

The kids get the blame

Bicycle sales have tripled during the last decade. Deaths and accidents on bikes have doubled. Biking is a pollution-free way to travel. It can also be fun, healthy, and cheap. But our auto-addicted society has built very few bikeways so far. Cyclists have to straddle car traffic these days as so many ride to school.

Bike riders are supposed to observe most of the regulations and signals meant for cars. But too many don't. A recent study of accidents involving bicycles and cars showed that bikers had

violated the traffic laws in almost 70 percent of the cases. The most common violation was not obeying stop signs.

In another report it was apparent that bikers made far more errors than drivers did. Most accidents happened because bikers didn't yield the right of way, used the wrong arm signals or none at all when they turned, rode on the wrong side, and ignored stoplights. And last year a study of 600 bicycle accidents, which was conducted by a Safety Commission, showed that two-thirds of the accidents resulted

from riding double on bikes designed for one, performing stunts, losing control of braking and hitting bumps and ruts.

Safer cycling is possible. Observing regulations helps a lot. Seeing and being seen—by cars, pedestrians, other bikers—is absolutely essential. Bright bike banners on tall flagstaffs have been seen in Acton. Reflective tape that is fluorescent day and night is coming into use. Keeping bikes in good condition is important too.



A WHEEL WITHIN a wheel... hundreds of wheels... in the M. Z. Bennett school parking lot. Bike racks are filled these fine mornings as the young scholars pedal to class. An editorial on this page warns of the dangers of bicycling and offers some timely advice.

End of summer notes: back to work; babies; the speed limit; and anything else that crops up.

It's good to get back to work. For a month. At first there's a general feeling of excitement as the fall term begins at school. Bonhomie among the staff as summer experiences are exchanged and tents are compared. The challenge of facing a hundred and some new faces in the classroom. The fine September weather.

Even the students are happy to get back. For a month. They, too, exchange summer anecdotes, greet old friends, and begin making new ones. There is a feeling of liveliness in the air.

One of the favourite pastimes for the students as school re-opens is sizing up the teachers.

"Yeah, he's not a bad guy, but you can walk all over him. His classes are a mob scene."

"She's a good teacher, knows her stuff, but she's so dull, no sense of humour, it makes your teeth ache."

"He's a real mean (deleted). Makes ya work like a dog."

And so on. They're usually pretty shrewd in their assessments. What they don't realize is that their teachers are doing the same. "There's a bad little devil; have to keep an eye on him. Oh, no, not Joe repeating his year. Why did they put him in my class again? There's a bright girl; good-looking too." And so on.

Utterly bewildered for a month are the new kids in Grade 9. They come in all sizes, from tiny shrimps to hulking giants. Some of them come from small country schools. To be dumped in a huge, complex building housing daily about 1700 people, including staff, is rather frightening for them.

They get lost. That's reasonable; even some of the teachers get lost. But the kids lose their books, forget where their lockers are or if they find them, have forgotten the combination for the lock. They have to unravel all the do's and don'ts of a huge and baffling new system.

But they get sorted out and after a month, they're old hands, just as cocky as all the others.

Now for babies. Thank goodness I'm not a young mother. We've been having a visit from our grandbabby, and when it was over, I felt ten years older.

He's a beautiful child and a healthy one. But he's as active and agile and slippery as an eel.

Unfortunately, his gran had cracked ribs, was in considerable pain and could scarcely hold him or lift him. As a result, she wasn't much good, as an over-sized toy. That's all grandparents are, when you're eight months old. They're far better than a rattle. They're softer (in more ways than one), they make the appropriate noises, they pick you up and kiss you when you fall down, they sing to you and juggle you on their knees, and so on.

Well, Nicov Chen "took a shine", as they say, to me as his new toy. "Ah, look. He

Bill Smiley



loves his granddad". The women would coo, when he'd crawl straight to me, look up imploringly and begin to ascend me as though I were Mount Everest.

