

Bill Smiley

There are still a few of the old breed left, thank goodness. And one of them is my friend Ab Cordingley.

Received a letter from him this week, and, as with everything he says and writes, it was right to the point. He doesn't waste any words. The letter ends thus "Hope U R OK."

He told me bluntly that he still reads this column and "Sometimes think U R OK, sometimes off base." He never had any hesitation in telling me what was wrong with my line of thought. To my face.

I remember the last time we went trout fishing together. I was to pick him up at 8.30 a.m. or some such hour, and have breakfast with him. I arrived at a quarter to six and he gave me hell. Then he forced me, a coffee-and-toast man, to shovel down a huge breakfast of bacon and eggs, enough for a logger, which he had ready.

We had a good day. I got thirteen speckles and a brown and he filled his creel. The only untoward incident in the morning's fishing was when he stepped into a boghole, fell flat on his face and hit his head on a rotten stump.

"Dam' good thing I had my hat on," he quipped, looking ruefully at his cigar, which had been mashed in the fall. Of course, he was just a spring chicken then, at the height of his faculties. He was only 80 years old.

We knocked off for lunch. I was glad. I was pooped. I pulled out my two meagre sandwiches, and Ab hauled out a lunch that would stagger a truck driver. He forced apples and bananas and great hunks of cheese on me until it was coming out my ears.

I thought, "I'll fix the old devil." I'd brought two beers along. I knew he was teetotal. It was a hot day, and the beer was the color and temperature of you-know-what. Offered him one. He was not only a teetotaler but a gentleman. He took it, drank down the gaseous horror, and said calmly, "Haven't had a beer in 20-30 years."

A couple of years later, we became across-the-street neighbors. One evening a few months later, about 10 p.m., there was a banging on our kitchen door. It was Ab.

"Call the fire brigade, Smiley. The dam' house is on fire." He had his pants pulled over his flannel pyjamas, and was in his bare feet. Had been going to bed.

"That gravel is hell on the feet," he observed, while I reached for the phone. The road between us was paved in gravel. Try running across it in your bare feet, at 82.

I got the fire brigade, and told them it was Ab Cordingley's house, and hung up. In a small town you don't give addresses, you just say whose house it is. Unfortunately, the fire brigade went to Ab's old house and dithered about for ten minutes before someone remembered he'd moved.

Unaware of this, we two hustled across the street and started carrying out of the house such valuables as potted plants, old pictures worth about 75c on the open market.

We'd been doing this for about five minutes when Ab stopped at the bottom of the stairs and yelled up, "Dammit, Annie, I told you to get down here." The flames were roaring in the roof by now. I realized with horror that his wife, who had bad legs and trouble walking, was still up there.

Then the fire brigade arrived, and soon confusion became chaos. We got his wife over to our house and into a hot cup of tea. Ab nipped around like a 12-year-old, telling people what to carry out and driving kids back from the flames. I got our kids out of bed, so that they could watch something they'd remember all their lives—a fine old house going up in a glorious pyre of blaze and smoke. There's something heart-wrenching and at the same time thrilling in such a sight.

Many people of 82 would have been utterly daunted by such a set-back. Not Ab. He'd have been more disturbed if the Tories had lost a by-election.

Quite a guy. He's 83 or 94 now, and still



Eramosa cauldron (Photo by J. Jennings)

The flu and the lamp

They propped me up between the sheets,
And poured the drug store down,
With watery eyes, and profane cries;
They wanted me to drown.

Then finally they went away,
And left me there to rest,
A battered heap, I could not sleep,
I spied the cedar chest.

I raised my head, then cleared the bed,
And raised the fancy lid,
I felt around, until I found,
The "Aladdin's lamp" I'd hid.

I clutched it to my bosom,
Then tucked it 'neath my gown,
Hearing them talk, I unscrewed the cork,
And poured a little down.

Pretty soon I felt so good,
There was no "flu" left to fight,
My "Genie" cheered, then disappeared,
And took me on a flight.

I danced with all the pretty girls,
I'd never seen before,
I got a "cramp" and dropped my lamp,
And it rolled across the floor.

Then came a big commotion,
They took my lamp away,
Then left me bare without a chair,
And tied me down to stay.

I am now back with the living,
Through the "Jungle" I must tramp,
I owe a lot to what "Genie's" got,
In my "ALADDIN'S LAMP."

Victor Smith
R.R. 2, Rockwood.

has a mind that would make many 15-year-olds look senile. He's a walking encyclopedia. He doesn't pretend to be an intellectual, but has read thousands of books and can still recite poetry he learned in public school.

