle-aged people attempting climbs and jumps and crossing thin ice that even an intelligent ape would shy at, I shake



and Pepper by hartley coles

A package arrived at our house a few days before Christmas, packaged in cheery gift wrappings.

"What's that," I asked the wife, more curious than interested.

"None of your business," she said with a mysterious grin, that suggested artifice.

Naturally the old appetite was whetted. I shrugged, smiled and attempted to read the large print discernible through the gift wrapping, reasoning it must be a Christmas present intended for me.

After repeated attempts to decipher the type through the wrapping, I retired upstairs where I tore it off in large pieces of paper frustration. Then I got the message:

"BORN IN BARRIE - RAISED EVERYWHERE," it read, the box a cardboard container with no other distinguishing marks.

If you haven't guessed by now, contents revealed a shining new toilet seat.

Apparently we had worn our old one out. The replacement was guaranteed to provide satisfactory service.

It was duly installed with appropriate ceremonies to mark the occasion - and totally forgotten - until last week.

It was at this point I picked up the Milton Champion and a related subject popped up in the column authored by Roy Downs. He picked up a fresh and amusing viewpoint from Claude Hoodspeth's Lions Gate Times, out in British Columbia, which sheds further light on a subject always treated with the utmost delicacy... and diplomacy.

Who says there's no humor in Canada's weekly press?

An English lady, making plans to visit Switzerland for Christmas holidays, wrote to a country hotel for a room reservation. She ended the letter saying, as she Britishly phrased it, that she preferred accommodation as close as possible to a "W.C." (water closet) or toilet. The innkeeper's English was sparse, so he took the letter to his friend, the parish priest, and asked his help with the interpretation of "W.C." The priest mulled this over a long time and then finally the dawn broke: "I've got it! — of course she means our Wayside Chapel!"

Very pleased to have the problem solved, the innkeeper hastened to write to the English lady:

Dear Madam:

It is with great pleasure I am able to inform you that we have a lovely room reserved for your visit and that there is indeed a W.C. to attend to your devotions. It is located only two miles from the inn in a beautiful grove of pine trees which gives a feeling of serenity to the visitor. We will be most pleased to arrange transportation for you during your stay with us.

It may surprise you to know that our W.C. holds over 200 people at a sitting and for the convenience of tourists it is open on Thursdays as well as Saturdays. It is a good idea to go as early as possible in order to get a good seat as sometimes standing room only is available, which is especially hard on some of the older ladies.

On Sundays a good number of people take picnic lunches to the W.C. and make a day of it, while others take a bus or a horse carriage and usually arrive only just in time. I would recommend Madam arrange to go on Thursday evenings when there are

my head sadly. It seems that every third person you meet has a twisted ankle or a sprained shoulder or a bent bum.

Then there are the gangs. The only difference between a motorcycle gang and a snowmobile gang is the speed and the time of year. Both are likely to be half-stoned, and both are prone to vandalism and indifferent to the feelings of others.

There's only one thing more boring and annoying than the abuses of the things. And that is the constant conversation about them, at practically any gathering of people, anywhere, in midwinter.

Boring? It's enough to make the mind boggle. One used to go to a party and have a party. One used to curl and sit around afterwards discussing the game. One used to sit in the teachers' staff room with a group of fairly intelligent people and talk about cabbages and kings and sealing wax and things.

Now, all you hear is a melange of carburetors and tracks and horse-powers and feats of derring-do, most of the latter gaining in each interminable repetition.

I know they wonder why I don't eat lunch in the staff-room any more. But I'd rather sit in the cafeteria with 400 noisy students than sit in the staff-room with twelve or fourteen snowmobilers bellowing at each other, each trying to top the other's story.

I told you I wasn't going to write a diatribe. And I won't. The car started this morning. Classes went well. My wife's in a decent mood. And my daughter got 88 and 90 on two essays.

And it was a beautiful day, before that silver lining turned into a black cloud.

no regular services but there is organ accompaniment. Although the W.C. dates back to the 12th century, the acoustics are excellent and even the most delicate sounds may be heard in the halls.

It may also interest you to know that our daughter first met her future husband, who was guest at the hotel, in the W.C. and they were later married there by our parish priest. We are also very proud of our unusual bell, donated by a wealthy visitor, which rings every time someone makes an offering. Unfortunately my wife has a rather delicate condition and so she has not been able to attend regularly; as a matter of fact, it is almost a year now since she last went. It grieves her very much not to be able to go more often, as you can imagine.

