

Free Press Editorial Page

The year's cheers

Herewith, a New Year's look back over 1977 and all the people who helped things happen here in Acton and district. . .
A few cheers. . .
A few boos. . .

Boo . . . boo . . .

First the bad news.
Boos. . .
Boos to the people who think the only place to shop is out-of-town. Look in our shops again—they are improving and increasing.

Boo to the fire hall-town hall complex, which has spoiled both buildings. The hasty project has defaced the town hall, our only historic public building. And the firefighters deserve a more functional building with ample parking.

Hurrah . . . hurrah

Cheers for the new Business Improvement Area, whose members are finding it's the best way to get things done. All the participating merchants have one voice.

Cheers for the attractive new sidewalks and the schedule of downtown improvements which promises more attractive and welcoming features to come.

Cheers for the planned Leather Theme, which can mean a lot to our town once it gets going. We could be famous yet.

Cheers for the Business Association, whose members are banding together to promote their stores with block advertising, flyers, and the happy Back to Acton Days.

Cheers for the Meals on Wheels, which are delivered to as many as 15 people now. Cheers for the recipients, who are taking part in a new venture. They pay for the meals themselves, and the volunteers look after delivery.

Cheers for the Community Services Centre and co-ordinator Terry Grubbe, who added the Meals on Wheels to their list of services. Cheers for the agencies, doctors, lawyers, nurses and such who work out of this new office, and to the people who find benefit there.

Cheers for Dr. Buchanan's gift to the town, the memorial chapel in the cemetery.

Cheers for our protectors, the police. Let's have more of them out walking along the streets with us.

Cheers for the staffs of the schools which saw so many great changes this past year.

And cheers to the students who adapted to the changes by dressing up for their new quarters. Special cheers for high school boys in suits!

Cheers for the Shoemakers, who again this year helped so many families through their most difficult days.

Cheers for the churches, there and ready to strengthen anyone.

Cheers for the library staff, ensconced in their cosy, welcoming building across the pretty bridge.

Cheers to Ron Waples who won more than 300 races and \$1 million dollars in purses on Canadian tracks in 1976.

Cheers for animals and very little children, who can be counted on to give us a laugh.

Cheers for the craftspeople, increasing in number who fashion unique articles right at home.

Cheers for Lorna Clarke, whose idea of compiling a list of French-speaking residents, to aid travellers, has caught on. A friend of hers heard it mentioned while listening to a CBC broadcast in Vermont recently!

Cheers for clergymen, doctors, dentists, nurses and chiropractors who have our interests sincerely at heart.

A new start

"God bless thy year!
Thy coming in, thy going out,
Thy rest, thy travelling about.
The rough, the smooth,
The bright, the drear,
God bless thy year!"
Old English Blessing

Boo to those who say there's nothing to do in Acton.
Boo to Darcy McKeough, who permits reviews of regional government in other places, but not here. Yet. (Cheers to his own staff in Toronto, who for Christmas presented him with a figurine of a downhill skier, labelled "Regional government, downhill all the way.")

Boo to complainers who don't do anything about it. How about a Letter to the Editor at least?

Cheers for the leaders of youth groups and teams, and for all the people who let themselves be elected president of anything at all. You do your bit, and let yourselves in for the usual criticism.

Cheers for the super recreation facilities in town and the people who operate them. Cheers for all the special interest courses run by the recreation department, board of education, and the Y, and even through craft shops. All these things make life more interesting and enjoyable.

Cheers for our post office staff! OUR mail gets through. Let's blame all those hold-ups on Toronto.

Cheers for the Town Hall Restoration committee, who got organized, backed by 2,000 names on signatures, and were baffled by the lack of co-operation from council. May they find a solution to the problem, and save our town's only historic public building.

Cheers for the Actonians for Action committee, who heard so many words of complaint about regional government and decided to do something about it. Their petition, with 2,000 names, for a review of regional government was rejected by Ontario treasurer Darcy McKeough. They'll not quit.

