



Winter visitor

Winter struck swift, sure and without mercy this year. Five days before Christmas we'd had about two feet of snow in these parts, along with the usual combination of blizzard-force winds and a generous sprinkling of freezing rain.

Today, with my driveway plugged again and my sidewalk drifted in a foot deep, and myself still nursing a deep cold contracted two months ago, I'd be just as happy if somebody marched me out, stood me with my back against the garage, and shot me, right under the flower-box.

It was a pretty uncheery holiday at our place. It wasn't planned; it just turned out that way. I'd bought the usual pair of trees, a spruce and a Scotch pine. Too sick to put them up and they sat by the back door, solitary, covered with snow and ice.

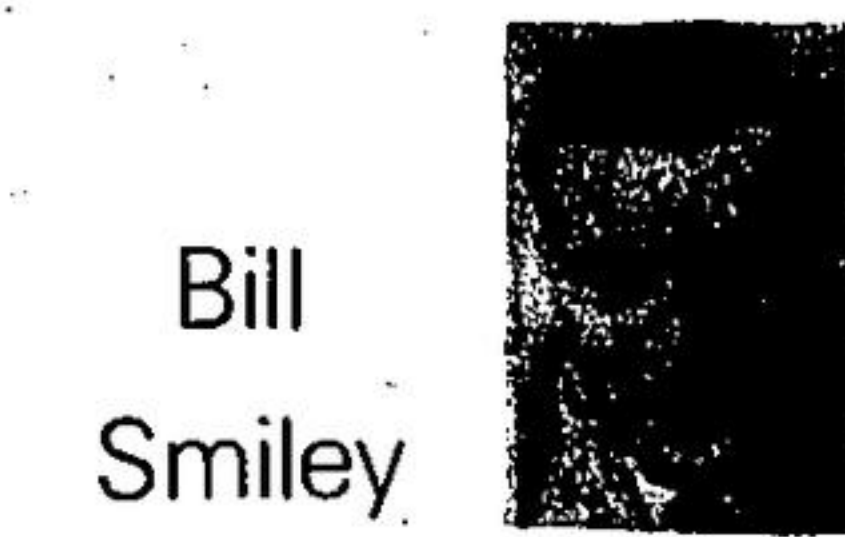
The Old Lady caught her second round of flu and just didn't feel like coping with family decorations and the whole Christmas scramble. She was even too sick to lash me on to greater heights, which is mighty sick. We had hamburg for our festive dinner.

Missed three holiday parties and had to cancel our own. Didn't even get out to church.

Thought desperately of fleeing the whole thing, going to Montreal to spend Christmas with number one son, and eating out. Couldn't get a plane or train ticket and didn't feel up to driving.

Thought even more desperately of fleeing south, whatever the cost. Same thing. No seats.

Didn't get our cards started, let alone finished. Didn't get the wreath of holly on



Bill Smiley

the door, or the mistletoe up. In fact, you name it, and we didn't get it done.

This is a solemn warning to whoever is in charge of things. If they don't get better smartly in 1973, there's going to be trouble.

I've been through two rounds of antibiotics and about 300 pounds of calcium tablets, in an effort to shift my cold. It worked. I shifted it from my head to my chest and back again and now it's penetrated as far as my big toe.

My, this IS a dreary little recital of woe, isn't it? Come on, Bill, surely something remotely pleasant happened.

Well, yes. We did enjoy getting cards from all the old friends. It's good to know that not everybody has one foot, both physically and mentally, on the edge of the grave.

And there is the cheering thought that everything has no place to go but up. Lucky that came out spelled right. Typed it with all my fingers crossed.

And there is one thing to hang on for. We're going to go south for a week in March

and try to make the sun and the rum put some life back into the reluctant bones.

There will probably be a revolution on our Caribbean island the week we're there. But I don't care. By March I'll probably be quite happy to be planted under a palm tree, even if it's permanent. It's a better way to go than a snow-shovelling heart attack, or getting lost in a blizzard between the house and garage and being frozen to death.

Even the calendar conspired this year. School teachers can usually count on a week's holiday to recharge the batteries before plunging back into the long winter term. Wouldn't you know it? This year, with Christmas and New Year falling on Monday, we got exactly three days of holiday, aside from the legal ones. I know what you're saying. "Eat your heart out, teach."

Oh, well, you can't win them all, and I've won some good ones. I do admit that I'm feeling a bit like Job except for the boils. But then, of course, my hemorrhoids are acting up, so we're even.

I guess, until we see what 1973 has in store, we'll just have to go around muttering things like: "Hang in there, kid" and "Keep the faith, baby" and "We shall overcome" and "Next year, Jerusalem."

There's no use complaining, is there? Especially when you've already been doing so for some six hundred words.

Whatever befalls me and mine, I want to end rotten old 1972, which seemed eight years long, by thanking all the readers who sent cards and letters during the year, and wishing all readers a great big, beautiful year to come, with unexpected pleasant surprises and lotsa luck with the tax collectors.

He wore a boyish grin and bow tie

It is significant perhaps that while the attention of the world was focussed on the death and obsequies for former U.S. president Harry Truman, Lester Bowles Pearson died quietly at his Ottawa home.

