

Free Press Editorial Page

Welcome to new principal

Welcome to a new high school principal, Dean Fink. He will undoubtedly bring different ways and a new slant on education. His name will likely often appear in the pages of the local paper over the next few years.

David Katz has left his stamp on the school, too, and the young people who passed through the school during his term will always feel the effects of his philosophy of education. The introduction of the semester system was a prime example of change under his jurisdiction. Appreciation from students and parents go with him, as well as best wishes in his new position.

That brings us to Education Week, which is April 20 to April 26.

The theme is Learning is a Co-Operative Community Enterprise. Education Minister Tom Wells says Education Week will reflect the strong relationship between the schools and the communities they serve.

He says "a school that is truly fulfilling its role is one into which parents are welcomed and one in which the staff take the time to explain to parents the hows and whys of what their children are learning."

Communications between school, parents and community have always been good here, and no doubt will continue that way, despite the inevitable changes of principals and staff.

Of this and that

The district senior citizens are being asked to fill out questionnaires on housing, which were to go in the mail to persons over 60 years of age. Answers will be of benefit to Ontario Housing Corporation in determining the size of the new unit to be built in Acton.

It is sad to learn that Ospringe Women's Institute has closed its books, and will meet no longer.

The Institutes have had a splendid history, but if the time has come for a good thing to end, there need be no regrets. Times have changed, and especially in the farming communities.

Another new mall has opened in Guelph. Acton people have always tended to go to Guelph to shop, rather than any other direction. So it was interesting to note that the manager of the new mall said about 40 per cent of Guelph retail dollars leave the city. So not only small towns have that problem.

Yesterday is experience; tomorrow is hope; today is getting from one to the other as best we can.



Lambs in wool collars? What next!

DOUG BERRY checks up on this year's spring lamb crop on his father's 10 sideroad farm. The larger-than-usual batch consisted of a surprising four sets of triplets, 12 pairs of twins, and only two single lambs. Visitors are amused to see 12

of the lambs sporting colorful string collars. The Berrys point out it's the only way to keep the triplets identified as to who belongs with which mama.

Halton sketches

by John McDonald

Speight family left mark in Georgetown and Acton

It was 1850 when the two Speight brothers, Samuel and John, arrived in Acton. They had previously been part owners of the Speight Wagon Works at Markham which had a fine reputation.

John Speight eventually operated an undertaker business on Willow Street in Acton while Samuel carried on the wagon works trade and cabinet making. Charlie Speight, John's son, owned and operated a hardware business in Acton for many years.

Thomas John Speight, Samuel's son, was born in Acton and as a youth learned telegraphy at the Grand Trunk Station in Acton. T. J. Speight later worked as a telegraph operator at the Georgetown Junction Station.

The "junction" was the union of the Hamilton and North West and Grand Trunk Railways. The station stood just west of Main Street overpass at the "Y" formation of the tracks.

Thomas met his fiancée "over the telegraph wires." The romance began with routine messages being relayed but a rendezvous resulted in the marriage of Thomas Speight to Cylesta Ann McCauley on November 23, 1886.

After coming to Georgetown, from Acton, in 1896, Thomas eventually left the telegraph office to go into his own machine shop business. The Speight and Brady Machine Shop was opened in a building on Guelph Street, immediately east of the present Carpet Barn Store.

Thomas bought out the Brady share of the business and went on to manufacture gasoline engines and water power motors. At one time, Creelman Knitting Machine Company, Main Street Georgetown, used one of Speight's large engines which had been made entirely in the shop, even to the small castings cast in his own small foundry.

The H. T. Arnold Glove Manufacturing Company, which was situated in the Carpet Barn Building, also utilized over 30 of the Speight motors to drive the sewing machines.

Thomas was a very innovative man and tended to keep up with the times. He stopped manufacturing gasoline engines and began building dynamos to provide water power on the farm. He later sold and manufactured cabinet radiators.

Thomas also made his own transformers and for a nominal fee of five dollars he would thaw water pipes in the home, whether it took three minutes or three hours!! With the advent of hydro-electric power to the homes in the Village of Georgetown this seasonal work soon ceased.