Cheers for the works departments, who are out at all hours plowing, sanding, and making repairs.

Cheers for the Citizen of the Year, Frank Oakes, and the people who received other special awards of 1977, the Queen's Jubilee medals - Mick Holmes and Edith Hilfman.

Cheers for the young people organizing the Coffee House.

Cheers for the high school glass collectors; recycling is coming.

Cheers for Acton's Citizens' Band, an outstandingly fine group of musicians. Cheers for the church organists and all the people who like to sing. Cheers for the disc jockeys and local dance bands, who liven the winter's evenings.

Cheers to the Queen, who celebrated her Jubilee so royally.

Cheers for our councillors and school board trustee, who spend so many hours representing us in important places.

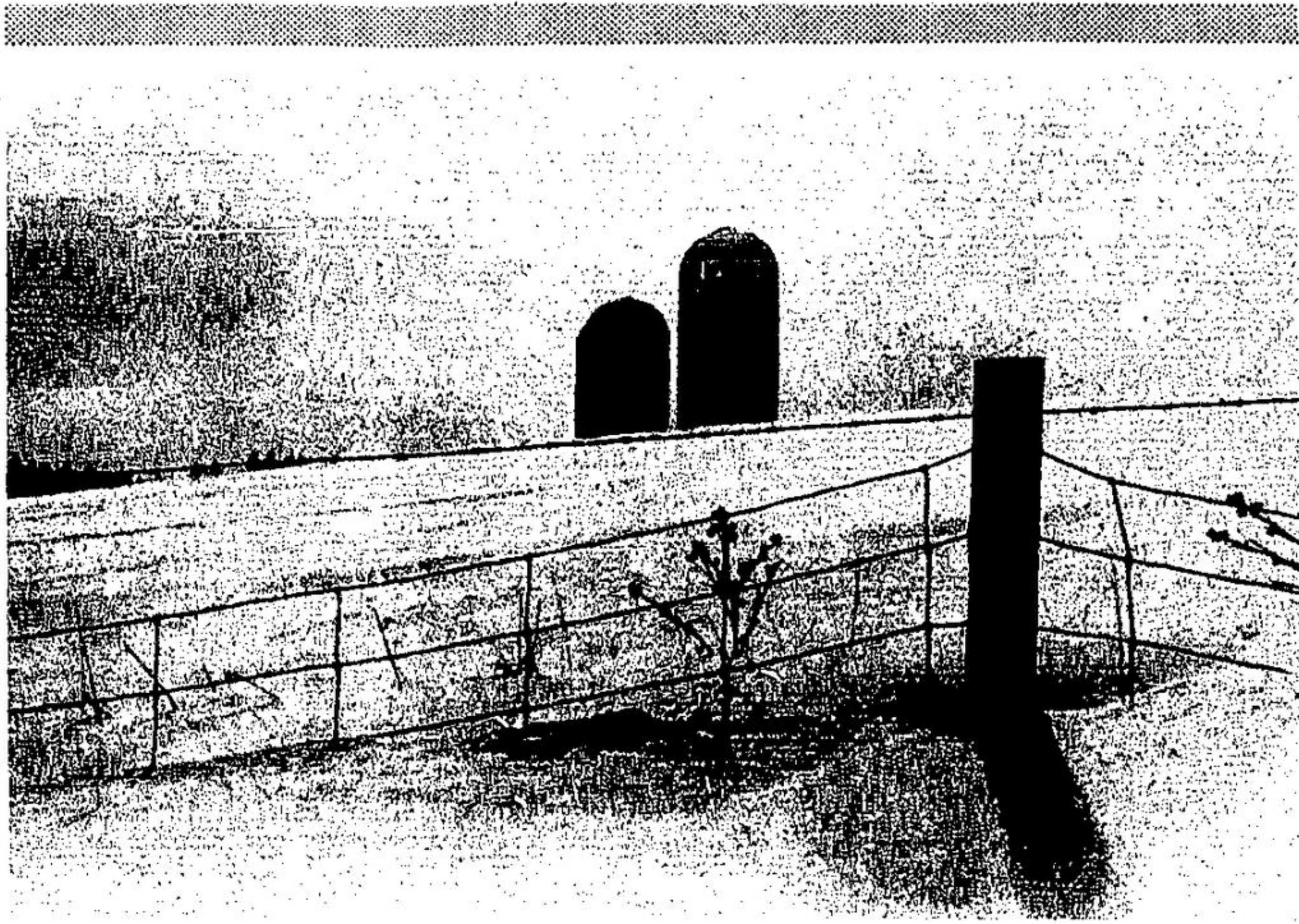
Cheers for all the people on the street who say "Nice Day" whenever the sun shines.

