



INTERTWINING BRANCHES, stripped of everything but a few solitary dead leaves, form an archway for this low rambling ranch style home at Silvercreek. Sunday's blue sky and sub-zero temperatures framed the home in a sparkling setting.—(Staff Photo)

## Bill Smiley



In a nostalgic mood today, I've been thinking that, with the onslaught of the Speed Age, many of our fine old Canadian traditions have fallen by the wayside, died on the vine, or simply lain down and curled up their toes.

One of the first to go, of course, was the blacksmith. It hurts me to face the truth: that most people today under 30 have never known the sensory joys of a blacksmith's shop.

At this time of year, small boys used to squeeze through the ramshackle door, and edge as close as they could to the fire, freezing their bums and roasting their cheeks. There was a fine acrid stench of horse manure and scorched hooves. There was the leaping flame as the bellows blew. There was the ringing clang as the smith beat out the white-hot metal between hammer and anvil, and the satisfying hiss when the hot metal was plunged into the cold water.

At a certain age, most male kids would have settled happily for the life of a blacksmith, a free soul who spent his days doing the most fascinating work in the world.

The decline of the smithy, of course, was brought about by the gradual phasing out of another tradition — the horse-drawn vehicle.

I wonder how many kids of this generation have ever spent a winter Saturday "catching bobs". This was our term for jumping on the backs of farmers' sleighs.

All day long the farmers came and went to and from town. And all day long we hopped on behind a load of grain, left that for a load of supplies, going the other way, picked up a sleigh piled with logs for the return trip, and shivered with delighted fear as the farmers shouted at us, and even sometimes flourished their whips in our direction.

As we grew a little older, about 12, we graduated to catching on the wing a cutter. This was more daring and more dangerous because they could really fly, the runner was much smaller, and the farmer could turn around and belt you one on the ear.

Most of them, of course, were pretty decent. I know now that they were more worried about us getting hurt in a fall than they were about the extra weight their horses had to pull.

Then there were the butchers' cutters. These consisted of a sort of box with runners beneath, and a step at the back for the driver to stand on. The horses were not plugs, but real road-runners that went like a bat out of hell. They were every bit as exciting as a Roman chariot, and the drivers were the envy of every boy, in fur caps, reins in one hand, whip in the other, as they tore through the town like furies.

And I wonder how many boys have played hockey all day on a frozen river, when a hard shot the goalie missed might slide for a quarter of a mile. We never had to worry about ice-time, or changing lines. We

could play until we were pooped, then sit by the bonfire until rested, and have another go. And there were always twenty or thirty playing at once, so everybody got a whack at the puck. Some great stick-handlers came out of that era.

Think of the depths to which we have sunk. The smithy, with its light and shadows, its reds and blacks, its earthy smells, its sense of life, has been replaced by a sterile thing with its cement floor, its reek of gas and oil, and its unspoken assurance that this-is-gonna-cost-you-plenty-buddy.

The cutter, swift and light as a bird, no longer skims the snow. It has been replaced by a stinking, snarling, skidding beast that only modern man could abide—the snowmobile.

No more meat-cutters, careening around the corners on one runner, delivering in any weather. Now, we plod like zombies through the supermarket, to moronic piped-in music, and pick up the odourless, antiseptic, cellophane packages the great gods Dominion, Loblaw or Safeway have assigned to us, and carry them humbly to our cars, three blocks away.

Our kids have to get up at five a.m. to play hockey, and if they're not real "killers", get about four minutes ice-time.

Ah, those were the days! And I haven't even begun on the most vital of all winter equipment — the puck consisting of a frozen horse-bun.

## And who is my neighbor? . . .

Perhaps this is a poor time to talk about "brotherhood". Catholic and Protestant are fighting each other in Northern Ireland, blacks and whites are struggling with each other in Rhodesia, South Africa and the United States. Moslem is pitted against Hindu in India and there are other world troubles which could turn the most optimistic person into a pessimist.

But the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews has named this week Brotherhood Week, so we can sit down and think about our own relations with our fellows. Making the world safe for differences is a never-ending job.

And there are glimmers of hope in some places where hate and rejection were once the norm. Sometimes we see a shining light that gives one a glimpse of what this world could be like if we rejected hate and social exclusion and replaced it with love.

As the president of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews has said, "Reverence for the reverences of others requires a new morality which rules out many destructive, nihilistic activities."

Today, civilized Protestants, Catholics and Jews are grateful for the pleasure of each other's company. Tomorrow we hope various racial

strains will enjoy social parity and from these we see nations and ideological systems evolving rules for fair

play in friendly competition. Man has been compared to a caterpillar crawling across an Oriental carpet.

At any one moment he will respond to the red or blue coloring, to the white, yellow or green. He may have a preference for any one of the many colors but from his prone vantage point each will merely be a part of the whole fabric.

Why then damage the design of life by false prejudice? Idealism, hollow slogans and wordy speeches no longer suffice. We must practice what we preach—believe in the brotherhood of man.