He's everything you're not supposed to be these days. He's prejudiced. He's 100 per cent opposed to Grills, booze and laziness. He believes in hard work, making money, and leaving something worthwhile behind, like a first-rate hospital.

But there's something endearing about his prejudices. They are right out in the open. I'll bet he believes in capital punishment, God, and heaven. I'll take him away ahead of your snarling liberals any day.

And he has a sense of humor. He used to winter in Texas and took great delight in telling the proud Texans that their mighty state could be dropped into one of our Canadian lakes and not even cause a ripple.

It seems to me that one winter he took some empty bottles to Texas, told the natives the bottles were full of Bruce Peninsula air, and suggested it was worth at least one dollar a bottle for its purity.

Good health, Ab, and long live.

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Pressing need for medical centre

Residents of Hillsburgh and district are going ahead with plans to establish a medical centre in the village, encouraged by the findings of a committee set up to investigate whether the proposal was feasible.

The committee recently met with the medical officer in charge of the program for under-served areas in Ontario, Dr. W. J. Copeman. He told the committee no outright grants are available but a winter works grant could pay 100 per cent of the labor costs and a summer works program could pay 50 per cent of the cost of construction.

A tentative site has been chosen for the medical centre, east of the Hillsburgh ball park, on land owned by the village. The committee hopes to get approval of the site from village trustees. Estimated cost of a 1,600

square foot two doctor centre is \$35,000.

It is expected a finance committee will start a formal fundraising drive in the near future, and it is hoped the venture will get a big boost from the planned Hillsburgh Potato Fest in September since proceeds have been designated for the project.

We commend the villagers and township residents who have taken the bull by the horns and are attempting to do something about a pressing need in the village and township.

There is only one doctor to serve the area. He resides in the village of Erin. He's on duty 24 hours a day, seven days and week, and has a long waiting list of patients. It is often impossible to get an appointment with him so patients are sent to Acton, Orangeville, Georgetown or Guelph depending on where they live. He would welcome some relief.

It is a frustrating situation, often causing anxiety among residents in the villages and township. There is a genuine need for doctors and a medical centre to serve these areas.

Eight years ago the Hillsburgh community centre committee purchased a home in the village and searched in vain for a doctor. The new committee could encounter the same difficulties. The possibility exists and must be recognized. However if the full weight of the two villages - Erin and Hillsburgh - and township residents - are thrown behind the quest we believe the committee will get positive results and a much needed centralized medical service where it would do the most good.

Co-operation is the key and some solid enthusiasm.

Free Press Editorial Page

B2 The Acton Free Press, Wednesday, February 28, 1973

An ear for an ear, a truth for a truth

Two weeks ago the Free Press ran a lead editorial which suggested that the people in North Halton have lost the Hon. George Kerr's ear on the issues of regional government.

This week Mr. Kerr has replied to the editorial in a letter which is published on another page. He denies he came out strongly in favor of a central Milton borough. "As a Member of the Cabinet and the Government of Ontario, I was simply explaining the rationale behind the proposals outlined by my colleague Arthur Meen in Hamilton on January 23," Mr. Kerr says in explanation.

"As a matter of fact, I am on record as personally supporting the TECO proposals for a three borough system in Halton County," Mr. Kerr says. He continues, explaining that eventually he thought Halton would come to a single tier government along the same lines as our county board of education. However, he recognized "we are not ready for such a drastic step and that a reduction from seven to four municipal governments in Halton might well serve our short term goals in municipal reform."

Mr. Kerr said his first aim was to preserve Halton, to prevent it being sliced up two or three ways in the formation of regional units, and he has achieved what he set out to do. "I hope that no one in the north will lose sight of our primary objective and jeopardize our successes to date by becoming too preoccupied with the question of internal boundaries," he writes. He assures us that despite the doubts expressed by the Free Press editorial the Government will listen to criticisms and comments from North Halton.

We agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Kerr in his comments and respect his integrity as to the intent of what he said at the meeting of the Upper Burlington Citizens' Forum. However, the reporter who attended the meeting still insists his account is primarily a factual account of what was said and he feels Mr. Kerr did come out strongly for the four unit Halton.

Mr. Kerr's success in including Burlington in a strong Halton region despite strong pressures from Mayor Vic Copps and his Hamilton pressure groups is a worthy feat. We commend

him sincerely on accomplishments which are vital to the people of Acton and district. He envisions one day that the internal boundaries of Halton will be swept aside and a one tier form of government embracing all the municipalities, will replace the four borough system.