Cheers for the people who feed the ducks. If we have a bird sanctuary, we must tend it.

Cheers to all the doers, rather than critics. Even when they're wrong.

Cheers to our advertisers, contributors and readers, who make the Free Press possible every week of the year.

In Buenos Aires, office workers start the new year by tossing mountains of paper out the windows onto the streets below. It's the traditional way of clearing their desks. Isn't that a good idea?



Barbed wire could not keep out snow



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

Don't you get a little tired of the touchiness of modern society in which, no matter where you step, it's on somebody's toes, no matter what you say or write, it's a slur on someone's background, color, creed or conviction?

About the only areas left in which one may chance a remark without fear of inflicting a wound are politics and sex.

It's extremely difficult to inflict even a bruise on a politician. He must have a fat ego in the first place, and he quickly acquires a brass hide to go with it. Add an ability to talk out of both sides of the mouth at once, and a certain skill in straddling fences, and you have cabinet material.

In the field of sex, there don't seem to be any limits any more to what can be said, presented or simulated. Movies, magazines and theatre club us over the head with raw, unembellished sex, or seek to titillate the spook in each of us with highly-embellished, freaky sex until the whole once-exciting subject has become a crashing bore.

Aside from sex and politics then, there is scarcely an aspect of the human scene where even angels fear to tread, lest they step on someone's sensibilities.

Ethnic jokes are out, black is beautiful, gefillte fish is glorious, Rhodesia is rotten, poor people are more noble than rich people, gay is gorgeous, and the only real sin is to be old.

Lord forbid that we should ever go back to the days when a Catholic was a "mick" or a "dogan", a black person was a "nigger," an Italian was a "wop" a Chinese was a "chink," and so on.

We need some politicians with guts, who don't give a diddle for the popularity polls, and who would give us the facts of life without any sugar coating.

We are developing into a society with a snobbish sort of reverse prejudice in which everybody is leaning over backwards in order to appear not even to be breathing on anyone else.

As a result, we are losing much of that good old Canadian crustiness and turning into a nation of nice nellas in whose mouths margarine wouldn't melt.

Even our media reflect this trend in our society. With few exceptions, our newspapers are as bland as blanco mange. The letters to the editor have more bite, and are often better written, than our editorials.

Our magazines are either tiresomely "liberal" or narrowly nationalistic, or both. Tied in tight bundles, they make better firewood, than they do reading matter.

Television and radio news reporting, most of it culled from the late editions of newspapers, is incredibly unimaginative and repetitious. TV programs, on the whole, are pure pap, offensive by being so inoffensive.

Public figures are so frightened of offending somebody or losing a few votes, that their public utterances come out as mush wrapped in marshmallow.

What this country, and this society, need is a good dash of cold water from somewhere, to wake us from our mind-numbing, paralyzing "niceness".

We need a Bob Edwards or a Grattan O'Leary to jolt us with some honest vituperation, some colorful namecalling, some hard facts, and some common sense.

We need some educators with backbone to tell the people who claim that Huckleberry Finn is racist and The Merchant of Venice is anti-semitic and Catch-22 is dirty and The Diviners is disgusting, to go fly a kite.

