

# OUR READERS WRITE:

## Art Meunier

# Man's fear results in 42 years in prison . . .

### Gone but not forgotten

The company's annual picnic,  
For the clasp of "old hands"  
A situation of appreciation,  
To the men of many lands.

To, Englishmen and Irishmen,  
Italian, French, there too,  
With fighting wit, each did a bit,  
To pull the company through.

Beneath the stately maple trees,  
And the spread of verdant grass,  
In silent prayer we tarried there,  
Like champions in the class.

White hearts were filled with memories,  
Some joys and sadness too,  
In perfect weather, got together,  
With everyone we knew.

It was grand to see out "Bob" again,  
In good humor as of old,  
He was the kind that filled our mind,  
With stories that he told.

Then we chatted with our Charlie,  
The guy who set our stride,

When we stopped and swore, he'd say "One More"  
On the upper leather side.

How I used to cuss those foremen,  
In their white collars too,  
But, in my heart, I took their part,  
They had their job to do.

I looked around and spied our "Wes"  
Who was chatting with our "Claude".  
This gallant pair, could make us swear,  
When they drew out the sword.

Now, there is "John" and "Peter" left today,  
In the pink of health condition,  
So young and strong to march along,  
And carry out TRADITION.

So, there above the sacred archway,  
That surrounds the office door,  
It's still the same, the founders name,  
The name of one BEARDMORE.

Victor Smith  
R.R. 2, Rockwood.

### Wants more class pictures

Acton Free Press,  
Acton, Ontario.  
Dear Sir:

It was with great delight I saw the Acton public school picture of 1941 in your paper. I went to high school with many of these people.

Would it be possible to print a school picture or pictures of the students of Lorne public school between the years of 1938 and

1945?

I was a student there and unfortunately do not have any pictures. This would be very much appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Joan (Holmes) McEnery

Editor's Note: We will be happy to publish these class pictures if someone will lend them to us.

### Looking for grads

Winchester, Ont.  
June 29, 1977.

Dear Editor:

The Alumni of Winchester High School are planning a get together for the Willard years 1942-62, to be held Friday, Saturday and Sunday, August 5th, 6th and 7th in the Winchester Community Centre.

The Winchester High School and all

records were destroyed by fire in 1962. We request the assistance of your news media in our search for former students.

Any student wishing to attend may receive further information by contacting: Mrs. Ethel Mussell, R.R. No. 4, Winchester, Ontario, K0C 2K0.

Sincerely Yours,  
Ethel Mussell.

### Our need for a miracle

The Breezes Trailer Park,  
Fairy Lake, Acton.  
138 Willowridge Rd.  
Weston M9R 3Z7, Ont.

Dear Editor:

In viewing and listening to the various people putting forward their pet theories for curing the ills in this world, and realizing that none of the potential leaders agree on anything, I have come to the conclusion that unless someone with all the leadership qualities comes to our aid, I'm afraid this old world will have had it and it will take a miracle to put it right again. This poem I have written, I think, covers what we need for our miracle.

Yours respectfully,  
John Herron.

"The Question — The Answer"  
Is there a man to save the World?  
A leader ere it's too late.  
A man of vision we can trust

To help the World hold back its fate.  
This man would be a tower of strength,  
Endowed with infinite wisdom.  
A man who knows what ails this World,  
To whom all men would listen.

Compassionate, with high ideals,  
Tolerant of creed, and color.  
A dedicated man of peace,  
Who treats all men as brother.  
This man, would love humanity,  
No fault of theirs antagonize.  
To him the task of saving it,  
Would justify all sacrifice.  
Corruption free, no greed or envy,  
Wiser than the wisest sage.  
Is there such a man as this,  
Somewhere in this modern age.  
The question asked, the world awaits.  
The answer, borne on nuclear wind.  
"Not today is there such a man.  
Remember? We crucified him.

John Herron.

### Complex refuses to die

The much-debated municipal complex refuses to disappear from the scene, despite much pre-election furor. A study has been made by department heads on municipal office accommodation, and so far has not been discussed publicly.

Tuesday night Mayor Tom Hill suggested a committee of one councillor from each ward and staff members make up a committee to come up with recommendations to solve the office space problem.

Councillor Mike Armstrong suggested the councillors who feel there is no need for additional space should be on the committee. "Then they might understand the problem."

The mayor said he would leave it to the councillors from each ward to decide who would represent the ward on the committee.

Terence O'Callaghan, 59 Greenore Cres., drove first into one ditch on Guelph Street, Glen Williams, then crossed the road to land in the opposite ditch last Thursday at 7:35 p.m.

(Continued from page 1)

once hurt anyone physically, as, he says, it is not in his nature.

In the 42 years he spent in prison, Mr. Meunier stayed in 105 penal institutions. In that time, he spent a total of eight or nine weeks free, and 21 years in solitary confinement.

He ended up in prison in Kilby Alabama in 1962, locally nicknamed "Devil's Island". His crime was fraud, and for that, he spent 31 months chained in a room with the door welded shut, and no window. A collar was welded onto his neck, and he had a chain long enough that he could reach the door, and to lie down. The other end of the chain was attached to the wall.

