

## Bill Smiley

It was rather a gloomy end to 1972, with the deaths of scrappy Harry Truman and that fine Canadian, Mike Pearson, and the eternal shootings among the mad Irish, and the earthquake in Nicaragua.

So let's get off on the right foot for the next 12 months with something a little lighter.

Some columnists are smart enough to keep a file of funny or unusual things that happened during the previous year, so that they have a ready-made column just after New Year.

The only funny or unusual thing around our place is my filing system. I just took a look at it, 18 inches high all over my desk, picked up my typewriter and moved to the dining-room table. There's nobody here but us crumblers.

Whereby I decided to pass along some things that I consider amusing, with the hope that you will too. They're not original, and are culled from the centuries.

Here's Stephen Leacock describing an encounter with a pirate ship: "The two ships were brought side by side. They were then lashed tightly together with bag string and binder twine, and a gangplank laid between them. In a moment the pirates swarmed upon our deck, rolling their eyes, gnashing their teeth and filing their nails."

And as he relates the ensuing carnage: "I noticed one gigantic fellow brandishing a knotted towel, and striking right and left among our fellows, until Captain Bilge rushed at him and struck him flat across the mouth with a banana skin."

That's the humor of incongruity. Here's an example of the humor of heartlessness, of which a master was Harry Graham. Try writing some of your own.

The ice upon our pond's so thin  
That poor Marjorie has fallen in  
We cannot reach her from the shore  
Until the surface freezes more.  
Ah me, my heart grows weary waiting —  
Besides, I want to have some skating.

Another of his was:

In the drinking-well  
Which the plumber built her  
Aunt Eliza fell;  
We must buy a filter.

Here's a touch of the ironic. And I'd like to ask my friend Dr. Hackstetter to please note.

"The denunciation of the young is a necessary part of the hygiene of older people, and greatly assists the circulation of their blood."

How about a couple from Ogden Nash, that great humorist in verse. This one's entitled Song Of The Open Road:

I think that I shall never see  
A billboard lovely as a tree.  
Indeed, unless the billboards fall,  
I'll never see a tree at all.

That's typically American in theme and content, but here's a little couplet of his that is symbolic and universal:

If you hear the scream of a panther  
Don't answer.

I can't resist one more Ogden Nash, and if you haven't read him, buy a copy. This is called Reflections On Ice-Breaking.

Candy  
Is dandy  
But liquor  
Is quicker.

Then, of course, there's the epigram, a very brief witty observation. Its master was Oscar Wilde, who came to a bad end, in more ways than one. But our sample will be from Hilaire Belloc. Entitled On His Books.

When I am dead, I hope it may be said:  
His sins were scarlet, but his books were read.

Isn't that a nice example of the pun, as well as saying in two lines something about the monstrous pride of the writer?

Here's another by Belloc. It's called, simply, Epitaph On My Wife:

Here lies my wife,  
Here lies she,  
Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah!

Then there is the limerick. Some of the funniest (and foulest) verses in the language are found in this form. But this is simply clever, or cleverly simple.

The bottle of perfume that Willie sent  
Was highly displeasing to Millicent;  
Her thanks were so cold  
They quarrelled, I'm told  
Through that silly scent Willie sent  
Millicent.

The fine art of satire has fallen into lethargy these days, except perhaps among political cartoonists, where it is often merely cruel, rather than witty. But the Roman satirist, Martial, wrote a verse that is just as modern as it was 2,000 years ago.

The golden hair Fabulla wears  
Is hers. Who can deny it?  
She swears 'tis hers, and true she swears  
For I did see her buy it.

Many Canadians tend to take life very seriously. I hope these samples, 90 per cent of which were taken from school texts, will help dispel that preoccupation. So, whether your troubles are kids, or parents, or old people, or unrequited love, remember, you have only one life. And this is it. Enjoy.



SNOW DRIFTS along fence lines form ever-changing abstract shapes as wind whips the fluffy stuff into bigger and bigger mounds. These drifts are along parts of Hwy. 25 exposed to the wind.