"Mike" Pearson, as he was known to close friends and associates, was never ostentatious while he lived. Somehow it seemed typical that he should slip away from us while attention was focussed elsewhere.

His boyish grin and bow tie were trade marks of one of the world's most accomplished diplomats but it was obvious when he served as prime minister of Canada that many never really understood him.

He introduced the new Canadian flag in a flurry of controversy that saw ultra-loyalists label him a traitor for daring to give Canadians something with which everyone could identify.

He tightwalked through some tumultuous years in Ottawa, never seeming to be strong, seemingly losing battles, but emerging on top in the end, to the chagrin of many opponents.

Lester Pearson looked and acted like the guy next door. It was perhaps this quality which endeared him most to Canadians but at the same time made them less appreciative of the tremendous talents he possessed.

If he had been more physically prepossessing, been endowed with oratorical powers, his road might have been less arduous. But Mike Pearson liked baseball, talked with a lisp, looked ordinary, took on no haughty airs.

While Canadians appreciated these facets of his character, they overlooked many of his finer points which really motivated his life.

It was Mike Pearson who first recognized that Quebecers could never really be at home in Canada while French was reduced to a minor role in Government circles. It was he, not Pierre Trudeau, who introduced the bilingual measures, which are still rocking the country. He did this because he believed in it.

You remember when the Canadian flag was being introduced? Pearson

walked right into a hostile Winnipeg Canadian Legion meeting and told veterans the reasons he favored a distinctive Canadian flag. He could have avoided that meeting. No one would have blamed him. But he was a veteran - and proud of it. He wanted his views known. He showed courage and courtesy in the face of provocation, all the time preserving his sense of humor.

Mike Pearson won the Nobel peace prize for his efforts in solving the Suez Canal debacle, when Britain and France resorted to some of the old gun boat diplomacy which was fashionable in the 18th century. Mike Pearson, the boy next door who had a distinguished academic career, showed Britain and France how to bow out of the dilemma - and save face. He preserved peace in the face of a powder keg that could have ignited another world war.

They buried Mike Pearson on Sunday in a little cemetery while freezing rain pelted down.

Only a few people watched as his remains were interred but many Canadians were there in spirit.

Farmers have it 'upstairs'

An editorial writer in the Fergus News Record, John Marshall, points out that the well worn opinion among city people about rural people being slow and unprogressive is a legend that has no basis in fact.

City slickers think of themselves as the epitome of efficiency, he says, but in truth the farmers are far and away the most proficient in increasing production. In the past decade Ontario farmers have increased output per man hour by 6.8 per cent. Non-farm industries have increased by only three per cent.

Farmers have been able to achieve this through the transition from horse and plow operations to big, fast tractor equipment, use of fertilizers, weed killers, etc. But other industries also have new equipment and methods including the use of computers, which do away with many man hours. The explanation for the rural-urban discrepancy involves much more than machinery.

Although vast technological knowledge, managerial skills and highly trained workmen has been

available to secondary industry it is the farmers who have been able to boost the production man hour more than twice as fast as the average in other industries. And this has been accomplished despite all the variable such as weather, quality of land and natural disasters.

So just who are the smarter - the fellows sitting at large desks in company offices or the men sitting on tractors in the fields?

The writer concludes it is the latter - and by a two to one margin.

Must examine small town views

A tri-level conference of representatives of the Federal, Provincial and large city governments went on in Toronto recently and we've heard plenty of baloney about the views of various levels.

It's about time such a conference was held, although we could do without all the propaganda that spouts from the mouths of provincial officials at all of these gatherings.

The provincial government people (Charlie MacNaughton in this case) always pretend they are just about destitute and always blame the greedy federal government for the problem. The federal government (they say) scandalously refuses to hand over all

their money to the province. And of course the municipal governments are dependent on the provincial government, whether it is Liberal or Conservative.

At these conferences the municipal people get a chance to hear the federal side of things, and get out of the position of begging to the provincial government. Even cities like Toronto are virtually under the thumb of the provincial government because they depend on grants for nearly all segments of their affairs.

If huge cities are slaves of the province, how much worse is the situation of the small towns and rural municipalities. They don't even have

the weapon of a large population to scare the government. They can only take what Mr. MacNaughton and his buddies deign to handout. And the situation will get worse as the province imposes regional government.

What is needed is a conference similar to the present one, but one to examine the problems of small towns.

Many government people in both the federal and provincial levels think only cities are important, but the future of the small town is immensely important to the province and the country. There are problems that must be examined, and examined soon, before it is too late.

(The Blyth Standard)

Mini-Comment . . .

Wellington County Council, following the lead of people in the area, went on record as being opposed to any large dump being set up in Wellington to contain Toronto's garbage. The township of Minto asked the county's support in objecting to the site. Acton council appointed a special "watch dog" committee to ensure the provincial government does not sneak through a proposal while councils are changing between '72 and '73. People in the county are afraid the provincial government might overrule local by-laws to establish a Toronto dump and they intend to oppose it at any level, as well they might. Toronto, with its enormous resources, surely can solve its own disposal problems without afflicting the surrounding countryside.

official. If everything is above board and reproach, members of councils should have no qualms about releasing results of meetings concerning public business.