"There cannot be peace without brotherhood and there cannot be brotherhood without justice."

Brotherhood, like charity, should begin at home, whether that be here in Acton, Rockwood, Georgetown, Milton, or on the farm or rural community in which you live. It can start with your neighbor.

We have always liked the old catechism definition of the Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, where it is asked "Who is my neighbor?"

The answer is—Mankind of every description, creed or color.



"What age do we stop being friends?"

## Short comment . . .

Although there was almost a 33 per cent increase in population between 1962 and 1968, the projected population for the county's elementary schools shows a severe reduction in 1980, according to an article published in New Dimensions, official organ of the Department of Education. Figures show a drop in public school registration to 25,329 in 1980 as compared to 29,208 in 1970 while separate school figures, reflecting the projected drop, go from 7,073 to 5,897. Obviously, there will be some empty school rooms.

The sudden death of Herman Freuler came as a shock to his many friends and acquaintances in this district. Herman's open, friendly manner and fluency in several

languages made him popular over a wide area and among people in all walks of life. Although he has left the ranks of the living, Herman's love for his adopted country will always be with us in his "Hymn to Canada" which was published during Centennial Year and became well known across the country. A Swiss native, Herman loved his home, family, good music and good books with a fervor we would all do well to emulate.

The groundhog must have seen his shadow February 2 and responded by diving down his hole for another six weeks of winter. How else can we explain the frigid temperatures and copious amounts of snow accumulated since February began? Saturday's and Sunday's cold snap was

well below zero. The wind's chill factor was estimated at 50 degrees below zero, at one point. Those who had to be exposed to it would no doubt agree with the estimate. Then Monday night it

The Eden Mills request to secede from Halton if regional government descends on us is reasonable, of course, since the entire village is Wellington County and Guelph-oriented. However, this is also true of parts of Nassagaweya and Esquesing townships and there are also good arguments about this for Acton as well.

One well known telephone company paper reminds employees it does not publish photographs of office Christmas parties. No comment is needed.

## Press, public, council triangle . . .

Although Milton Council has decided to keep the press out of committee meetings, their counterparts in Acton are debating, and could have decided by now, whether to open up a 15 minute question and answer period to members of the press, radio, TV or the general public.

There may be a difference in attitudes but both are symptoms of distrust members of the news media are meeting from some members of public bodies. Councils have been seeking the shelter of the committee rooms for more and more of their business. Public meetings then become really no more than rubber stamping of decisions that have already been made.

As a result the press is denied background on a subject which has many facets and cannot report objectively.

We realize there are times when the press must necessarily be excluded from discussions about council's business, especially when it could affect some long range planning or confidential material. At other times when public business is being discussed we think councils and other public bodies are morally obligated to let the public know what is taking place.

In Acton, council has been good enough to allow the press copies of the committee minutes. This has been an aid in delving into the background of information with which we are not familiar. The mayor, clerk and other members of council have always shown a keen desire to keep us posted on current problems council is tackling.

We appreciate these privileges and try our best to live up to our res-

ponsibilities, although it must also be said that sometimes information councillors relay to us is used to disagree with their line of thought.

However, if individual councillors are convinced they are taking the right side on an issue, we find it hard to believe they would be reluctant to let the public know about it, even if it is an unpopular decision. Popularity is not necessarily the distinction between muddled and confused thinking.

We hope that Acton council has decided to open that 15 minute question period to the news media and public. We will do our best to keep questions

straight to the point although at the same time cognizant of the fact that individual councillors need not reply to our queries.

There will be no attempt on our part to put anyone "on the spot", if the question session is allowed. We think it will enable us to garner any background information we may need for objective reporting.

We endeavor to be fair to both council and public, recognizing at all times that we bear the responsibility of relaying accurate information between town councils, village trustee boards and township councillors to the public.

## OUR READERS WRITE:

### Suggests check dental prices . . .

Georgetown, Ontario  
31 Byron St.,

Dear Mr. Editor:

In reply to my editorial of January 21 regarding the high prices being charged for dentures.

Doctor Greenglass of Georgetown, in answer says that "the cost of a product or service should not be a prime factor when one's health is concerned".

I ask how can it be other than a prime factor when the product is priced above the average ability to pay, and is so necessary to good health?

If it is presumed by the dentistry profession they must regain the total costs of their education, plus a healthy profit, within the first year of operation, then it would appear that this is their objective.

The government recognizes the cost of

dental care is very serious and has stated that because of this, it is impossible to include dental care in the health services program.

I see where Hamilton dentists are preparing plans to supply full dentures at a cost of \$180. Let us hope they will be of first quality which such a price should demand in view of the statements of denturists that they could provide full dentures at less than \$100.

In conclusion, I recommend that anyone requiring dental services check what the profession in this county is charging in comparison to centres such as Toronto and Hamilton. In these centres the overhead is much greater, yet prices in some instances are only one-third to one-half of those charged here. Buy where you can save your hard-earned money.