(Photo by J. Jennings)

## Mini-Comment . . .

The new minister responsible for liquor laws in Ontario said he couldn't recall ever seeing anyone really suffering from the consumption of alcohol in Europe. He was explaining why he wants to relax rules in Ontario. Mr. Clement must have missed the French government commission study on alcoholism which reported that drinking kills 30,000 Frenchmen a year, the nation's most frequent cause of death, and the highest alcoholism rate in the world.

Much of the confusion about planning over the past few years may be cleaned up when plans for the Halton region are unveiled January 23 in Hamilton. It seems likely Burlington will stay with Halton, but the burning question now is whether Milton will get its own way regarding a central borough, rather than the three borough system favored by the other six Halton municipalities. If the four borough system is favored at Queen's Park, it could also mean the new region could extend into Wellington County, possibly encompassing Erin and Eramosa townships, ostensibly to make up for the assessment plums a Milton-centred borough would pluck from Nassagaweya and Esquesing.

A computer will likely be used to select the best overall route for the proposed 140-mile high voltage power line to run across Southern Ontario from Pickering to Nanticoke, the consultant hired to find a route least damaging to the ecology has said. In the meeting with the public concerned over the line, Bruce Howlett also showed slides and models of possible tower designs which could be used along the route but apparently they aroused little enthusiasm. We wish Mr. Howlett every success in this venture which will never please everyone but certainly will avoid many of the mistakes the original preferred route encompassed. Howlett has said communications with the people in planning the route is essential, and he's doing his darndest to get it.

Now that Anne MacArthur has officially elected Warden of Halton it might be branded another victory for Women's Liberation by those who can see only a few inches beyond their nose, but in reality it is a tribute to a tireless campaigner who has shown an astuteness in political life that many men envy. Mrs. MacArthur has often seen through the motives of these with

selfish interests and unhesitatingly spoke her mind on the subject. This does not always win you friends but certainly has gained the "Voice of the North" plenty of respect in political circles. It is quite possible Mrs. MacArthur will be the last warden of Halton as we know it, and we know she will do her best to make it a memorable year.

It is interesting to note that Acton reeve G. W. McKenzie has been appointed to roads and administration committees of Halton County Council while the deputy reeve Peter Marks has been appointed to community services and Halton Manor committees, areas in which he has always shown an interest. Esquesing reeve Tom Hill is chairman of the roads committee and is also on community services. Deputy reeve Len Cox is on administration and Manor as well as regional government committees. Nassagaweya deputy J. Watson has been appointed to community services and the Manor. The north-end of the county has a good representation that certainly allows for ample voice for northern concerns and do doubt they will exercise their authority with fairness to all parts of the county.

One of Acton's beefs about the county government in past years has been the noticeable lack of county-controlled roads in the area while places such as Georgetown and Milton have had many of their most travelled routes financed by the county. Maple Avenue in Georgetown, for instance, was taken over by the county as a connecting link while Steeles Avenue runs through Milton. The closest Acton has come to getting any of the money put into roads as been 25 Sideroad which connects the Guelph Line with 25 Highway, an unlikely benefit to many, but the only major artery in the area which qualified under the present criteria. Council has discussed possible routes but so far has been unsuccessful. Perhaps when regional government does arrive some of these inequities will be corrected.

Obviously there is a lack of suitable places for snowmobilers to run their machines and the problem will increase as the number of machines in operation increases. We have heard rumbles about a plan involving a co-operative farm venture that would open fields and laneways to snowmobiles at a slight charge and modest profit to farmers. It sounds like a good idea.

## Far away fields look greener

We were interested in the poll conducted at Acton high school asking if students would want to continue living in or around Acton after they have finished their education.

Twenty-two students were polled. Twelve said they would leave, seven said they would definitely stay in the area, and three would like to go off exploring for a while before returning to settle in the district.

In spite of the gloomy attitude of a few students we thought those who opted to stay in the town and district was a very high average. Most students attending high school when this writer went couldn't wait to wipe dust of Acton from their feet, figuring those far away fields were certainly greener.

