

## Island of compassion

By chance, Jim Dills was in Vancouver Airport Sunday when the plane-load of babies orphaned by the Viet Nam war arrived. These are his personal observations.

The usual hustle of the airport took on a different dimension. There were the meters and greeters, the lines for passengers checking in and the groups around the luggage carousels, but there was also a tiny island of compassion.

A group of Viet Nam war orphans was arriving on the CP Air jet as I found myself in the Vancouver airport waiting with others.

These youngsters seemed like a special group. An island of compassion surrounded them, it seemed. Camera crews were pressing to do their job, reporters were anxious to capture interviews with adopting parents but there behind a glass enclosure were the youngsters themselves, snatched from the orphanages and placed on the plane in advance of the pushing Viet Cong.

Among the group on that island of compassion, were 10 who had miraculously survived the crash of an earlier flight-to-freedom plane.

Protection was the keynote for the group of arriving children and workers, volunteers and adopting parents. Security was at its peak as customs procedures and red tape was cut or trimmed to see children join new parents or be whisked on to Montreal where more parents were waiting.

Looking through the glass window to that tiny island of people you could see young lives taking new direction. The haggard look on the faces of exhausted volunteers told something of the hell from which the youngsters had been snatched. The children had been moving through adoption procedures in Viet Nam orphanages but the paperwork had not been finished before the pressure of the driving Viet Cong added a new urgency. Now that time was running out, the

paperwork would have to catch up later. Bundled into a bus and onto a plane, the children moved rapidly closer to new homes and the love and compassion of waiting, anxious parents.

The little ones were being fed and attended to as name tags were checked and new links established. The trip was telling on the children, many of whom still had hundreds of air miles to go to meet adoptive parents in Montreal.

Reporters were asking a government official about the wisdom of such air lifts, whether they would be continued and how many children could be accommodated in Canada. I couldn't get very interested in the line of questioning. All I could see was the compassion of people—loving people—providing homes for these startled youngsters who were in need of aid, people who were obtaining hopefully some new happiness from having reached out to provide happiness for others.

Amid the faces behind the glass wall were faces of happiness, mixed with faces of wonder and uncertainty, faces of excitement, faces of tiredness and faces of confidence.

I'm not naive enough to think there are no problems ahead for the young families and their new charges. What emotional shocks are there to overcome, what frustrations to face, what challenges to meet?

But surely such a one to one relationship paves the way to better understanding as our world shrinks in its global village concept.

Through the glass windows of the Vancouver Airport I caught a refreshing glimpse of human compassion taking precedence over the hesitation and timidity which so often keeps us from action. Certainly it was compassion with courage and a sense of determination by a few who made possible a new start, a new life, a new opportunity.

—Jim Dills

## Our readers write

### Few spoil carnival

April 7, 1975

Dear Editor:

Please convey our congratulations to the Acton Figure Skating Club for giving us a very enjoyable evening on Saturday. The attractive costumes were most effective and the ability of each skater was proof of the hard work which was put forth during the winter. Thanks to each and everyone in the Club for giving Acton such a pleasure-filled evening.

But why were many spectators allowed to spoil the whole evening for the participants? Even though the Master of Ceremonies cautioned the audience at least twice against throwing articles on the ice, bubble gum, popcorn and paper still found their way to the ice causing some of the skaters to fall and injure themselves. Thoughtless people can surely not realize

the skill that many of the jumps and steps require without having a dirty ice surface to handicap their execution further nor can they realize the very real danger of broken bones which is ever present while a skater is performing.

Also, why did many spectators both young and old bother going to the show anyway when they were not interested in watching the various acts or listening to the description of the forth-coming acts? The noise, shrill whistles, and constant movements of these imbeciles detracted our attention from the show several times during the evening. What can be done about this lack of respect for other people which was shown too clearly Saturday evening? I would hate to see the Skating Club cancel their annual show.

Ena Gibson



AN ISLAND of compassion surrounded the Vietnamese and Cambodian orphans when they arrived in Canada on "operation baby lift" Sunday. Jim Dills took the photo at Vancouver Airport where nurses, doctors and volunteers were dispersing the orphans to new homes in western and central Canada.



## Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

Around here, it's one of those grand old of March days, with the sun pouring down, the air positively balmy (about 40 degrees), the defeated snow clinging grimly to the shadowed corners, and that lovely smell of rotten earth that precludes spring.

If it were fall, of course, and the temperature were the same, we'd be saying: "By George! Nippy enough, ain't it. Looks like winter's not far off."