His technique was impressive. I was wearing nothing but shorts most of the time. He would reach up from the floor, grab me by the hair on my legs with a grip like an orangutan, pull himself to his feet, grinning with triumph and swaying around, ready to fall, bump his head and start yelling.

Another beseeching look, and I'd hoist him onto my knee. Then he'd turn around, grab me by the hair on my chest, and pull himself up for a little jump jump, facing me. When he got tired of that, he'd start grabbing my nose and trying to pull it out, or poking at my eyes, or tearing at an ear.

Suddenly, he'd squirm around and want down. On the floor, he'd head, at startling speed and with a demonic grin, straight for a standing floor lamp. He loved it because when you shook it, from ground level, it made a nice jingling sound. It is also heavy enough to brain a baby.

So grandad leaps across the room and grabs the lamp in the nick of time, points the kid in another direction and sinks wearily into his chair. Sixty seconds later, he feels a painful twisting of the hair on his legs, and off we go again. One of us never got tired of this little routine.

He's a happy baby, but, on the occasions when he isn't you could hear him two blocks away. Whenever his Mum went shopping, I baby-sat and enjoyed it thoroughly, but did my sitting in a constant state of fear that he'd get unhappy. I'm glad, once again, that I'm not a young mother, but an old granddad.

Finally, the speed limit. There is a proposal that it be reduced from 70 on the big highways to 55 m.p.h. This was done in the U.S. and Germany, among others, during the oil crisis. There is quite a lot of opposition here. I'm all for it. It's been proved that it cuts the carnage on the highways. Save lives, save money, save energy. How can anyone be against it? And what's the big rush, anyway? It's time we slowed down.

OUR READERS WRITE:

Suggests Acton pull out

Sept. 6, 1974

Dear Editor:

The Federal, Provincial and Municipal Revolt happening today in Acton and other towns, cities and villages in Ontario recalls the older days of the Seigneur or Feudal Systems which I and most of us were led to believe had ceased when King John was forced by his Barons to sign in 1215 The Magna Carta or the Great Charter. I am proud to say I was born, raised and educated in Acton, married there, raised my family and made my living there and was happy. We had no Regional Government then and I for one do not feel we need it now.

Acton was Acton, not a pawn in a chess game to be moved or pushed as a few seem to desire. At one time Acton was an independent, bustling town who operated under her own steam and on her own resources. It's no secret Acton had problems but many good people, solved them without help from any source, and did it well too. Why then should it in the twinkling of an eye, or on the whims of someone else be changed now? Many centers have lost identities in order to please a few, but why Acton? No one wishes to hamper progress, nor do we wish to return to the dark ages either. But why should

Acton or any other center be forced to abdicate to the whims of a few bureaucrats, opportunists, or on the spot manipulators or such like?

Some centers are larger and some smaller but this gives no one the right to eliminate or to delete any. All of us are docile, we lie dormant, we say yes when we mean no, and we allow the big machine to slowly crush us in bits. I support Esther Taylor on her stand on Fairy Lake. I swam in it many years and no fuss, so why any needed now? As for smelt it was in Acton before we had any big industry. Noise, smoke, and pollution too. So why blame Beardmore for it all? True I am no longer in Acton but I am part of it, and always will be.

As a former Actonian for what it's worth I would suggest Acton forget the new order, pull out before it's too late, and before Acton gets swallowed up, our own fire system, water, sewer, hydro and collect our own money as we did in the past, also our own police. Regional Government is OK for the big ones, but not for the small ones. We elected a Mayor, Reeve, Deputy Reeve and our own Council. We did it before—it worked, we all were happy. Why not do it again? It will be more economical than now. Before we knew where we were going, today we do not.

Your renegade Trimmer Coleman

Editorial notes

The Free Press invitation to attend the inauguration ceremony for letter carrier service didn't arrive in the news office till after the whole thing was over! It was mailed Wednesday in London. Whether to laugh or groan? Take your pick.