Many of them left the old home town to discover the greener fields were right at home, although sometimes the opportunities were not.

In many cases, they returned much more satisfied with their lot in life.

The good thing about expressions of opinions like those expressed in the poll is that education opens many doors which were closed to the students of a

few years ago. They can dream of bigger things and have the option of going ahead with them, whereas the students of other decades were limited due to financial and other reasons.

Certainly, a small town such as Acton does not have opportunities for advancement in a career that larger centres have. Openings to bigger and better jobs are limited. However, there are compensating factors which those from larger centres are finding more and more attractive, as the migration from city to town and country indicates.

Those who pursue an education are going to go where the opportunities exist. And what is wrong with that? The day is long past when thinking limited a person to a small, narrow minded area. It is no longer necessary for a rural resident to be enclosed in a little world. He has as many opportunities as his city brethren to expand mind and locale, thanks to rapid transportation techniques.

We don't have to be sold on the merits of living in a small town on the periphery of the large cities. Actually

residents can have the best of both worlds without having to endure the traffic, congestion and noise common to most large centres.

Actonians, for instance, can often travel to the heart of Toronto faster than those living in the confines of Metro. This opens up opportunities which never existed a few years ago.

For those who think these opinions are out in left field, we point to the convincing arguments of those who do move to this district from the city—that things be left as they are.

They don't want the small towns and townships to change. They recognize the difference between the tinselly, artificially created environment of the city, as compared to the natural, less hectic atmosphere of small town and country living.

No doubt, some of the discontented students will change their minds as they tuck years of experience under their belts, but we think it is important they have the opportunity to make up their own minds.

## Free Press / Editorial Page

4 The Acton Free Press, Wednesday, January 17, 1973

## Express annoyance in ballot box

It seems that in the political field any stick is good enough to beat the dog.

In recent months, says the St. Mary's Journal Argus, accusation has followed accusation regarding the conflict of interest theme in the province. But like over-eating, over-drinking and over-smoking the extent of the criticism should be kept relevant to the facts, applying some measure of common sense.

The latest member of the provincial House to come under such criticism is the member for Middlesex, Wm. A. Stewart, Minister of Agriculture. The Journal-Argus says that while it does appear Mr. Stewart showed a little poor judgment in seeking grants to help pay for a new silo and a new cattle barn, there was nothing even slightly illegal in his seeking either grants.

A charge of a somewhat similar nature resulted in the loss of another able minister, Darcy McKeough, when he chose to resign his cabinet post.

The big danger faced by the general public from this political furor raised by conflict of interest charges is that able men may well stay out of the political scene because often the type of man we want running this country is the same type who has his own particular brand of enterprise in a successful manner. Over-enthusiasm in this type of witch-hunting may very well be forestalling this type of man's entrance into politics, the Journal-Argus opines.

We couldn't agree more. Let's save criticism and censure for those who deserve it, and cease the nitpicking which in the past has turned molehills into mountains for want of something better with which to beat the "dog". By all means, keep eyes open and senses alert for wrongdoers and evidence of bribery in government. When these are not available, why stoop to petty vendettas?

The time to hit the Government is when there is very strong evidence of political skulduggery such as the

recent Fidinam case, which has not yet been cleared up to anyone's satisfaction, except the coterie at Queen's Park.

Many of the cases which have appeared in recent months are much like the story told by William Lyon Phelps where the captain of a ship entered in his log, "First mate was drunk today."

When the mate became sober, he pleaded with the captain to strike out the record, declaring he had never been drunk before, and promising it would never happen again. But the captain was adamant.

"In this log we always write the exact truth," he said.

The next week the first mate kept the log.

In it he wrote, "Captain was sober today."

Often the truth as we know it does not convey the entire story.

In this writer's judgment the best place to express annoyance with Government is the ballot box.

## Back Issues of The Free Press

### 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, January 22, 1953.

During the opening ceremonies and administration of the oath of office to the new Warden of Halton county council last Tuesday, retiring Warden Joseph Wickson presented the warden for 1953, George Leslie of Esquesing, with his gavel. Warden Leslie has been a member of county council for the past three years and Esquesing council for seven years.