Speight Power Motors are on display at the Halton County Museum and one has been donated to the Credit Valley Conservation Authority for a museum exhibit.

The Speight home in Georgetown was originally across from the old town hall which stood at the corner of Cross and Back Streets. The house site no longer exists because the hill on which it stood was completely excavated for the Toronto Suburban Railway right-of-way. Most of the soil was used as a fill to cover part of the mill pond which stood near the corner of James and Main Street.

The "radial" track had to be laid over part of the old Lawson Pond. The site of the original Speight House can be best described as sitting on a hill overlooking the Canada Trust Building and the municipal parking lot.

When the land was being bought up for the TSR, Thomas decided to build his new home near the machine shop on Guelph Street. A new shop was required so in 1913 Thomas and his sons started to construct a cement block building.

Cement blocks were made by hand and work had to commence at five a.m. to ensure the blocks would be dry enough to lay in the afternoon. Arthur Speight advises, "2,260 blocks were used in the construction, when you shovel by hand you tend to remember."

The new Speight home, constructed of Terra Cotta brick, was started in the fall of 1912 and was completed in 1914. In the same year Thomas opened a car dealership at the building previously used as a machine shop. A showroom, reputed to be one of the finest in Ontario, and sales office were added in 1920.

Thomas J. Speight served as a school trustee, councillor and reeve of Georgetown and was a member of the Masonic Order and a past Master of the Lodge. An accomplished violinist, he led the orchestra in the Methodist Church Sunday School. He

died in Georgetown in 1934.

The youngest son Arthur, continued the Chrysler and Imperial Oil dealership from 1935 to 1945 at the same location and purchased the home from the family estate. The house was demolished in 1974 after being razed by fire, while alterations were being made for a steak house.

Raymond Bower took over the Speight dealership in 1945 and operated until a fire destroyed the showroom about 1964. Guy Rogers then bought the property and operated a welding shop until just recently. The Town of Halton Hills now owns the property.

After selling the dealership in 1945, Arthur worked in the automobile trade in several locations throughout Ontario. He was a service manager at the Art Scott business once located at the corner of Queen and Guelph Streets. In 1954 Art Speight opened a motor tune-up business on Water Street. He is now retired and resides on Shelly Street in Georgetown.

Arthur, not unlike his father, served the community in several ways. He was a member of the Georgetown Council during the 1930s, president of the Board of Trade in 1945, and in conjunction with his business was president of the Garage Operators Association of Halton County for two terms.

Art was re-elected to Georgetown Council in 1966 and served as deputy reeve from 1967 to 1972. Upon his retirement from council art stated he had intended to stop the feuding at council meetings. Council night, apparently, was once known as "fight" night and seats would be filled to capacity to see the next episode.

Arthur was instrumental in establishing new procedures to keep the arguments to a minimum.

Arthur R. Speight has also served as a vocational teacher at Georgetown high school while a member of the advisory committee for the school. He has served on the Centennial Manor Board, Museum Board, Georgetown Hospital Board and acted as liaison between council and the ambulance and fire brigades and was chairman of the water commission.



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

This seems to be a good week to clean up some loose ends, so, if you happen to have a loose end, join me.

Me and the Old Battleaxe spent a couple of days in the city during our winter break holiday. And "spent" is the word. It would have been cheaper to fly to Mexico and pick up Montezuma's curse, as they call it there, or the dire rear, as we call it here. This remark has no connection with the opening sentence of this column.

We went out shopping to buy a "little something" for Pokey, the grandson. Just a little shirt, or a toy, or some other trifle. Fifty dollars later, I staggered out of the department store, toting two large toys, six little shirts, four pairs of overalls, a full-dress suit for the kid, and a plastic shell windbreaker with a lining and a hood to "keep him warm when he comes out from swimming." At 15 months, he's going to be doing a lot of swimming, you see.

Then, of course, we had to deliver the stuff. So we invited ourselves to dinner with daughter and told her not to fuss, that we'd bring along an old chunk of meat or something. Never one to look a gift horse in the mouth, she agreed with alacrity.