In conclusion, we hope your stay with us will be most happy, so please let me know if you wish a special seat reserved for you for the season at the W.C. There is a small service charge but it will ensure you an upholstered seat. We also suggest you bring your camera as the evening candle lighting ceremony in the W.C. is very colorful and it's a beautiful sight to see the light playing on the fountains.

Some come with cheer — some with charity — but all leave satisfied!

Yours obedient servant
THE INNKEEPER

Off the cuff . . .

The best way to remember your wife's birthday is to forget it once.

Don't complain about your relatives. They didn't pick you either.

The stork is often held responsible for circumstances which might be better attributed to a lark.

Need new directions . . .

Once a vital part of the town's social and recreational activities, the future of Acton Y.M.C.A. is being discussed by Y board members and members of the Y's Men's Club, in an effort to come up with a solution to some of the organization's ills.

Many of the activities which made the 'Y' a beehive of activity in the past have been usurped by schools, recreation committees and other organizations. This has led to a gradual loss of interest both by the public

and those charged with operating the facility, with the exception of a few dedicated people who have attempted to revive flagging interest and instill new life into the organization.

There is no doubt the people attempting to keep the YMCA functioning as an integral part of the town's life have been waging an uphill battle against apathy and disinterest as well as dealing with a building that is becoming obsolete for the purposes intended.

There is a genuine need to seek directions for the 'Y' if it is to remain as an integral part of the town life.

Those committed to the task have an important decision to make in the discussions of the Y's future. Imaginative solutions are needed.

It would be a tragedy if the organization which has supplied so much good to Acton and district should die from the twin diseases of public apathy and lack of funds to operate a modern facility.

Economy on the move? . . .

There's a new optimism in financial circles that suggests the current depressed mood of the economy will change to a much brighter picture over the months immediately ahead.

Unemployment and bleak prospects, coupled with the tight money situation, created a lack of confidence in the economy that reflected in consumer spending. Now it appears the Canadian consumer is in a more expansive mood than at any time in 1970 and this is taken as clear evidence by The Financial Post that the only place the Canadian economy can go from here is up.

Big improvement that is creating optimism is the step-up plans to buy

expensive things as houses and cars. This, coupled with encouraging news about prices and credit, also puts the serious unemployment situation in more promising perspective.

The number of jobs looking for people may overtake the number of people joining the labor force in the latter half of 1971 and it is expected that then the rate of unemployment will drop. But it won't happen fast enough to keep the year from recording high unemployment totals.

Gloom spreaders, of course, would have us believe that a million unemployed can be expected before the situation clears up — a figure which

would be catastrophic if it materialized.

Government circles are more optimistic about the future of the job market but it is clear that it could be well into 1972 before they can talk about "full" employment.

It appears from the opinions of the experts that a return to economic buoyancy will depend on restoration of business confidence, which in turn hopefully will lead to increased employment as the situation improves.

This is the feeling government is trying to propagate and Canadians are hopeful it turns out that way only much speedier than the predictions.

Pornography on the shelves . . .

It has been our opinion that the least amount of censorship the better. This was based on the idea that censorship might suppress some of the baser instincts but in the process also destroyed the motivation for finer things as well.

We had no reason to doubt this view. Censorship imposed during the imposition of the War Measures Act, for instance, threw a blanket over many of the things we felt the public was entitled to know. If censorship had been imposed in Viet Nam the American public would not be fully aware of the tragedies of war.

Lately, however, exposed to several movies and some publications we would label obscene, we wonder if censorship isn't the answer to the filth peddlers.

We've been inclined to the view before that people would recognize pornography when they see it and refuse to allow it into homes or places of business. But this no longer is true. They are doing the stuff up in such attractive, glossy packages now that some people are being misled.

At one time you could be pretty sure pornography would be pretty shoddy material printed on poor quality paper. Distribution was usually an under the counter deal with furtive looks for possible exposure.

Today you can walk into many bookstores and find much more lurid material on the shelves done up in attractive covers and wide open for children or anyone else to peruse. It undoubtedly is a good seller because many book stores have as much, if not more of it than the less sensational material.

There are those who claim that reading and leafing through this type of literature and illustration does no one any harm. In fact, some supposedly learned people maintain exposure to pornography is good for the immature mind, basing this supposition, I suppose on their own personal habits.

Anyone with sense, of course, recognizes that if this was true then by the same token there is no merit in reading good literature. You couldn't possibly benefit.