But at this time of year, the weather is more a state of mind than a matter of temperature, and all across the land Canadians go slightly hysterical with the jubilation that once more they have made it through that masochist's delight—a Canadian winter.

With the first relaxing of those icy tentacles, we go a bit haywire. Rubbers are kicked into a corner. Sweaters and scarves are buried into closets. Babies are plunged into prams. And we all come down with a spring cold that is only slightly worse than the vicious one we nursed all winter.

Typical example: This morning was garbage day. Just because the sun was shining and it wasn't snowing, I nipped out in my pajamas and slippers to deposit the plastic bags.

It was a trifle nippy, but the sun was shining and there was that ineluctable essence in the air. I winked at a sexy squirrel in the cedar tree. I made a V-for-Victory sign at Old Sol. I hallowed at a beautiful crow. I stopped to stroke the cat, who was lying in the mud, basking. And I've been sneezing and blowing ever since.

No matter. Winter is over. Those long black nights and those short white days are gone for another six months, and, as far as I'm concerned, fill up the bowls and let joy reign unconfined.

Usually, we struggle into spring with nothing more hilarious than a slight lessening of despair, but this year the old lady and I ended winter with a gallant filip. Some would call it a filip.

As you know, if you are keeping up with the social news, we "took up" cross-country skiing this spring. Most people take up sports during the season, but we don't operate that way. As I recall, we took up golf in the fall, after the leaves had begun to tumble.

Anyway, we took to skiing like a cat takes to nip, and in no time we were arguing about what kind of wax to use (we have two kinds, red and black) and clumping around in our boots like real skiers.

Our timing was perfect. On what turned out to be the last day of skiing for the season, we took a shot at a hill. Or maybe it was the other way around.

It was a long, straight hill: no trees, no rocks, nothing that a capable six-year-old couldn't handle with both hands in his pockets.

We were certainly polite enough. It was: "You go first, you're the man." And: "No, no, dear. Ladies first, you know."

As usual, I was out-manoeuvred. I steered myself with recollections of driving a bicycle head-on into a cow during an English black-out, of diving into a hell-fire of German anti-aircraft fire.

I took off. One thing I dislike about skiing is that there are no brakes. You can't even drag your feet.

Well, sir, the only way I can describe my descent of that slope is hell-bent. Squatting like a kangaroo in labor, eyes rolling, I went down there at what I reckon was about 140 mph.

And I made it. No ignominious tumble. No splits. Thirty feet from the end of the run, all danger behind, I straightened up, waved one ski-pole nonchalantly and turned my head to see if The Chicken was impressed.

Just then the snow, with unbelievable crust, rose up and smote me a mighty smite on the head. My cap flew off. I knew I wasn't in hell, but I sure felt bent. I lay there, quietly uttering words I haven't heard since my Dad used to go down and beat the coal furnace with a shovel.

I heard a scream. "At least she knows I'm dying," I thought bitterly. "Boy, is she going to be sorry for some of the things she said to me, over the years."

Then I heard another scream. "Bill, get out of the way! I'm going to run over you!"

Wrenching my broken neck around, I looked uphill. There was a dark figure flying toward me. It looked like a witch, but it was riding two broomsticks, instead of one. Then the broomsticks began to part, in what seemed slow motion, and I knew the witch was going to split right up the middle unless the nightmare ended.

## The Free Press Back Issues

### 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, April 7, 1955.

Douglas McEachern, local taxicab driver, reported to police this week that a deer bounded across the highway early Sunday morning, east of Crewson's Corners, and into the side of the car.

The collision wrenched control from the driver and the car ended up in the ditch, damaged to the extent of about \$125. The deer was killed by the impact.

Resignations of Miss D. Fulster, Mrs. M. Ringler and Mr. R. McKrown were received by Acton public school board at its regular meeting on Wednesday evening of this week. Miss L. Putter is also leaving at the end of the school term to attend Normal School to receive her certificate.

Sunday morning 34 joined Acton United church, 10 by transfer and 24 on profession of faith. Four were baptized.

Winning close to \$26,000 in last Saturday's Irish Sweepstakes is not going to make much difference in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. John Stoutley, according to the lucky winners.

The Sunday school room of Acton United church was filled to capacity for the regular Bible Society fireside on Sunday evening. M. M. Coles introduced to the group his son, Rev. Stewart Coles of Knox Presbyterian church, Oshawa.