His food was slipped through a small slit in the door, and newspapers were sent into him, on which he did his daily bathroom duties. He then pushed the newspaper back through the same slit, when he was finished with it. He was fed a piece of cornbread, and three cups of water a day. An operation on

his gall bladder was also necessary, which he had to endure without any anaesthetic.

Receives challenge  
His big break in life however, occurred while under these conditions at "Devil's Island" in 1970. The warden challenged him to learn to read and write, something he had never bothered to learn before. A teacher would sit outside his cell daily, and he eventually graduated from elementary and then secondary school.

The first book he ever read was the Bible, the Book of St. John. Mr. Meunier said he read one passage, and suddenly realized his life was going nowhere. He explained it suddenly dawned on him there was a whole world out behind the bars he had never cared existed. He looked at his life, and wanted more for it.

The correspondence courses soon began, and he received degrees from Queen's University in Kingston, and ended up with the Osgoode Hall law course, Toronto.

After ten years on "Devil's Island", he was the only man in history to ever be paroled from solitary confinement.

From there, he went to Atlanta, where he realized he still was not ready to adjust to society. He found out he could be convicted for threatening the life of the president, so off went the letters to President Richard Nixon, and later Gerald Ford. Once again he found himself back home, behind bars.

Opens eyes  
A friend of his visited him while in jail in Sandstone Minnesota, and called him a coward. The friend told him it took more courage to live in society, than to commit crimes. It was then that Mr. Meunier decided he wanted to get out into society and show his friend he could do it.

Just before he left, the prisoners declared him ambassador for them in Canada and the United States.

In March, when he was released from Sandstone, Mr. Meunier was deported back to his native Canada. The RCMP met Mr. Meunier at the border and arrested him for an outstanding offense, several years before. He

found out later, the police were acting on the instructions of Jake Epp, Member of Parliament in a Manitoba riding.

Mr. Epp explained that he was arrested as a ruse, to keep him there until Mr. Epp himself could arrive. The M.P. said he feared Mr. Meunier would panic and run away again. The old charges against the ex-convict were dropped, as he had paid restitution to the victim, and he went to Winnipeg, as a guest of the Canadian government.

Meets teenager  
While in a hotel there, he met his first teenager, Richard Erdmann, 16. The two became instant friends, and after Mr. Meunier went to Ottawa, he sent for Richard to be his chauffeur / confidant, and to star in the movie of his life.

While in Ottawa, he had lunch with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and other parliamentarians. They discussed penal institutions, and he was appointed acting advisor of such institutions, to work with the attorney general on prison reform in Ontario, Mr. Meunier explains.

Last week, Premier Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick, asked Mr. Meunier to join the probe of the committee examining the prison fire in St. John which claimed 20 prisoners' lives.

Mr. Meunier has, at present, a court case suing the United States government for more than 15 million dollars for various actions against him during the 42 years in prison. Four of the individual suits he has already won, which include everything from improper medical attention, to violation of his mail and theft of his personal property.

With the money he receives, he plans to build a boys' town in British Columbia for people like himself who are afraid to face society.

Although he has been physically and emotionally scarred for life, Mr. Meunier

says he is able to forgive the guards who beat, kicked and hurt him. He is also able to forgive his adoptive parents for the life they gave him before he went to jail for the first time. He can forgive these people, he says, but he cannot forget.

Now that he is out of prison for good, and only thinking of his past inmates, Mr. Meunier is able to enjoy the things he only dreamed of having for real. He devoured a banana split after longing for one for 20 years when he saw a picture in a magazine. He had his first ride on a subway in Toronto, and numerous other things.

His friends  
He did his time with some of the greats, as movie land has made them out to be. The Bird Man of Alcatraz, Robert Stroud, was a good friend of his. Vito Genovese, a Mafia leader, Momo Giancana, Joe Valachi, Jimmy Hoffa, the Great Imposter, Ferdinand Demara, Al Capone, to name a few were all sharing the same prison as Mr. Meunier at one time or another. Yet in spite of all the famous criminals he has been imprisoned with, Mr. Meunier deplores the thought of anyone making a hero out of his life. He is not proud of his past, but didn't realize there was any other life for him at the time.

Two heart attacks later, one in 1976 and the most recent being a few months ago, and the discovery of diabetes have made him slow down his life and appreciate what he has now. He feels God has meant the Boys' Town to be his objective in life. "I was down at the bottom of the pit," he says, "and have nowhere to go but up."

Because of all the publicity afforded him through national media, Mr. Meunier received many offers from writers wanting to pen his biography. He is currently negotiating with writers, as well as publishers, and has spoken to major motion picture studios about making the movie.

His public relations secre-

tary lives outside of Acton, and it was while on a visit to her, that Mr. Meunier decided to move to the area. He quickly found a place to live for himself and Richard, and moved in last week.

He has made his whereabouts known to the local police department and has made friends with a few of the businessmen. However, Mr. Meunier is concerned about Richard. The 16-year-old was uprooted from his home environment in order to live with Mr. Meunier to become more aware of his part in the

movie, and as a result is in a strange town, with no friends his own age. He plans to attend Acton high school in the fall, but that is not enough.

They both look forward to being accepted by the people of the community, and to lead normal lives. They need the help and understanding of the people of the area to do so however. Of all his years doing hard time and of all the many months of solitary confinement, Mr. Meunier finds that loneliness is the hardest thing he has ever had to endure.

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