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"And summer's lease hath all too short a date," said Shakespeare. Right on, Bill. But it was good while it lasted.

September is for pride

September always seems a better time for beginnings than New Year's.

Certainly for all the children back to school it's Happy New Year with new teachers, new rooms and new clothes.

Acton, too, has a really amazing group of firsts for its September.

There's the centennial Legion hall, the Centennial swimming pool, the tennis courts, and postal delivery.

Walker Lodge will mark its centennial at a huge affair the end of the month, and the fair is adding some centennial spice.

For the first time, music is being taught at the high school.

It's a hefty slice of innovations for a town our size, and each of these things alone should generate a lot of pride in our community.

Every month we hear complaints.

How about making September a month of praise and pride?

The Free Press Back Issues

20 years ago

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of September 16, 1954

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of September 11, 1954

School traffic is much changed this year. The public school children go to one end of town and the high school students to another.

Don't forget that the midway will be all set up Friday afternoon this year. It's hoped that the children particularly will enjoy this new aspect of Acton fair.

Laverne Allen, 19, of R.R. 2, Acton, is the winner of a Dominion-Provincial bursary worth \$400. Graduated from Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute, he is studying electricity at Ryerson Institute of Technology in Toronto.

Storey: Born: Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Storey are happy to announce the birth of a daughter, Debra Lynn at Peel Memorial hospital, Brampton, on Saturday, September 11, 1954.

After choir practice at Acton United church on Thursday evening last week, the choir members gathered in the Sunday school room for a friendly visit and lunch. The group was bidding farewell to two faithful choir members, Mr. and Mrs. R. Robbins, who are moving to Richmond Hill. Mr. Robbins was unable to be present as he had already begun his duties as police chief there.

Rae West spoke a few words on behalf of the choir and then Miss Nancy Lambert presented Mrs. Robbins with a hammered aluminum tray. Mrs. Robbins replied, thanking the group.

YES YOUR LETTERS ARE WELCOME on topics of general interest. Please keep them short and be sure to sign your name. Pen names are acceptable for publication but are not recommended.

It may not be generally known, but it is illegal to ship corn out of Halton county. The Dominion Department of Agriculture is endeavoring to stamp out the corn borer pest, Peel and twenty other Ontario counties are in the same position.

There was no uncertain sound from the pulpits in town when the announcement was made on Sunday calling the people to a county convention at Milton yesterday—as to the duty of Christian people to stand firm for the Ontario Temperance Act, at the coming plebiscite. The ministers each spoke strongly as to the actions of right-thinking people should take to hold the position attained.