This may indeed come to pass, (All the more reason to start with three rather than four boroughs). The part we cannot agree with is the tendency to make Acton, Nassagaweya and Esqueping sacrificial lambs in a regional government experiment. We have played the role badly in the past and will continue to do so in the future. We are the ones who will not have adequate representation in a proposed North Halton borough while the burghers of Milton and district, who obviously feel internal boundaries are very important, have a voice all out of proportion to numbers and area.

We would say they have one of the Government's ears, while the North, if we haven't lost the other, got the deaf one.

Back Issues of The Free Press

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 5, 1953.

"At the high school assembly the Student Council put on a play for Brotherhood Week. Taking the main parts were Joy Peel and Ena Jennings.

Public speaking trophy was presented to Raymond Braida by its donor B. D. Rachlin. Ella Jany was second and the runners up were Shirley Mason and Lynda Mann.

Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Reed celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

Council's sunshine budget cut the tax rate over 20 per cent. The rate is 51 mills.

A special meeting is being called to discuss the district changeover to 60 cycle power.

Rotary club officers elected were president Vic Rumley, vice president Art Padbury, secretary Ted Hansen and treasurer Walt Woodburn. Directors are Ed Bilton, Jack Blow and Harold Lieb.

Rockwood Community Club held its fourth annual Variety Show in the town hall three nights. Large crowds attended the hilarious event. The theme was Mother Goose's Nursery rhymes.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 1, 1923.

Mrs. E. J. Gamble, secretary-treasurer, attended the regular session of the council and on behalf of the Women's Institute officially presented to the town the fountain for watering horses that had been donated by the Institute at the corner of Main and Mill St. last fall.

Two Chinamen from the Star restaurant, Guelph, have leased the new store in the Starkman block at the corner of Mill and Main and intend opening a restaurant here. Acton will surely be well supplied with eating houses. No one ever need leave town for lack of public eating places.

The roads in the country have been almost impassable. The horses have been floundering badly. The blocked roads hindered the delivering of turnips for about a week.

Knox church, Guelph, has granted its pastor Rev. McGillivray a three-month leave of absence during which time he has planned to make a tour delivering a series of addresses in opposition to the Church Union movement.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 3, 1898.

The general elections for the province of Ontario are over for another term and the Liberal government is again sustained although the majority is very small. The latest returns give Liberals 47, Conservatives 44, Independents 1, Patrons 1. In our county where Col. Kerns has had the seat for 15 years the electors said by their votes "It's time for a change" and John Baker was elected by a handsome majority of 136. The vote in Acton was by far the largest in its history. There were 300 who voted in the town hall and at Speight's shop.

Georgetown is very happy. For the first time they have a real live member of parliament in their midst. The well-known paper manufacturer mounted a dry goods box and expressed his thanks for the honor.

The House has passed the Anti-Cigarette bill. The bill is sweeping and absolutely prohibits the sale, barter, loan or use of cigarettes or even to have these things in one's possession. The bill now goes to the senate.

Of cabbages and kings

By H. Coles

It's only an oil slick someone said but the unexplained spillage of oil in the school creek had ramifications for the fowl which winter on Fairy Lake. Swans, geese and ducks soaked up some of the oil into feathers and this can be fatal.

Nature's delicate balance is upset by the presence of foreign substances it can often trigger further disturbances of which we are aware of only few.

One of the first to get upset about the oily fowl was Esther Taylor, who has had a Mother Goose attitude towards them ever since the first Mallards were procured by the Board of Parks Management to grace Fairy Lake waters. Esther started a phone campaign to get something done about the birds. She felt experts should have been called in to clean them off.

"Probably everyone thinks I am crazy," she said, "but they depend on us to look after them - and we should." Her phone campaign got results - the birds were cleaned and parks manager Harold Twynaley made every effort to catch them,

with limited success, since the ice wasn't safe and the birds reluctant to be handled.

Now Esther is worried that the Y's Men's snowmobile races will bother the birds. She'd like to see them moved to a more sheltered spot in the winter. The swans, of course, already have moved winter quarters on the other arm of the lake and their graceful movements have inspired someone to dub the ice-free water Swan Lake.

You probably noticed where Lloyd and Elva Masales celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last week with a celebration at the band hall on Wallace St. Of course, the Free Press had a news item about the event which outlined some of the many activities they have participated in during their many years in Acton, but it couldn't begin to cover everything.

This writer remembers when Lloyd and Elva used to run the old Gregory Theatre for R. L. Gregory when Acton's "show" was situated where A-B Supermarket is now. It was usually Elva behind the cashier's window collecting the dimes and quarters charged to see film thrillers. Lloyd would be busy ushering people to their seats, seeing that the kids stayed over the white line, which restricted them to the front of the theatre.