What can be done about the problem, then?

There's no use leaving it to the police and the courts. They are so bound up with legalities, loopholes and obscure definitions of what pornography is they are almost completely ineffective.

The Lincoln Post Express suggests that the women who are so busy with this "nonsensical women's rights business would go on the rampage against the filth they could clean it up in a big way." The paper suggests a baseball bat would make a convenient and handy weapon.

"Fewer marches for rights, ladies", says the Post Express, "and a lot more righteous indignation against the filth and perversion that is being peddled to your children."

Well we'd draw the line at marching mothers with baseball bats, even if the police are looking the other way, but the spirit of the editorial we endorse one hundred per cent.

It is time people took stock of who is poisoning the minds of the young and did something about it, making doubly sure it doesn't enter their own homes.

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, January 25, 1951

Topping the Georgetown Industrial League this week is the Baxter Lab's team, who can also boast of downing Guelph Leland Electric at Acton arena on Tuesday. In the Georgetown games played every Monday, Baxter's has climbed from the bottom spot to the very top and hope to take the league. Players are Mel Jordan, Bob Marshall, Harold Robson, Earl Masales, Vic Masters, Julian Zajac, Bill Fields, Jack Stewart, Ray Everdell, Fyfe Somerville, Lloyd Robinson, Ken Allen, Lorne Masales and coach Kerwin McPhail.

The "Daughters of Knox" was the name chosen by a group of Presbyterian teen-age

girls when they met at the manse on Monday to organize a girls' guild. The group is for girls 12 to 18 and Mrs. A. J. Buchanan is their leader. The following officers were installed: Hon. presidents, Mrs. H. Mainprize and Mrs. R. H. Armstrong; president Ruth Smith; secretary Joan Chisholm; treasurer Marilyn Sigsworth; pianist Elizabeth Jany; crafts convener Betty Wilds. Associated with Mrs. Buchanan are Mrs. G. Ritchie and Mrs. K. Mackenzie as the leaders.

Radio transmitting station CKFH on Centre Island was serviced with its two steel transmitting towers this week, which were made at Ajax Engineering. The new station is owned by Foster Hewitt.

Employees of the Bank of Montreal gathered at the Dominion Hotel for an informal dinner party in honor of Mr. and Mrs. William Clayton. He is being transferred to Toronto. Orme Hunt made the presentation of an end table.

Miss Jeanette Russell, Oakville, sent her wedding bouquet to her grandmother, Mrs. D. C. Russell, here.

Ed Jennings saw a robin on Cobble Hill.

Saturday afternoon the Duke of Devonshire chapter of the I.O.D.E. held a tea at the home of Mrs. (Dr.) Bell in honor of Mrs. R. M. MacDonald, the retiring regent. After an hour spent in sewing and conversation a dainty lunch was served.

In 55 hours the mercury went from 10 below to 50 above. Mrs. William Hall picked pansies out in her garden in full bloom.

Mr. Harry Holmes Jr. is filling the place of Mac McDonald at the G.T.R. station until his injured hand is better.

Council paid N. Starkman \$10 damages for his mare which received injuries falling in a ditch on Mill St.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 16, 1896.

On Monday evening a passenger train going west struck a man walking on the track near Rockwood. The stranger is from Florida and was looking for work. He spoke of starting a barber shop in Rockwood. He stayed in Limehouse Sunday night. He was about 40 years old.

Deaths recorded: Maggie Grant, Limehouse, age 18; Christopher Moffat, Campbellville, 22 years, struck by a train; Isabella Miller, Ospringe, 51 years; George Little, now of Hamilton, 34 years; Alice Ford Hill, in Guelph hospital, 20 years; William J. Johnson, Trafalgar, 22; Mary Lucretia Livingstone, eldest daughter of Rev. James Livingstone, in Kincardine; Douglas Cameron Arms, Toronto, seven years; twin sons of P. Falconbridge, Aberfoyle, age nine months and 4 days and nine months and 24 days.

Mrs. John Colquhoun of Nassagaweya celebrated her 101st birthday.

Messrs. J. and A. P. Symon have their new stock of hardware, tinware, jewellery and patent medicines opened up.

Mr. J. Hallet, Guelph, has been appointed collector of customs to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Collector Hefferman last week.

This being leap year, the new woman will have better opportunity than ever to show her superiority over the old man.

Miss Sowler of Wingham is in town for the purpose of taking pupils in oil painting.

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