



Winter shadows

Bill Smiley



Well, what do you think of the CBC's widely-touted Jalna series? Please don't answer that aloud. There are ladies present.

Ah with what hopes we looked forward to a truly brilliant, all-Canadian grand slam in the world of television. All-Canadian cast, all-Canadian material, and a decent budget.

It would astonish the world, dazzle the screen, and all of the world's great networks would beat a path to the CBC door, clutching millions of pounds, francs, dollars and lira, begging and pleading for the right to reproduce it.

So much for hopes. The result merely shows that you can have on hand champagne, caviar and filet mignon, but if the cook doesn't know what he's doing, it ends up as watery, limp and lukewarm hash.

We have the champagne in the shape of gorgeous sets. We have the caviar in a collection of first-rate actors. And we have the filet in the rare beef of the original Jalna novels.

But what emerges on the screen is the most ham-fisted, club-footed, distorted, downright dog of a series anyone could dream up. Or nightmare up.

The champagne has been watered, the caviar has been fired from a shot-gun, and

the rare beef has been minced into hamburger.

I warned the CBC, before the series began, that I would roast it if it weren't at least reasonably good. It's not even reasonably bad. Can you roast hash?

I watched the first episode with a mixture of disbelief and horror. The second was a little better, and hope sprang eternal. The flame was quickly smothered by the succeeding wet blankets.

I thought I knew the Jalna novels inside out. But the series is so baffling that, were it not for the names of the characters, I'd be willing to admit that it was the Bobsey Twins series I was thinking of.

The most coherent parts of the Sunday night show are the commercials. But even here you have to keep a wary eye, because you're not quite sure they aren't part of the plot, so dense and unwieldy is the latter.

Those faint screams you hear from your set are not static. They are Miss Mazo de la Roche, author of the novels, shrieking epithets at the CBC, the director, and everyone else connected with the mutilation of her manuscripts.

Perhaps the most appalling aspect of the whole dreary business is that the CBC has actually sold the series to some retarded

British network, on the understanding that it (the CBC) will produce another 13 episodes in the series.

This is not just flogging a dead horse. It is giving castor oil to someone who is dying of dysentery.

You may have picked up the mis-conception that I don't like the Jalna series. Quite wrong. I love it. It's the best comedy mystery hour on the air.

Mind you, the comedy is of the black variety. It's rather like making jokes as the British Empire, on which the sun never set, sinks slowly into the sunset.

But the mystery, though there is obviously no solution, is fascinating. Sorting out the characters alone is more fun than reading a Russian novel.

Who is married to whom? Why? When? Which are brothers, which cousins? Is Rennie's second wife Eden's first mistress? When is Rennie going to get a new nightgown?

The ramifications are endless. And hopeless. It's a soap opera with a schizophrenic at the helm.

I wish they'd sell the dam' estate and put Gran in a nursing home, and give Ed Sullivan a ring.



by Hartley Coles

COLES' SLAW

This is the last episode in the months' long commentary about this fuzzy-faced fella's two week long trip to Florida, with a side excursion to the Bahamas.

One close acquaintance, remarking on the length of the series, noted he was glad I never stayed away a month since I had already written 10 volumes from a piffling two weeks tour to places most people had seen, anyway.

Another lady said she never read anything about the trip because she thought this was a cooking column with a name like Coles Slaw. Well, it is true I do a bit of cooking now and then, but few people care to comment on the quality of the food.

Anyway, as you will remember, last week we left the Miami docks with the car headed for northern Florida and home with not the foggiest notion where we would lay our heads. We struck out for the border but the infernal heat slowed us down so we only got as far as Melbourne the first day where a Holiday Inn with a swimming pool proved too cool an attraction to be avoided.

Melbourne, if you don't know, is just off the coast and one of the main centres close to Cape Kennedy, home of the space shot. But after a couple of weeks in that heat we weren't particularly enthused about seeing anyone take off for the moon or prepare for it, so we avoided the space centre, content to lay heads in a bed which didn't rock (after four nights on a ship.)

We were greeted in the motel lobby by a distinctly Canadian voice, seemingly

genuinely pleased to see some real Canucks. She was the desk clerk, fed up with Florida, its heat, soggy weather and large bugs, which she said only ceased to fly around for a few days each season.

The lady came from Winnipeg, surely one of the coldest spots outside the Arctic, but she said she would trade the Winnipeg climate any day for that of the sunshine state. Her husband moved to Florida to work as a scientist at the Space Centre and she took a part-time job at the motel to while away the sunshine, which everyone tried to escape from in air-conditioned rooms.

"Worst mistake we ever made, coming here," she said.

Nonetheless, a short trip into the city proved it to be a very clean looking centre with polite people.

The next morning we were up early and heading for South Carolina where we hoped to reach Myrtle Beach. Most of the trip was over two lane highways clogged with slow moving traffic but we travelled the distance and arrived at the beach around six in the evening where we immediately jumped into the ocean. The sunshine of the past few days cooled off under the influence of some rain and by the time we started out for Washington the next day it was warm again.