Yours truly,  
Ed. A. Peters

## 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, February 28, 1952.

Henpecked Henry was the feature presentation of Knox church choir that attracted capacity audiences on Thursday and Friday. In the cast were Bella Roszell, Inez McLellan, Clarence Coles, Helen Otterbein, Rachel Mullen, Bill Mainprize, Lorraine Mullen, Mrs. Mann, Jim Greer, Mrs. Ted Hansen and Ken Mann. Mrs. A. Buchanan was the director.

About 100 mothers and daughters enjoyed turkey, friendliness and a varied program last Friday in the Y.M.C.A. This first annual banquet for Acton mothers and daughters was sponsored by the Y Ladies' Auxiliary with members of the Y's Men's club acting as waiters. The guest speaker Mrs. Don Wilson, Guelph, spoke of the ideal mother and daughter. Good housekeeping, loyalty, kindness, helpfulness and beauty of speech were described by Mrs. Wilson as the attributes of an ideal woman.

The accent is on navy. Acton ladies saw the "works" of latest fashions at the Fashion Show sponsored by the Friendly Circle Tuesday and Wednesday in the town hall. Over 400 attended. Models were Mrs. Elsie Kinread, Mrs. Edna Hufnagel, Mrs. Joyce Buchanan, Mrs. Charles Mason, Mrs. Pauline Symon, Mrs. Marguerite Taylor, Mrs. Joan Hollinger, Mrs. Louise Baxter, Mrs. Bunny Stewart, Mrs. Helen Bittorf, Virena Johnston, Barbara Baxter, Jean Harris, Elaine Hufnagel and Maureen Kinread. Mrs. G. W. McKenzie played the piano and the audience was welcomed by Mrs. Laura Lovell and Miss Clara Grindley. Mrs. C. Matthews was in charge of make-up. Mrs. Edna Johnson was chairlady in charge of the show.

## 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, February 23, 1922.

The Methodist Sunday School orchestra discoursed splendid music last Sunday. There were nine pieces present including Mr. Earle Brown of Kitchener, a former player, and Mr. Ernest Brown of Toronto, another old member. This orchestra has greatly improved its musical service lately under Mr. A. T. Brown, the new

superintendent.

A very interesting letter has been received from Miss Margaret Bennett who is teaching in London, England and has visited Paris.

Milton's new \$21,000 hockey arena has been officially opened.

A most enjoyable community evening was spent at Dublin school. An amusing program was presented. Pupils of S.S. No. 7 Nassagaweya put on a play Uncle Lep. Miss Irene Mulholland sang, Knox church quartette sang, Messrs. James Smith, Thos. McClure, Leonard Worden and Alex Mann; violin selections were given by Messrs. William Frank, Andy Frank, James McIsaac and Lyle Kennedy. The proceeds \$28.20 were devoted to the Children's Aid Society, Milton.

The Toronto Star contained particulars of a peculiar court case whereby a couple were promised \$1,000 of wedding presents and launched a successful suit. Mr. E. G. Black, a former Acton boy who is practising law in Toronto, handled the case for the aggrieved couple.

Acton Hydro Commission advertisement: Let Violet Ray Give You Health and Happiness. Every member of the family can receive benefit from its soothing rays. Call in for demonstration of this electrical kit.

Mr. J. W. Barbaree has sold his house on Main St. to Mr. John Mellon.

The ice was too soft for the big hockey match with Guelph Saturday.

## 75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 4, 1897.

An aged saint was called home when Mrs. Adam Dickson passed away. A happy Christian, she had been an invalid lately and unable to leave her room. Mr. and Mrs. Dickson came to Acton in 1851. In 1837 Mrs. Dickson was a lady's maid in London was an eye witness of many of the events of the great coronation ceremonies of Queen Victoria.

Constable Fitzsimmons of Woodstock spent several days this week with his father at Rockwood. Fitz likes Woodstock well and is doing the best he can to make the rowdy element keep the peace.

New regulations went into effect on both the G.T.R. and C.P.R. lines which abolish cheap fares, market rates and special rates to school pupils. The most serious change is the large increase in school tickets. For instance, scholars attending Georgetown high school must now purchase 55 trip tickets at \$5.50 and use them in a month; or if to Guelph they must pay \$1.10 for a ticket sufficient for a month's travel. The rates will be prohibitive in a majority of cases and is a serious matter to high school pupils.

Two worthy Acton families removed to the North West by the first settlers' excursion this season. Ex-Councillor Joseph Anderson bought a farm near Hartney. Mr. John Ruddick and family have not long been residents here. The two families took two carloads of effects, Mr. Anderson having six or seven horses.

The necessity for a crossing at the G.T.R. on Mill St. was spoken of by council. The sermon on "Dancing" by Rev. Howell Sunday evening was listened to by a large congregation. It was an able indictment of this pastime which has been vetoed by a number of the church courts.

## Free Press back issues

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