Those were the days when the Gregory used to feature such films as "The Plainsman" with Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur, "Stand In" with Joan Blondell and

Leslie Howard, "Springtime in the Rockies" with cowboy star Gene Autry. And how about Mae West in "Every Day's a Holiday".

Mae West, in case you never knew, was the Brigitte Bardot and Raquel Welch of the '30's. Her famous line, "... Come up and see me sometime..." was widely used.

Lloyd used to manage to keep us kids in line, even when the weekly serial flicked on the screen, and when the roof was raised for such occasions as when Gene Autry galloped to rescue the current femme fatale. In those days the movies were shown Monday, Friday and Saturday evenings and they threw a matinee in on Saturday. You were expected to stay home the rest of the week.

Another of the Masales' duties was to see the kids who didn't have a dime never got into the theatre. The really brave youths who dared to "sneak in" through the exits during the warm summer days they were open, often were surprised to find Lloyd waiting for them after they had crawled on their stomachs for yards, apparently unobserved.

He was nice about it though, and never did connect with the foot aimed at your backside.

Lloyd used to do some minor baseball and hockey coaching in his day, too. I can remember being on the Juvenile ball team which must have caused him more grey hairs than all his days in the theatre. We had an airtight infield which gobbled up every

ball which drove in our direction - and then promptly dropped them. We'd run up big scores on the opposition, garner a commanding lead and then uneasily watch the opposition gain and pass us. Somehow we still managed to win a few and erase some of the wrinkles from Lloyd's brow.

Anyway, happy anniversary, Lloyd and Elva.

One of the most surprised people in Acton last week must have been Mrs. C. K. Browne when they named her the Browne Mother of the Year, gave her roses, a plaque and a bean bowl to boot. "Doris" as she is affectionately known to her hundreds of customers, has the plaque hanging up in her store, where it has become a conversation piece, thanks to Jack Carpenter's hang-up. Jack agreed to hang the plaque up for Mrs. Browne and she said the air was "blue" before he finished.

Since the Browne store is at the end of the school lane it attracts scores of kids every day, anxious to shell out their shekels on gum and candy. Mrs. Browne is the other attraction. She always has something pleasant to say to the kids, jokes to trade with the adults and sometimes is a go-between for messages.

When the Brownies, guides and their leaders decided Mrs. Browne was their Den mother of the Year they had their hearts in the right place, even if she does refer to the mayor as "Mr. Duz".

Bert Hinton dropped in the other day to argue about regional government with this fuzzy-cheeked fellow. Bert's a former warden of Halton and an acknowledged expert in municipal matters, which escape some of us news hounds, and he doesn't agree with some of the editorials which have emanated from this poisonous fellow's typewriter.

Bert feels the Government has done the right thing in promoting a four unit Halton, while I feel it was a political favor with little going for it but sentiment. We went at it hammer and tong. Sometimes Bert was a round; sometimes I scored a point, but without any antagonism. There were honest differences of opinion on several matters. I inferred the county system had never done much for Acton and area and the regional government proposal would do even less.

Bert, however, figured the county had been good to Acton and the new system would be even better. He said the government's decision was based on good sense, and a Milton-based central borough could only result in better things.

You can make up your own mind but I haven't changed my opinion. (See George Kerr's letter elsewhere.)

The big issue in this area now is the Indianus dump. It is something we can't cherish too warmly somehow, despite all the claims for its efficiency, inertness, and what have you. I feel if Acton and area has to be

known for something we would rather it be for something pleasant than the connotation of a Toronto dump. Now I know they are calling the garbage "refuse" and it comes in dried bales which are supposed to restore the Niagara Escarpment to its original contours - and it may - but a dump is a dump.

The recent day set aside to honor Toronto's policemen may not have been as spontaneous as some have suggested, but it was a fine tribute to men who labor under great difficulties, with little thanks.

The police are often criticized for performing their duties too zealously but it would be a poor country indeed if they were not around to preserve law and order. They are human, too, despite what some of their critics may think.

An illustration of how helpful they are in emergencies was provided at the recent fire in Ballinacree where the Sid Spear family lost home and possessions. They kept traffic moving along the Seventh Line and assisted whenever they could in aiding the family.

I happened to be standing nearby when one officer of the OPP detachment approached Sid Spear, asking if he could help in locating his insurance agency, and then rendered all the assistance he could.

It touches like this which provide the best public relations for the police and builds up real respect among all people.