Some tire trouble slowed the safari up in North Carolina and we didn't quite make the U.S. capital. Instead we bunked in Fredricksburg, a small town in Virginia, 60 or 70 miles below the Potomac. I'd been

there before nosing around civil war relics but we were content this time to eat and arise early the next day to start the last leg of the journey through Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York.

We made good time the next day until we tried to go in and out of a small city on the west side of Washington and got hopelessly lost about five times, which developed into 42 arguments about direction. The station wagon finally found its own way back by itself and north of Pittsburgh we decided to take the short cut through the mountains since it was a glorious autumn day and the colors on the hills were running riot.

Five hours later we emerged near Buffalo soaked in color but dizzy with turns and curves through those hills and Pennsylvania coal towns.

Crossed the border at Buffalo meeting Michael Rafferty there, a former Acton resident who was stationed on the bridge as a customs official, since transferred to Toronto on immigration.

The first thing to greet us in Canada was dense, pea soup fog which persisted right along the Queen Elizabeth. We stopped at Burlington for some Chinese food and came home anyway, glad to be back and agreeing with whoever wrote that old song about there being no place like home—be it ever so humble.

Free Press Editorial Page

Not such a "crazy" idea . . .

Despite detractors, the Acton bid for a Grey Cup has more merit than most people are aware.

For most it was a bid for some unattainable goal with a facetious twist that left the country smiling. And it was — partly!

However, let's not forget Acton has a lot to offer as a centre for any sports facility.

This town is in the geographical centre of a population running around the three million mark. There is plenty of land available and it is within easy commuting distance from cities with plenty of accommodation.

We say this with tongue in cheek, but it would be easier for a sports fan in Hamilton to drive to a game in Acton than to fight Toronto's formidable traffic. It would probably be more convenient for someone in Metro Toronto's east end to reach Acton than it would be to attend a game at Exhibition Park.

The old idea that sports arenas or other large attractions must be in a city centre has been discredited. Large cities in the United States and Europe have already built ball parks, football stadiums and mammoth new sports complexes well beyond metropolitan centres.

Getting away from city centres and attendant heavy traffic hasn't hurt attendance. Fans appreciate the opportunity to flee the smog and smoke.

The day may come when the Toronto Maple Leafs or Toronto Argonauts — or the Hamilton Tiger Cats — play home games well away from city centres, in choice locations with plenty of open spaces.

It sure doesn't hurt to get a bid in early.

Remember when some people laughed at the idea of a large race track at Campbellville?

Olympic double standards . . .

Anyone naive enough to believe that everyone involved with sports is a sportsman, or that as something done for self-satisfaction and entertainment, sports in general are not the deadly serious business that say, politics or world finance are, could not have been watching the antics of the International Olympic Committee in Sapporo, Japan.

Headed by Avery Brundage, the 84-year-old anachronism who has threatened to disrupt Olympic games, summer and winter, for the past decade or so, the IOC proved itself worthy of its laughing-stock image when it denounced a lone Austrian skier, Karl Schranz, in order to save face.

Accused of cashing in on his excellence in his chosen field of sport, Schranz was drummed out of the games without so much as a hearing. Of course he was guilty according to the written word of the Olympic code; but then so is just about every other athlete competing at Sapporo.

The only difference between the Austrian skier and any member of the Canadian ski team is that Schranz was paid individually for his advertising while Canadians receive support as a member of the national ski team—and he was paid much more handsomely. But the fact remains in the real world of global competition and costly equipment and travel, not to mention the necessity of eating while training,

such a saint as a Simon pure athlete cannot live—unless he happens to be a millionaire.

Canada pulled out of world hockey competition because it could not tolerate the double standards of professional and amateur status. Had it not been for the fact it would have financially ruined the city of Sapporo, in order to force the issue, it would have been best for every ski team at this winter's Olympics to have withdrawn en masse.

As it stands, the future of the 1976 winter games is very much in doubt.

The half-truths and double standards being perpetrated by Brundage and the IOC are not beneficial to the Olympics or sports in general. To the common man, the only person involved in last week's pre-Olympic exhibition making much sense was the ousted Schranz when he told the world's press that nineteenth century attitudes favoring rich competitors over poor ones, could no longer apply.

Now until Mr. Brundage is forced to retire and the remainder of the IOC see the light, we will be faced with the spectacle of skiers, skaters, runners, etc. walking around with manufacturer's names carefully inked or taped out on their equipment and state supported athletes allowed to compete with those who must drum up their own

support. How ridiculous can you get?—(The Listowel Banner.)

Short comment

Speaking at the opening of the new nuclear powered generating plant at Pickering, Premier William Davis pointed out to all some ingenious "firsts" Canadians have bestowed on the world. "Our firsts over the years have included the discovery of insulin, and the invention of such things as the first television camera, the electro-microscope, the washing machine as well as Pabulum and Instant Mashed Potatoes," Mr. Davis said, probably choking on the last two.

We go along unreservedly with the Silverwood Women's Institute and Mr. S. G. Bennett in their attempts to retain that wedge-shaped piece of land at Silvercreek as a roadside park. Highway 7's re-direction left the former picnic spot stranded and really only accessible from Halton Road 3, formerly the Seventh Line. The land is an Esqueving oasis.