Acton High School annual At Home was staged in Acton public school auditorium Friday. About 160 students, parents and citizens attended. Helping plan the event were student council secretary Arlene Gordon, vice president Marjorie Warner, president Fred Gordon and treasurer Kathleen Stanley.

The fire truck was the only vehicle able to climb the treacherous slippery hill on Frederick St. when at 12.30 a.m. Sunday morning the fire siren summoned the brigade to the blazing bunkhouse at the foot of the hill. The unoccupied building was gutted by the flames. An amount of upper leather had been stored there. Beardmore's have no plans for rebuilding.

Distinctively Canadian arts and crafts were encouraged by Thor Hansen, who came from Denmark to Canada 23 years ago, when he spoke to the Home and School Association. He illustrated his talk with slides of quilt designs and needlepoint and interior decoration he had supervised.

Dr. Henry Gear, who gave most of his life to looking after the sick and suffering in Erin district, has died. He was one of the doctors who practiced the hard way in horse and buggy days, and he was always ready and willing any hour of the day or night. In some families he served three generations. Last week 43 girls and 36 boys went to Guelph to swim.

Bernie Freuler won a Hopalong Cassidy gun-belt and holster from the Milko Company in a draw on their radio show.

### 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 11, 1923.

The Free Press recommends the teaching of music in the public schools.

Music is a great accomplishment, a protection against vice and an excitement to virtue. Music makes home attractive with an inspiring intellectual and moral effect.

A number of farmers' wives and daughters gathered at the home of Mrs. Bert Davidson last Thursday and organized a United Farmers' Women of Ontario Association.

The matter of punchboards seized from Acton dealers a week or so ago has been referred to the Attorney-General's department. Dealers had gone into the transaction through misinformation. The punchboards were confiscated but the stocks of chocolates were surrendered to their owners. The operation of these devices is gambling, pure and simple, and a violation of the Criminal Code.

W. D. Robertson, Trafalgar, is suing the Hydro Commission of the township for \$5,000 for alleged injury to his property by the mutilation of trees on the front of his farm. Mr. Robertson was visiting in California when the trees were "trimmed".

Robins, meadow larks and cranes have

made their presence known in Halton county during the last few days, the larks near Acton, the cranes at Georgetown and the robins near Oakville.

It is many a day since Acton received such a shock as that of last Thursday when the news came up from the works of Acton Tanning Company that "Billy" James had been instantly killed.

In order to preserve the dignity of the office, members of Hanover council will not smoke during meetings.

How times change. In days of old, when knights were bold, the maids were not.

### 75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 26, 1898.

Since the destructive fire which annihilated the long established woollen business of Jack Newton and Son about five years ago, Limehouse has been free from fires. Yesterday morning, however, the devouring flames again visited us. The store and residence occupied by N. Brown were totally destroyed.

The carnival at Rockwood Saturday night was quite a success. There were prizes for the best costumes.

Rev. T. J. Sabine was the recipient of a fine young horse as a New Year's gift from his friends on the Drew circuit.

Morgan Crewson of Crewsons Corners is engaged in drilling a rock well. His new steam drilling machine is far superior to the old horse-power drill and a good deal less expensive.

Mr. J. J. Lawson has secured the right for the manufacture and sale of a new clothes reel, very neat in appearance. It will simplify the work of the housewife.

Dr. A. S. Elliott was appointed Medical Officer of Health for the town for the year, at a salary of \$15.

The by-law establishing a Free Library was finally passed by council.

Council re-appointed W. R. Kenney to the board of health. Other members are the reeve, the clerk, Messrs. H. P. Moore and Robt. Wallace. A meeting was held last week. Some uneasiness has been felt by parents because of the appearance of scarlet fever in some families. The Medical Officer of Health said every precaution is being taken in the interests of public safety. Complaints of nuisances will be dealt with.

Tuesday night's blizzard was old-fashioned enough for anyone.

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