It was strictly a social evening when the Men's Club of the United church met Monday evening. Games included shuffleboard, darts, table tennis, scrabble and crokinole and music also added to the program.

### 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, April 9, 1925.

Dear Editor:

I received a jolt today when on receiving the Free Press I was reminded that our subscription had expired the week before. I take great pleasure in renewing for another year, and enclose postal note for \$2.50. We enjoy reading the paper today as much as we did when we first subscribed thirty-four years ago. The Free Press is always a welcome guest in our home.

Minnie Cook, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Last Tuesday afternoon, little Wilma Watson, the eight-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Victor Watson, Frederick Street, was taken ill in school. The teacher sent her home and the mother sent for the doctor. He diagnosed the trouble as appendicitis and at once motored the little patient to Guelph Hospital.

Dr. M. Forster, who was referred to by "The Old Man of the Big Clock Tower" in his column a few weeks ago, celebrated his ninety-fourth birthday last Friday at his home in Toronto.

James Mills, tester for Mes. Beardmore & Co. had his foot painfully crushed one day

It did. I woke up. The witch was dead. One broomstick pointed straight up in the air. The other was pointed back up the hill. There was silence.

Then: "Are you all right?" And: "I don't know. Are you? And: "I dunno. I think I'm gonna cry." (That was me).

Boy, am I glad it's spring, and there's no more skiing until December.

But skiing certainly tones you up. I can now touch my toes with no problem at all. I use a yardstick. And my wife can knit like a demon with one hand. She got good at it while her left arm was in a sling.

### 75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, April 5, 1900.

Mr. J. T. Elliott has purchased from W. E. Smith his Acton property on Mill and John Streets and Bowser Avenue, including the dwelling and large barn. The price paid was \$1,200.

The special services in the Methodist Church are still in progress. Revs. S. W. Holden, Rockwood, and John Saunders, M.A., Georgetown, have rendered excellent assistance. Rev. H. A. Macpherson preached a most impressive sermon last Friday evening. The meetings have not been announced to continue longer than the present week.

A baby crib for sale, apply to Mrs. T. E. M. Secord, Acton.

Miss Ida Coulson, Church Street, has returned home after spending a couple of pleasant weeks with friends in Guelph and Fergus.

Mr. and Mrs. John Laverty of Monck, came to town last week to spend a few days at the home of Mr. A. F. Smith. Mrs. Laverty, who was suffering from a slight attack of blood poisoning in one of her hands, is still at the parental home.

A new Postmaster General arrived at Crewson's Corners on Thursday in the person of a son to Mr. and Mrs. George Carr.

Mrs. Kafelman would advise the ladies to come early and leave their orders for skirts and blouses if they want them by Easter.

Those who contemplate purchasing monumental or work of any description for their cemetery plots should order direct from the old reliable granite and marble dealer J. H. Hamilton, Guelph, Ontario.



MISS MINNIE Z. Bennett's junior fourth class in 1924. Front row left to right Jack Symon, Bob MacArthur, George Cook, E. Tubman, Dorothy Smethurst, Holmes, Kathleen Kelly, Hazel Cox, Mildred Hollinger, Vi Currie, Phyl Tyler, Lil Burns; second row Hazel Smith, Gladys Linham, Rita McNabb, Jessie Mann; Edna Howard, Rose Waterhouse, Marg Price, Meryl Kirkness, Isabel

Lantz, Peg McDonald, Nell Barber, Marjorie Mann, Dorothy Campbell; back row Gordon Smith, Gordon McDougall, Jean Smith, Jessie Atkinson, Annie Smith, Miss M. Z. Bennett, Dot McPherson, Doris Maddocks, Eva Wheeler, Muriel McComb, Mabel Heward, Velma Murray, Lois Malone.

THE ACTON FREE PRESS  
PHONE 853 2010  
Business and Editorial Office

DAVID R. DILLS, PUBLISHER  
Key Title Editor  
Don Rycer Advertising Manager  
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Founded in 1873 and published every Wednesday at 26 Willow St., Acton, Ontario. Member of the Acton Bureau of Circulation, the C.C.A. and O.N.A. Advertising rates on request. Subscriptions payable in advance. \$2.50 in Canada, \$3.00 in all countries other than Canada; single copies 15 cents; carrier delivery in Acton 15 cents per week. Second class mail Registration Number 9515. Advertising is accepted on the condition that, in the event of typographical error, that portion of the advertisement 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 advertising space or services at a special price, goods or services may not be sold. Advertising is hereby offered for sale, and may be withdrawn at any time.