My wife's idea of a couple of items to help out with dinner turned out to be five dollars worth of steak, the equivalent in pies and stuff, and assorted groceries running to another 10, my daughter supplying the potatoes and water for the coffee.

However, it was worth it. We each got to hold the baby for about 10 minutes, in one-minute snatches, between bouts of trying out his toys and having clothes tried on him by the women.

After many years, I finally realize why I hate trying on new clothes for my wife's surveillance. That baby despised every minute of the clothes-modelling session, and bellowed lusty protests as his mother and grain pulled his limbs into all sorts of gymnastics, trying to stuff him into his new pants and shirts.

It probably happens to all males in childhood, and they resent it ever after.

Next day was even worse, financially. My wife was determined to buy a rug, bedspread and drapes to match some new wallpaper in a room she'd decorated. As any woman knows — and most husbands, too — this is a three-month, not a three-hour quest. It's usually about as easy as looking for the Lost Chord.

Consequently, the old girl went off with lenden step, sagging men and built-in frustration. She looked so depressed my heart went out to her, and in a moment of madness, I offered to accompany her. Unfortunately, she was in the bathroom with the door closed and the water running, and I was so emotional that I was whispering, so she didn't hear me.

To my astonishment, she burst into the hotel room two hours later, eyes shining, looking like a girl on her first date, and radiating joy. She had hit the jackpot in her shopping. Everything matched some shade of off-yellow.

Since I had expected to greet a worn-out woman, full of recriminations, weary, dispirited and empty-handed, I got carried away.

"Hey! This must be your day. Why don't you buy a little something for yourself in that women's store? It will give you a lift."

"Well, as you know, I haven't bought a stitch of anything new since I don't know when. Maybe I'll pick up a new spring blouse or something."

Not to be an old fogey, I decided that, by George, I'd get a new tie, myself.

Well, I guess I got a little carried away. I walked out of that men's shop with two ties and two turtle-neck sweaters. I am not exactly the turtle-neck type, but in a devil-may-care moment, I tried one on. It was white, made in Italy, and I swear I looked just like Fred Astaire, just in from Acapulco. Fred's a good-looking 72.

These sweaters had extra-high turtles. They conceal your wattles and push your dewlaps out so that you look jolly, rather than just hang-dog.

Fifty bucks lighter, I left the shop with a red plastic bag containing my goodies. I felt guilty but jaunty.

I lost both my guilt and my jaunt when I went to the ladies' shop to meet my wife. Yes, she had picked up a new spring blouse. And a new spring suit. And another suit. And a casual outfit. And some more blouses. She was snatching things off the racks like a two-year-old opening Christmas presents.

Ah, well, what the hell. You can't take it with you. Especially if there's nothing to take.

Next day, back home, she modelled all her array for me. It was then that I learned none of her shoes or purses "went with" the new clothes. The rest is history.

Two good things did come out of that holiday, however. My wife told me she wanted to see me in one of my turtle-neck sweaters. I fought it, but finally gave in with bad grace.

"Where are they? They're in a red plastic bag. Where did you put it?"

"It's with the rest of the stuff", she retorted. It wasn't. It wasn't anywhere.

After going back over the day before, we agreed that I'd taken it into the dining-room, put it beside my chair, and had walked out without it. Of all the stupid...

Phoned the hotel, long-distance. No, Lost-and-Found had no trace of it, but, learning my name, the lady there said she read my column in the paper and we had a nice chat.

Well, there goes fifty bucks, plus a L.D. call. Went out morosely to put some empties in the car trunk. There was the little old red devil plastic bag. With sweaters and tie.

The other good thing was gyping the hotel on breakfast. We ordered breakfast for one. I drank the orange juice, she ate the buckwheat cakes, I ate the toast and jam, and we shared the coffee. Two breakfasts for the price of one. I'll bet they haven't caught on yet. I saved \$1.80 on breakfast, two days in a row.

A profitable trip, taken all round.