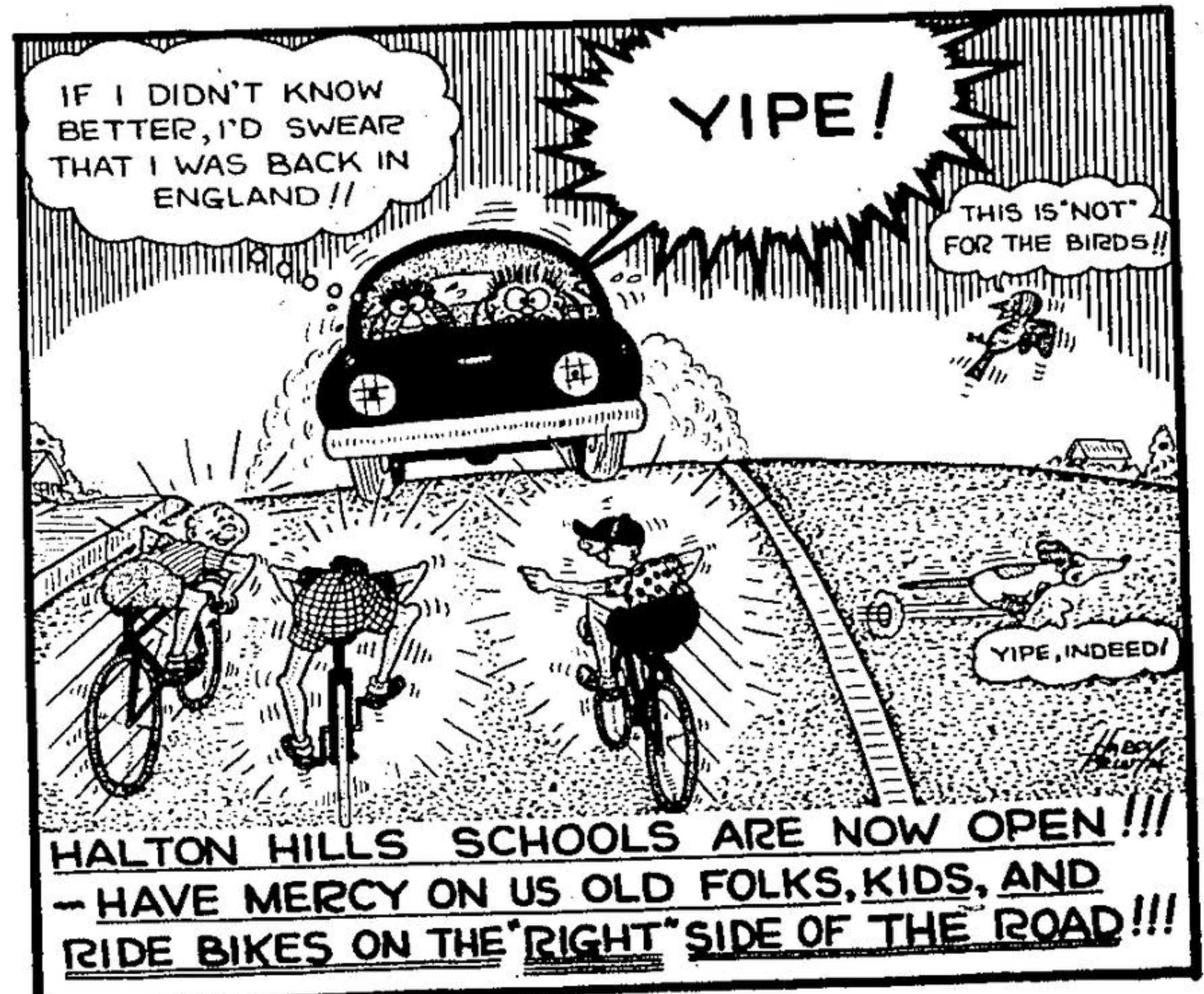
After fifty-one years as a Masonic Hall the quarters on Main Street in the Kennedy Block are to be converted into a residence. Walker Lodge A.F. & A.M. was instituted there, and many residents have been made Masons within those walls. The lodge has leased the rooms over Russell's Store for a period of years, and will fit up the new premises, converting it into an attractive lodge room. These premises are more commodious and will permit conveniences not possible in the old hall. W. M. McTavish and his officers expect to have the new hall completed and in fine condition for the annual visit of the District Deputy Grand Master at the October meeting.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of September 7, 1899

During the past week thousands of visitors passing on the G.T.R. trains have viewed with much interest the immense electric sign which adorns the Canada Glove Works.

People are talking about this novelty all over the country and Mr. Storey will be amply rewarded for his inventive skill and



HALTON HILLS SCHOOLS ARE NOW OPEN!!!
— HAVE MERCY ON US OLD FOLKS, KIDS, AND
RIDE BIKES ON THE "RIGHT" SIDE OF THE ROAD!!!



MILL ST. was shady when this picture was taken years ago. It was lent to the Free Press by Mrs. Daisy Kingshott. The photographer is standing about where the town office is, looking toward the Mill-Main corner.