



ONE OF THE MORE RUGGED, scenic areas of Esquesing is in the northern end of the township all along spots like these on the Ninth Line. The Niagara

Escarpment rises majestically on both sides of this valley with wooden spikes of trees, evergreens and birch, making brush marks on glistening snow—Staff Photo



Sugar and Spice by bill smiley

It's one of those wild, Canadian nights, with the wind howling like a pack of wolves on an LSD trip, and snow seeking out every crevice. My wife came down today and found a little kid trying manfully to shut our front door, which had been blown open. There was about eight inches of snow in the vestibule, and the furnace was grunting away like a hippo with a hernia.

It's the sort of night when you think with awe of our ancestors. In their draughty log cabins, and their sod houses on the prairies.

They were giants, compared to us pampered, doughy creatures, who whimper and get sick at the thought that we might not be able to get the car out of the drive in the morning.

We simply can't imagine getting up at five in pitch dark, lighting a lamp, building a fire, breasting it through three or four feet of snow to the barn or lean-to to see whether the animals have survived, feeding them, numb to the bone, and coming back in to make porridge.

A tough life, but in some ways we must envy them. They didn't have to worry about too much cholesterol in the eggs, too much

fat in the bacon. They didn't have that demon of today, the alarm-clock, to tear their tender morning nerves.

And maybe, because they weren't geared to the clock, they missed some of the joys of modern life. They didn't have ulcers, because they had to do something about their problems, not just worry about them.

They weren't constipated, because they didn't have time, in that cold. Their women weren't so neurotic, because they didn't have time to worry about nerves, cancer, gray hair and wrinkles.

It was a hard, brutal life, no question. But were they worse off than we? Maybe their kids had to walk three miles to school through the snow. But when they got there, there wasn't anybody trying to convince them that sniffing nail polish was the greatest.

And the same kids, when they hit their teens, were young men and women, capable and independent. My grandmother died at 33. Fatigue and child-bearing, common enough in those days. There were nine children. And my mother, the oldest girl, reared the lot of them.



and Pepper by hartley coles

I'm writing this as the southbound Kapuskasing-Toronto Special glides through the heart of this province's north.

Outside the air is crisp, a few degrees below zero. The landscape, as we thunder towards Cochrane, is flat, relieved by trees and a few fields, with fence posts peering out of waist-high snow. It doesn't vary much as the miles go by. Surprisingly, though, it is never really monotonous.

There's always the chance you might glimpse a deer, moose or bear in the bush, or pass through a small northern town, the streets glistening in the morning sun and the inevitable snowmobile tracks cutting patterns in the snow.

The train is slowing down. Someone ahead in the coach, familiar with the north, says, "It's Cochrane." That was a signal for activity.

Out of the train tumbles a bearded bundle of bombast, wrapped in bulky buffalo coat, topped by a bright orange touque, fingering a trumpet. Behind him in file are a troupe of followers in gay, mighty gay spirts.

They line up on the station platform at 11 a.m. Sunday morning. The man in the buffalo coat lifts his trumpet and shatters the crisp northern air with a fanfare that would do credit to a royal house. Then, while railwaymen along the station platform grin, he breaks into the old favorite, "I've been workin' on the railroad."

That breaks the ice if you'll pardon the pun. The whole scene lights up. Revelers, live abreast, parade down the platform to the delight of faces pressed against the frosted windows of the CN and Ontario

Northland special that is returning over 200 newspapermen, women, wives, husbands and a few kids returning from two days at Kapuskasing. There they were mined and dined, visited bush camps, paper mills and sampled the north at its best — in the winter.

We arrived on the vanguard of a thermal blast that gripped the north with icy fingers for three weeks, sending the mercury plunging to a chill factor of 71 degrees below the zero mark. Naturally, few of us faced the prospect of two full days and three nights at the Kap with the same enthusiasm we would have for Florida at this time of year.

But when we stepped off the train, after 14 hours on board, the mercury had regained its balance. They were having a heat wave — 20 degrees ABOVE zero.