We need about 10,000 fewer smart-ass commentators on what is wrong with this country, and a few hundred honest men or women to tell us what is right with it.

We need far fewer "reasonable" people and a heck of a lot more "unreasonable" people, who would refuse to accept something just because it's always been done that way, or someone might be upset if things were changed.

We need some thundering editorials, some pulpits pounded, some stiff jail sentences for racism, some honesty in high places.

We certainly don't need a "good war" or a "good depression" to make Canadians stop whining and bitching and mealy-mouthing, and we certainly need a "good" something to turn us back into the sturdy, individualistic people we used to be.

I haven't the answers. I'm no prophet. But I'm sick to the ears of a society that thinks: old people are a nuisance; young people are never a nuisance; supermarkets are sexy; social workers can make miracles; and everybody is as good as everybody else.

Perhaps if you agree with me to some extent, you would enjoy reading The Golden Age of B. S. by Fred C. Dobbs. It's rambling and it's coarse in spots, but it's right on.



THIS ROADSTER PULLED OFF the highway through Rockwood for a snow job sometime ago.

Back issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, January 3, 1968

Bill Sheppard, who has retired from the town, was a special guest at the works department's Christmas get-together at the pump house. Mr. Sheppard began work with the town crew in 1956. He was presented with a wallet on retirement and other mementos by Mayor Les Doby, clerk-administrator Jack McGeachie, superintendent Al Doby and councillor Bob Drinkwater.

Acton Parks and Recreation committee, plagued by a sick refrigeration plant at the community centre, decided to "go for the bundle" and order a new compressor to replace the existing one at a special meeting of the twin-hatted board last Wednesday night.

Telephone workmen removed the two telephones from the C.N.R. station in Acton last week, the final link agent C. Perry has with the outside world of business and commerce.

Cyril Bishop, last year's vice-chairman, was named public school board chairman for 1968 at the board's inaugural meeting Tuesday evening in the Robert Little school staff room. Vic Bristow was named vice-chairman.

A farewell to Christmas, New Year's and even to the whole year-long centennial celebrations will be said around a blazing fire this Saturday evening, January 6.

Occasion: the annual Chamber of Commerce Christmas tree burning, and mayor Les Doby is all set to light the fire at 7.30 p.m.

20 years ago

Taken from an issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, January 9, 1958

1958 arrived in Acton with the traditional horn tooting and celebrating in various sections of town but fortunately without an accident.

Acton's first baby of the New Year is Peter Jeffery. He was born at 12.40 on January 1 at Guelph General Hospital.

Acton's 1958 council had their inaugural meeting on Monday, January 6, at the council chambers. Members are Councillors G. V. Barbeau, Reeve J. M. Greer, Councillor J. Goy, Clerk J. McGeachie, Councillor W. J. McLeod, Councillor J. T. Hurst, Councillor E. Footitt and Councillor B. D. Rachlin.

Over 100 Scouts, Guides, Cubs, and Brownies with their leaders gathered in the Parish Hall recently to watch films on Life Saving, Water Safety and Artificial Respiration, sponsored by the St. John Ambulance Brigade, Acton Division.

Town workmen made a special trip on Friday, January 3 to pick up Christmas trees. Town foreman A. Kirkness announced this week about only half the amount of trees used in Acton this year had been put out for pickup.

During the holiday season, Carmen Woodburn passed his swimming test at the Guelph pool and received his first star certificate and Paul Phelan received his first and second certificate.

Greenock Women's Institute toured the plant of the Acton Free Press on Wednesday afternoon, to view the operation of the local plant.

G. A. Dills, editor-in-chief of the Dills Printing and Publishing Company, conducted the ladies on the tour, explaining the various machines and their purpose.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, January 5, 1928

Esqueing township elections: reeve Thomas Leslie; deputy reeve M. J. Carton; council George Cleave, W. G. Appleby and George Curry.

Nassagaweya: reeve F. McNiven, council L. Crawford, G. Lamb, T. