

# Free Press Editorial Page

## Happy New Year!

Labor Day seems to herald a new season far more than New Year's Day ever does.

It brings changes to almost everyone, and for none more than the young people. Their lazy, hazy summer days are over - it's back to the books. Most of them are ready for their studies, too, despite summer's many delights.

The number of school children

in Acton again makes a record - nearly 2,000 of them. That's a lot of people to be off the streets all at once, next Wednesday! And more local young graduates than ever are taking up specialized studies, especially at the community colleges.

Business picks up; meetings resume; the fair is on soon.

September...happy new year!

## Len Coxe will be missed

The death of Councillor Len Coxe has left a void on both Halton Hills and Halton Regional Councils which can never really be filled.

Len's hard work and dedication at both jobs were well known and his personal qualities made him popular in a wide circle of acquaintances both inside and outside the region's political circles.

He always had an avid interest in municipal politics, going back to the grass roots politics of Esquesing township where he never failed to show up for nomination meetings, backing candidates he felt would contribute to the welfare of the township. Several times he was asked to stand for office but due to business and other pressures he never dipped his feet into municipal politics until elected as a councillor in 1970.

He was soon at home in the township council, making a useful contribution almost from the first time he sat down at a meeting. His interest was so intense and his ability to get at the heart of problems soon marked him as an excellent councillor. In 1973 when he decided to run for deputy-reeve he was held in high estimation by voters of the township and elected to the post which also took him to the county council.

When Halton went regional in 1974 Len Coxe, intrigued by politics at the county level, naturally decided to keep his interest there as well as in the new town of Halton Hills. He was fond of saying that he

was a real citizen of the new town because he had been born near Acton and lived near Georgetown and knew and liked people from all parts of the community.

Len was acclaimed as a regional councillor for Ward Two (Esquesing) in elections for the new town and his concerns at the region and town increased when he was appointed vice-chairman of the Halton Region Conservation authority. He was also chairman of the public works committee in Halton Hills in 1974, duties which were often onerous because of the time and dedication it took in answering ratepayers' complaints.

People said, "If you want anything done then get in touch with Len Coxe," and his reputation for getting things done spread quickly by word of mouth. Many times he did it quietly without fanfare but his conscientious approach to all problems was widely recognized.

As the chief administrator for Halton Region said, "He was very aware of people and their concerns," a tribute which is another way of quoting the Great Commandment. No better tribute could be paid a man all of Halton Hills, and indeed all of Halton, will miss in the conduct of public affairs.

We extend our sympathy to his wife and family in the death of a gentleman whom we will mourn both as a good public servant and one who exemplified personal character easily admired.

## A tribute to a fine lady

Acton has lost one of its finest citizens with the death last week of Mrs. Bertha Buchanan.

For the past eight years, she fought illness with inspiring gallantry, her cheerfulness and acceptance a lesson to others.

Many are still here who remember her as the enthusiastic and energetic young teacher who came to town and later married the dentist. It was a romantic chapter for her young girl pupils! In those days a teacher who married could not possibly continue to work outside the home, but Mrs. Buchanan was welcomed back as a supply teacher many times.

In her church, her contributions

included inspiring a new group, the Daughters of Knox. And they in turn have just organized the newest church organization for young women, so aptly called the Bertha Buchanan group.

Bertha and Allan joined clubs and thoroughly enjoyed being a part of them. They shared each other's interests, too. They attended the band concerts, the high school dances. Lately they began to travel widely. They have been a happy couple, fond of people and their town.

As Rev. McKenzie pointed out at the funeral, many have their own personal memories of this gracious, kindly person.

## Of this and that

An advertisement in today's paper reminds amateur photographers of the special Free Press competition at the fair again this year. To encourage entries, the requirements are made simple. Nobody will be disqualified on a technicality.

Now that Solicitor-General George Kerr has had his swim in Hamilton Harbor, will he be trying

Acton's last filter bed next? It's another clean-up program in his riding that's coming along successfully.

They say that these days "24-hour service" can mean three eight-hour days!

The best way to keep friendships from breaking is not to drop them.

## The trail users' code

The latest newsletter of the Bruce Trail Association tells us the club has 7,500 members - and that an estimated 100,000 people use the trail!

The Association is trying to get more members to strengthen its attempts to preserve the Niagara Escarpment for public use.

Several hikes are planned in this area.

Here's the Trail Users' Code, as it is in the newsletter, for the benefit of local, unorganized hikers.

"Hike only along the marked route. Do not climb fences—use the stiles. Carry out all garbage (if you can carry it in full, you can carry it out empty). Build fires only in the places provided, or better still, carry a lightweight stove. Leave flowers and plants for the others to enjoy. Never strip bark from trees, as it will kill them. Keep dogs on the leash near farm land. Walk around the edges of farmer's fields, not across them. Protect and do not disturb wildlife. Leave only your thanks and take nothing but photographs."



## Home for hobbits in Esquesing

THIS ROOT FORMED shelter on 25 sideroad, Esquesing, could have been a perfect shelter for the adventuresome hobbits of J.R.R. Tolkien in his trilogy, The Lord of The Rings. The hobbits, Frodo Baggins and the "Fellowship of the ring" set out from Hobbiton in the Shire to destroy the one all-powerful ring in the cracks of doom in Mordor, where the shadows lie. Wendy Thompson of the Free Press took the photo.



## Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

A friend brought to my notice a news story the other day. He wanted my opinion of its contents.

The story was headed: Former War Prisoners Hold Prairie Reunion. It stated that more than 500 former prisoners of war from Britain, the United States and Canada gathered at Moose Jaw recently for a 30th reunion.

The rest of the story was a little nauseating. The reunion was held in "an atmosphere not unlike the prison camps they survived in wartime." There was barbed wire, a bazooka, two machine-guns, a German flag, people dressed up in German uniforms, and caricatures of wartime German officers.

I gave my reaction to my friend: "A bunch of middle-aged boys clinging to the only real thing that ever happened to them."

That sounds harsh, at first glance, if it's possible to glance at something and hear it. But it satisfied my friend.

"It's incredible," he said. "I too would like to see some of my old friends from prison camp, but to talk, not to play games."

I agreed. I would like to see some of my old friends from prison camp. For about half an hour. Not for a three-day reunion, with wives tagging along.

And perhaps this is why I don't attend the annual reunion of former prisoners-of-war, though I am invited every year.

And I guess I'm not the only one. There were 500 at this reunion, from three

countries. Where are all the others? There were 10,000 airmen in the camp I was in, only one of many.

A couple of other items emerged from the news story. Guess where the chaps were entertained? In the officers' mess at Moose Jaw.

Secondly, it was the first reunion of POWs in 30 years to be held outside Toronto.

What does this suggest? To me, a little clique of Toronto-based ex-officers who have kept the thing going, for who knows what adolescent satisfaction.

Whatever you may have heard or read elsewhere, prisoners of war who were officers didn't suffer all that much. I know. I was there.

We were not required to work in factories or mines or on farms as were "other ranks." I know of no Canadian officer who starved to death, though grub was mighty slim in the last few months.

Perhaps one in 1,000 was beaten up for some misdemeanor. I was one of them, and it was my own fault.

It was no bed of roses, and I don't minimize the skill and daring of those who tried to escape, but, looking back, it was all juvenile and Boy Scoutish: lookouts, secret passwords, disguises, caving-in tunnels, interminable planning, and end results about as dramatic as one degree Celsius.

There was suffering of course, but it was not beatings and torture and starvation,

not for Canadians. It was not physical, but psychological.

As far as military discipline went, most of the bodies had far more freedom than they had had on their units. But there was the simple fact that you were in jail, and somebody would shoot you if you tried to get out (quite the opposite to modern Canadian jails).

And there was the great feeling of waste, of knowing that the best years of your life were going down the drain, while other young men were kissing girls and drinking beer and staying up all night and doing all the other foolish things young men do.

There was boredom and monotony and stagnation and frustration and a little lurking fear that the latrine rumors might be true—that Hitler had ordered the SS to eliminate all POWs when Germany faced ultimate defeat.

But there were compensations. There was a tremendous sense of oneness against the enemy. There was the fascinating meeting of different ideas and cultures, a great and almost immediate education in itself.

Throw into one room the following: a young actor from the London stage, a kid from a prairie farm, a Glasgow toughie, a Dublin hooligan, an Australian sheep farmer, a Welsh poet, a Rhodesian schoolboy, a Norwegian railworker. That's a bare sample.

Toss in an American from California and a West Indian singing calypso and a Belgian bookmaker and a Polish Count and a few other assorted odds and sods, and you had a typical group—at least in my camp.

I wonder where they all are? Most of them, certainly, are a long way from Moose Jaw and a small group from Toronto whose members can afford to fly to a convention and try to recapture something that is gone forever.

For the same reason, I have stopped going to reunions of old fighter pilots. I went to a couple. Enjoyed them. But there is a tendency to maudlinism, exaggeration and downright lying about long-gone days. These pot-bellied, bald, wife-ridden, right-leaning, class-conscious, middle-aged poops are my old comrades? No way.

My memories of prison camp and fighter-piloting are far more fun than meeting some red-faced paunch who roars over the noise from the bar: "Hey, yeah! Aren't you Jack? Jack Wiley? Yeah! We were at Sagan together (I was at Barth). Wanna tame the wife

All "the wife" wants is, not to meet me, but to be sure that George is on his feet for the final evening's ball, at which she will peer, with her sad, crumpled 50-year old face, at all the other sad, crumpled 50-year old ladies and wonder what the hell the kids are up to while she's hoofing it up in Moose Jaw.

I told a little of this to my friend. He understood. He was a German officer with Rommel, badly wounded in North Africa spent three years in a U.S. prison camp and is now a Canadian citizen.

Where are the snows of yesteryear?

Mrs. Grace McEnery

## The Free Press Back Issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, September 1, 1955

One of the best located business blocks in Acton at the north west corner of Mill and Willow Sts. and now occupied by Milton's Department store will in all probability see a big change. Plans are being formulated for the bank of Montreal to demolish the present building and erect a fine new building on the corner.

After several years absence, the children parade in the fall fair will be revived this year. Also will be announced. The young men will march into the fair grounds in the music of the Acton Citizens Band. The fair is to be held September 10 and 11.

Mr. Jerry Fisher of Esquesing entertained a number of young people of the community last Friday evening in an old fashioned hay ride. Following a drive through the country they returned to the farmer's home where they enjoyed a most most Miss Helen Walker of Esquesing.

A real estate advertisement read, six trees, brick house, surrounded by shade trees in a quiet setting in Esquesing. Lovely lawn, sunny veranda, modern kitchen, set-up with water in tap, clean carpets in every room, extra large bathroom with linen closet, new furnace in full basement. Don't miss this chance. See you at the 1955 Fall fair.

Clark and Betty Armstrong are happy to announce the arrival of their daughter, Louise Marie, Sunday August 22, 1955 at South General Hospital.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, August 27, 1925

Miss Bertha Brown who went to London, England, in June, 1924, to spend a year teaching in the London school, arrived home on Monday morning. Miss Brown had a varied but very interesting experience having taught in about twenty schools during the year.

A letter received this week from Rev. J. Gulp says he and Mrs. Gulp are now getting comfortably settled in their new home at 155 Palo Alto Avenue, Mountain View, California.

Last Thursday night, chosen for the garden party in the park under the auspices of St. Alban's church, was not ideal garden party weather, as the sudden drop of temperature made it rather cool for an audience at an outdoor function. However, a fair crowd attended the function. With the exception of the Acton Citizens Band, whose services seem indispensable to a complete garden party programme, the artists were all new to an Acton audience.

Mrs. E. E. Perryman and little daughter, Lena May of Brougham, returned home after spending a couple of weeks at the parental home. Misses Jennie Allan and Jean Burt accompanied her back for a few days.

Mr. and Mrs. N. P. McLam enjoyed a very pleasant motor trip during the week. They went as far as Buffalo, had a pleasant visit with Rev. and Mrs. C.D. Draper at Niagara Falls, and made enjoyable calls at Hamilton, Grimsby and other points in the Niagara Peninsula.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, August 30, 1900

The last harvest of the nineteenth century, for this section, has been safely garnered, nearly every farmer having his crop now well housed. It is a grand crop and most encouraging to the husbandman. In conversation the other day with Mr. Alex Waldie he said: "The crop this year has been the best all around yield we have had for thirty-two years. We have had, it is true, better yields of hay and perhaps better at times of some of the grains, but taken as a whole, the crop is an exceptionally good one." We all rejoice at the good fortune of our farmer friends.

Most of the matches in the singles of the tennis tournament on Acton Tennis Club's courts have been played off, but two or three remain yet. The tournament has revived the interest in the game and the club's courts are now much in demand.

Through the efforts of Chief Harvey, who has been well supported by the officers, Acton Fire Brigade has been brought to a commendable state of efficiency, and this has been most satisfactorily demonstrated when their services have been brought into requisition at fires and at the regular monthly practices. A feature of the Chief's efforts which will all appreciate is the studied care with which he endeavors from time to time to plan for methods of operation, so as to be well informed in the event of fires breaking out at hazardous places or points difficult of access.

## THE ACTON FREE PRESS

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