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, March 6, 1952

Mayor Rachlin announced that work on the sewage disposal plant on the third line east of Acton began.

Alan Leishman, who is with the Ontario Provincial Police, has been transferred from Barrie to Huntsville. Friends gathered at the home of Mrs. Cam Leishman, Mill St., and presented Mrs. Leishman with an aluminum tray and her mother Mrs. Guy with a brooch.

Two chartered buses took 30 couples to the Brant Inn, Burlington, last Friday evening for the fifth annual party of Baxter Laboratories. Special guests of the honor were the new accountant and his wife, Gerry and Betty Candler.

About 150 ladies joined in the World Day of Prayer service held in the Baptist church last Friday. Leader was Mrs. S. Cripps and Miss Nellie Anderson, returned missionary from South America, spoke. Prayers were given by Mrs. R. H. Armstrong, Mrs. V. Bristow, Mrs. A. T. Brown, Mrs. Ethel Hanna and Mrs. S. Snow. Miss Ethel Franklin played the organ and Mrs. John Davidson sang. Mrs. H. Helwig and Mrs. L. McCutcheon were ushers. In charge of the service were Mrs. Wm. Denny, Miss M. Z. Bennett and Mrs. H. Mainprize.

A practising physician for over a quarter of a century Dr. J. A. McNiven passed away on Sunday in London. He was 87 years old. He left Acton when he retired in 1942 and was succeeded by Dr. W. G. C. Kenney. He came to Acton in 1919 from Oakville. We have often thought of him as typical of that picture "The Family Doctor" that hung in his office. No matter what the time of day or night or the weather he made his way to the bedside of his patients. When he came the motor car was of no use for winter travel and many the lonesome trip he made to reach those who required his attention. His friendly guidance and counsel were sought as well as medical advice.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, March 2, 1922

A couple of weeks ago the Free Press advertised for a stenographer and bookkeeper and ten bright young Acton girls

applied. Miss Laura MacDonald has been engaged in the position.

Miss Annie McCaw and Mr. Sockett of Nassagaweya were married a week ago. Miss Mary McCaw of Crewsons Corners attended the wedding.

Last week's storm was serious for Oakville. For three days the town was without power, light and water. The water famine was serious. Acton is fortunate in having an auxiliary gasoline pumping plant.

Miss Bessie Woodhall spent a few days this week at the home of Inspector Stewart, Milton.

Ad — Palmistry and Phrenology — Madame Melba, noted as one of the best exponents of these sciences will be at the Station Hotel, Tuesday to Friday, Feb. 28 to March 3. Gives accurate and scientific advice on all matters pertaining to business, health, investments and adaptability in life, marriage, etc.

Misses Nellie Hall, Margaret Grindell and Master Maurice Starkman were the lucky ones in the prize contest at the

matinee Saturday in guessing the number of beans.

The dear little, sweet little shamrock will be on deck in a couple of weeks.

Toronto subscribers write their papers are delivered regularly on Fridays. (50 years ago the Free Press was mailed out Thursday afternoons.)

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, March 11, 1897

Guelph's city treasurer's books are again in a muddle and an expert is being called in to put them right.

The skating rink business is over for the present season.

According to the last report of the inspector of county prisons there were 312 commitments to Halton gaol last year. Of these but four were women. Of the number 251 were discharged without trial; they were tramps and vagrants. 285 were returned as interperate.

Mr. H. Grindell is getting in the machinery for his new machine shops and when the new building is up will have everything in readiness.

To hear the talk in some quarters about going to Rossland to shovel gold and to the Northwest to harvest what by the thousand bushels, a big exodus from Acton might be expected within the next few weeks.

Guelph now has three one-cent daily newspapers.

The rumor is again current that a project is on foot for the erection of a new Baptist church here and that subscriptions are being solicited.

Officer Graham reports frequent guests at the town hall dormitories. They have been more than usual the past winter, owing perhaps to the cells being comfortably warmer now.

The Oakville Star labels our young ladies in a stanza Burlington girls are neat and sweet; Acton girls have large-sized feet. If the fair young man of the Star comes to Acton again he will not only take his own large-sized feet home with him but a pair of very large-sized ears as well.

War clouds hang heavy over Greece and Turkey.

THE ACTON FREE PRESS
PHONE 853-2010
Business and Editorial Office

Founded in 1915 and published every Wednesday at 59 W. How St., Acton, Ontario. Member of the 2nd District Bureau of Circulation, the C.W.N.A. and O.N.A. Advertising rates on request. Subscriptions payable in advance \$4.00 in Canada, \$5.00 in all countries other than Canada. Single copy 15 cents. Second class mail registration number 0315. Advertising is accepted on the condition that in the event of typographical error, that portion of the advertising space occupied by the erroneous item, together with reasonable allowance for signature, will not be charged for but the balance of the advertisement will be paid for at the applicable rate. In the event of a typographical error, 5000 or more words of services at a wrong price, 5000 or more words may not be sold. Advertising is made available to sell, and may be withdrawn at any time.

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