It was the first encouraging word for the news media since the mass media report told Canadians the newsrooms of the nation were the "boneyard of broken dreams." The boneyard special had one nightmarish quality — it arrived at the Cinderella hour while most northerners, rather than basking in the balmy breeze, were sawing wood in bed.

Somehow I had always pictured the real north to be a facsimile of Muskoka — lots of trees, hills and rocks with lakes thrown in to provide picture postcard scenes. It's not. There are spots like that, but around the Kap it is almost as flat as Bill's billiard tables. There are lots of trees, dominated by the spruce family, which is the mainstay of the pulp and paper industry.

Main feature of the topography in the north is muck. Although frozen in winter during warm months it varies in depth from

Most of our kids today couldn't raise a guinea pig without the help of two parents and a veterinarian.

I am presently trying to convince my daughter that the free-enterprise system has its points. She has some piano pupils. She thinks it is atrocious that she gets only half the fee the kids pay, a mere \$2 a half-hour, while the studio owner takes the other half, \$2.

I point out to her that he picks her up and delivers her home, that it is his studio, his piano, his advertising, his overhead. Nope. It is a clear case of vicious capitalistic exploitation of the young.

And my mother hitched up the horse-and-buggy, or horse-and-cutter, and drove all over Calumet Island and half of Pontiac County, giving lessons at 50 cents an hour. And drove the long, dark, lonely road home.

It's not the money. Half a buck then was probably worth more than four dollars today. It's the attitude.

There's nobody to be blamed. They grew up in an era of comparative peace, when a strong back and a strong will gave you a life that was rewarding. We grew up through a depression and a world war and sought security. Our kids are growing up in an era of violence and fear and rapid change and insecurity.

And perhaps the last are more idealistic than any of us, closer to the truth, with their slogan of "Love and Peace."

a few inches to as deep as 30 feet — the bane of lumbermen.

Geographically, the Kap is at the centre of the province, but it is still only 150 miles from James Bay, a name that sends shivers down the backs of most Canadians. The town is dominated by the Spruce Falls Power and Paper Co. and around Rene Piche, whom we dubbed Rene the Peach, mayor and publisher of the Kapuskasing Times, a genial and hospitable host.

Kapuskasing, named by the Indians after a bend in the Kapuskasing River, is a model town built in the design of a wheel, around a central hub on which the business section is located.

Veterans of the first World War pioneered the area and farmed clay left by retreating glaciers of the ice age. Few were successful and the area around the Kap is a real boneyard of broken farming dreams. Abandoned farms with falling barns and empty shells of houses dot the countryside, testifying mutely to hopes of the early settlers. Now the economy is dominated by pulp and paper with a few agricultural areas still functioning and looking fairly prosperous.

Two days is hardly enough to become an expert or even very knowledgeable about the north, but over the next few weeks I hope to write a few of my impressions about it while in its real element — winter.

Editorial notes . . .

Growing old is simply a question of mind over matter. If you don't mind it doesn't matter.

Money does make a difference. If you have two jobs and you're rich, you have diversified interests. If you have two jobs and you are poor, you're moonlighting.

We are the losers . . .

News that the St. John Ambulance Brigade in Acton would be disbanded and amalgamated with Milton is almost an indictment of disinterest on the part of all of us living in Acton and district.

It is a sign that we don't know or care enough about worthwhile organizations to support them financially, morally and with enough recruits to keep them healthy.

Surely no one knows better than we do the tremendous amount of work the St. John brigade has done in Acton in the past. They have been a fixture at all community events, kept the sports scene well protected with trained men and women and conducted training classes for those interested in learning the rudiments of practical first aid.

In 1968 the community honored them collectively by bestowing on them the Citizen of the Year award.

It is ironic that in 1971 — three years later — they have to fold up their equipment due to falling interest, financial troubles and a tendency on our part to take their important community role for granted.

It isn't that we didn't appreciate them. Their figures were at all events where there might be some sort of physical risk. It was comfortable knowing trained help was immediately available in the event of an emergency.

We are informed that teamed with Milton remaining members will still be able to attend events in Acton but with nowhere the scope they worked with previously.