BERTIE SPEIGHT stands in the doorway of her father's shop in Acton. She was secretary-treasurer of the Public Utilities commission. The Speight family lived on Church St., Miss Speight dying at her second home at the corner of Church and John in 1944.

The Free Press Back Issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, April 14, 1955

On Wednesday, April 6, Mr. J. B. Chalmers celebrated his 67th birthday. There was a family party on Sunday.

The April meeting of the Duke of Devonshire Chapter F.D.E. was held on Tuesday evening, April 5, at the home of Mrs. W. Woodburn, Mrs. J. Whitlam, the regent, presiding.

Acton Chamber of Commerce's first cycle night, which may become an annual affair, featured lively discussion between members and town officials Wednesday night as questions and answers ranging from current road work to long range town planning provided a means for closer appreciation of municipal problems.

Sewer extensions to Acton's new subdivisions began last week when men and equipment laid over 600 feet of conduit in two days into the 10 lot Cobble Hill subdivision. Work will start next at the 200 lot Glenlea development, then back to the western end of town and the 40 lot Fairview Subdivision.

Mrs. Chris Britton, R.R. 1, Acton, has been accepted as the new clerk in the post office. She will begin her duties on May 1, replacing Mrs. Sonny Jacques.

Mr. and Mrs. Alan Leishman, Drew and Alana of Huntsville spent Easter with Mr. and Mrs. Cam Leishman.

Wednesday of last week Mrs. A. J. Buchanan, Mrs. H. Mainprize, Mrs. E. J. Hassard and Mrs. C. Hansen attended the annual meeting of the Synodical Society of Toronto and Kingston W.M.S. in Central Church, Galt.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press April 16, 1925

On Saturday evening a rather expensive motor accident occurred on the Acton crossroad at Mr. R. N. Brown's gate, which fortunately was not attended with serious results to the inmates of either car. Mr. John Woods, who was assisting with the farm work at Mr. Brown's, was turning into the lane, after giving the customary signal, when a Georgetown man with a McLaughlin car, who was driving a load from the football match, collided with the Ford car.

It was quite evident at the meeting of the Council on Monday evening that Daylight Saving is not popular in the town. The Council was very wise in deferring action to read correctly the pulse of the community. Daylight Saving confuses train time, as railways refuse to adopt it, it is not popular with the farmers, and therefore our merchants do not wish to run counter to their preferences; and citizens generally prefer standard time.

Provincial Police officers secured a quantity of liquor of the variety known as "moonshine" in a raid on the premises of an Erin Township farmer Monday afternoon. Two square jars and one bottle were seized. While conducting their search of the premises, County Inspector Grant states that he heard a crash, and rushing to the pantry door, discovered the fifteen-year-old daughter of the house smashing bottles containing what he alleged was liquor. A charge of keeping liquor for sale has been laid as the result of the raid.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press April 12, 1900

Business is evidently profitable with Mr. Thomas A. Morton, barber, Milton, formerly of Acton. He has just purchased Mr. E. Brook's residence on East May Street. Tenders for the new block, corner Mill and Willow Streets will be asked for in a few days, the plans are now on the way.

Postmaster Matthews has earned the thanks of a long suffering and uncomfortably crowded community by the removal of the partition at the entrance of the post office. Other improvements are in contemplation.

The pastor, Rev. J. A. McLaughlin, M.A., will preach special Easter sermons morning and evening. The choir have had several new Easter anthems under rehearsal for several weeks, and this will add to the Easterlike character of the services.

Rev. Mr. McAlpine will preach a sermon appropriate to Eastertide on Sunday afternoon. By special request Miss Lexie Clark will sing "Forever with the Lord" at this service.

At the last meeting of Esqueuing Council, Peter Gibbons and Sylvester Van Fleet were each voted \$3 as bounty for killing dogs caught worrying sheep.

Last Sunday several Oakville boys got guns and were playing Boer and Briton. A gun in the hands of a son of Henry Wilson went off. The charge broke the jaw of a 14-year-old boy named Rozier, the son of a labourer, and carried off part of his cheek and one ear. The boy's recovery is doubtful.

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