Those who were responsible for stealing the half-mast flags at the Acton post office and library are candidates for the dubious honor of

being the meanest thieves of the year (1972). It is unfortunate that the official emblem of the country cannot be displayed in Acton without some sneak thief furtively swiping it, but it's the facts. The flag at the library has not been flown lately because each time a new one is raised someone steals it. A new one was raised to honor Lester Pearson and true to form disappeared.

How do you measure the success of the bus service Acton council sponsored over a 10 day period before Christmas? If numbers mean anything, the fact 2,445 people used the bus indicates success. But how many of these people used the bus to shop in Acton, object of the experiment? No one will ever know but we would hazard a guess the majority of the adult users had this in mind. It is interesting to note that if everyone who used the service was charged 25c one way, the service would have made money. Costs were \$58 a day, which amounts to \$580. If riders paid 25c revenue would have amounted to \$611.25, leaving a small profit. We congratulate members of council for taking the step as a wrinkle to help Acton businessmen and filling a need when the weather was especially inclement.

Safety is respect for one's fellows, being courteous or thoughtful.

Back Issues of The Free Press

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 8, 1953.

Sales of Christmas trees and the profit realized were doubled this year by the Y's Men's Club compared to last year. About 250 trees were sold, from the farm of Mansell Nellis. Doug Manning was in charge.

The highest amount of town taxes ever, \$148,588.65, was collected at the town office during 1952. The number of births registered was 43 and the number of deaths distinctly higher, 52 over 33 the year before.

Don Clayton and Y secretary Bob Redfern, working 27 hours straight, repainted the Y staircase, downstairs hall, games room floor and kitchen floor a smart combination of cream and dark grey. They just paused for hamburgers and tea.

Tom Watson was named chairman at the inaugural meeting of the public school board.

December gold star winners at the Y were Ruth Landsborough and Don Dawkins.

Queen Elizabeth's commendation "for valuable service in the air" has been awarded to Flt. Lt. Robert F. Burn of Hespeler, husband of the former Joan Somerville of Acton. He is one of seven members of the R.C.A.F. and one army sergeant who received the awards for service in the Pacific theatre.

One of Ontario's most forceful premiers, Mitchell Hepburn has passed from the scene.

Placing fourth and ninth in the three mile race at Hamilton on New Year's day, Ed McHugh and Dave Cook were the entries of the Acton Whippet Club. Coaches Andy and Tom Nicol were well pleased.

Skating in the arena has begun for the season.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, December 14, 1922.

It is 50 years this month since Acton Citizens' band was organized. The organization took place on December 12, 1872. The young men who joined the organization were required to pay eight dollars each for the privilege of being enrolled, spending their own time at learning to master the art of producing musical sounds, and securing the possession of an instrument. A popular subscription list of \$100 was raised by our citizens to assist in the organization and purchase of instruments. So far as can be ascertained the following were amongst the first members: John Cameron, John C. Hill, Jacob Dempsey, James Nicklin, Thos. Kennedy, John Hutchison, Andrew Stratton, Charles Maunders, John Winlaw, Harry Gibbons and Dave Lighthouse. Of all these John C. Hill is the only one still a member of the band.

For many years Mr. Hill was bandmaster. He held the institution together and loyally stood by its interests through all these years. Prof. J. W. Davey of Toronto, who had organized bands at Georgetown and Glen Williams, was the first bandmaster. He proved too fond of liquid refreshments of a strong alcoholic content and after compromising the members once or twice when out fulfilling engagements, a deputation of the members called on him and advised him his services were no longer required.

The band was never in a better state of organization than it is for its jubilee year. Mr. Amos Mason, the bandmaster, is bringing the players up to a good state of efficiency and numerous engagements are booked.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 6, 1898.

The Crokinole Club, which has for its object the edification of its members and securing funds for the purchase of a piano for the town hall, has been organized with a working officer.

The annual tea-meeting of Ballinad Methodist church will be Friday evening. Addresses will be given by three clergymen and Mr. H. P. Moore will give a chalk talk.

All report having a good time at the grand assembly at Eden Mills Friday night.

A sleighing party had a ludicrous spill at the corner of Mill and Main S. Tuesday evening.

Now men, let's have the sidewalks cleaned to the planks and kept clean all winter.

Mr. A. McIntyre, who has been teacher at S. S. No. 8 Erin for the past two years, ended his labors here. Wednesday a brief program was given by the scholars. Ernest Near read an address and a presentation was made by Edward Mann and Roy Wansborough.

On Christmas Day the ladies of St. John's church, Brookville, presented their pastor Rev. Strachan with a fine pulpit gown. He wore it on the 26th at the communion service, at which there was the largest attendance in the history of the church.

Twenty-four persons were crushed to death in London, Ontario, when the town hall floor gave way on election night.

A new "Gibson girl" drawn by society artist C. D. Gibson, will make her debut on the cover of Ladies' Home Journal.

Bogus ten cent pieces are circulating freely in Burlington.

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