Perhaps it is not too late to redeem ourselves in the eyes of the dedicated men and women who wore the black with white trim, the unmistakable mark of a St. John man or woman.

Since they were formed in 1957 the Acton division has constantly demonstrated qualities of good citizenship.

The Order of St. John goes back to the crusades when knights from the Christian countries of Europe were so impressed with the care given to the wounded by the Brothers of St. John of Jerusalem that many of the crusaders joined the Order. Others endowed it with gifts of money and land to enable the Order to extend their care for the suffering.

Maybe we don't pay enough attention to crusaders these days. Certainly we don't with their modern equivalents. Perhaps they will forgive us for our folly.

We will be the losers, not the brigade.

A little humble pie . . .

Man, after walking on the moon and achieving other scientific marvels during the past half-century, has tended to become blasé and very much satisfied with himself.

Modern living has its advantages, but there is a growing awareness that technology is destroying a very important aspect of living in that man tends to isolate himself from other men. True, he may belong to clubs and so forth, but in his inner self, modern man lives very much unto himself.

It follows that, in many respects, a battle with the elements such as area residents experienced last week, is not

as bad as it appears on the surface. True, there was suffering, but at least it gave those of us who bother to think a little, a chance to once again realize that we are but humble "pebbles", when the forces of nature decide to take hold.

The essential goodness of the human race, deluged and partially smothered by mass media, good living and fast travel, broke once more to the surface as harried travellers were welcomed into shelter under strange roofs; stranded school children were eagerly accepted into many homes, and as hundreds of persons beat every effort

toward helping those in need due to the fury of the elements.

Perhaps, as modern times march along their course, the incidental "lessons of nature" may begin to take a firm hold once more? We may regain that compassion for our fellow man once the outstanding characteristic of our pioneering forefathers.

At any rate, a little taste of "humble pie" serves to drive home the fact that man may not live for bread (or money) alone.

We hope the lesson has not been wasted. —St. Marys Journal-Argus

Personal interest gone . . .

Although there are probably some astute business reasons for the policies of school boards and government hiring contractors in place of caretakers to maintain and clean schools and public buildings such as post offices, there is growing recognition among the public at least that quality of service sometimes leaves much to be desired.

Phasing out of individual caretakers with strong personal interest in their work in favor of impersonal cleaning firms can possibly be defended in the financial statement columns where quality is measured in dollars and cents, but we wonder if they are as complimentary in the nitty gritty of everyday maintenance.

Many caretakers of the past took pains to provide clean, shining buildings with complementing well manicured grounds. If extra work or hours were needed, they didn't hesitate to provide them. Perhaps this would

only mean replacing a door lock, a drop of oil on squeaky hinge, or a wiping a light bulb which periodically needed cleaning. It might be simply keeping the sidewalk clean and free of snow in winter or could entail major repairs of the heating system, which they often nursed along in addition to other duties.

These were all services the public took for granted although sometimes they were provided by an overworked, conscientious workman. If caretakers weren't fashioned along these lines they wouldn't last long at the job.

Then along came the new improved business methods. Cost accounting showed that hiring firms to do the job of caretakers could shift a substantial balance of cash from expenses required for maintenance. These firms have modern, efficient machinery which does away with the drudgery of the job and also eliminates the necessity to buy new equipment.

With their equipment and men and women hired at a figure not much beyond the required minimum, cleaning firms were able to almost eliminate the individuals who once staffed buildings.

But now the chickens are coming home to roost.

Machines may be efficient, costs lower but the little extras once taken for granted, are no longer being provided. They may not be in the contract. Or if they are, workmen on a small wage are not as likely to bother about frills as the caretaker who once conscientiously tried to fulfill his job. There are exceptions, of course.

Unless there is a sudden change of policy among the decision makers of school boards and government we are more apt to run into more of their depersonalizing influence which laudable as it may seem for the public purse strings, has some hidden drawbacks.



20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, February 8, 1951.

The tall green vine growing on the platform of the town hall auditorium early this week had the title role in the public school pupils' operetta The Magic Beanstalk presented there Monday and Tuesday evenings of this week. Chairmen for the evenings were Tom Jones and R. R. Parker. The music was under the direction of Miss Linda Stewart and the dialogue under Miss J. McPhail. Staging was directed by Mrs. Gamble and Mr. McKenzie.

Ron Emmerson as Jack, Jerry White as the wicked ogre and Frances Oakes as

Jack's mother had the main speaking parts and handled them with ease. Others to be commended are George Oakes as the announcer, Robert Parker as Captain Kidd, Leona Sagaski as the fortune teller and Herb Dods as the magician. An amusing tap dance by Martin Marks and Ron Sheppard as a cow delighted the audience. The dance of the five beans was charmingly done by Patricia Barr, Linda Lovell, Judy Halliday, Faye McEachern and Pat Moyle.

Mrs. Peter Smith of Main St. observed her 90th birthday.

High School news — Grade XI put on the literary program. There was a play with Jack Davidson the U. S. delegate, John Ware a Russian delegate, Don Dawkins a Canadian delegate and Rod Force as secretary-general Trigvie Lie.

Taking part in a debate on homework were Mr. Robbins and David McVey, against Miss Grindley and Lorraine Mullin. Others on the program were Pat Terry, Marjorie Warne, JoAnn Veldhuis, Fred Euringer, Chris Lamb, Joyce Lambert and Frances Fletcher. Crawford Douglas played Dorsey's Boogie, Burnelle Boogie and others. Vic Alger passed away suddenly at his home on Arthur St. He was born in England and came to Canada 45 years ago.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, February 10, 1921.

The entertainment given at the Soldiers' Community House under the direction of the Women's Institute was well worth the large patronage accorded it. Rev. I. M. Moyer presided over the program: Mrs. Leonard Worden, piano selection; Miss Marguerite Symon, piano selections; Mr. Andy Frank, violin numbers; little Miss June Frank, vocal Scottish numbers; Miss Betty Lowrie, musical recitations; Mr. Fred Coles, vocal solo; Mrs. A. T. Brown, readings; Miss Lily Alderson, vocal numbers; selections by Messrs. Mann, McClure, Worden and Smith, solos by Rev. W. L. Findlay and Mrs. Frank Holmes.

The Hydro Commission are planning to renew the transmission lines from Acton to

Guelph shortly. To accomplish this the current will be cut off for eight hours per day for seven days. This will militate most seriously against those who use power in town.

Dr. E. J. Nelson has purchased the medical practice of the late Dr. Thos. Gray. Better get in your stock of ice now, an early spring is predicted.

Quite a few of the tannery workers are cutting fire wood on the neighboring farms while the tanneries are shut down.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 30, 1896.

Acton Horticultural and Agricultural Society is in a very flourishing condition. The annual meeting held in the town hall Wednesday proved this to the entire satisfaction of the directors. The secretary's report showed a cash balance on hand of \$75, after paying all prize money and accounts. The following were elected for the coming year: Jno. Duff, President; Alex. Waidie, 1st Vice-President; Thos. Wilson, 2nd Vice-President; Geo. Hynds, Secretary and Treasurer; Jas. Matthews, auditor; directors Jno. Williams, Geo. Haville, J. H. Matthews, Thos. Harding, Wm. Hemstreet, Geo. Kitching, Jno. Wrigglesworth, Jas. Black, Jas. Kirkwood.

A "silver wedding" was celebrated at "Homedale", the pretty and comfortable brick home of Mr. and Mrs. George Dills. Mr. Dills and his interesting family came to Acton from Nanticoke two or three years ago. An event of the evening was the photographing by Artist Ramshaw of the company by flashlight.

Mr. David Mills lost a fine team horse last Friday through inflammation. With personal and family illness Mr. Mills is afflicted to an extent which calls forth general sympathy.

In Toronto people are being fined for not having bells attached to their rigs when driving through the streets.

Bickle's Anti-Consumptive Syrup stands at the head of the list for all diseases of the throat and lungs.

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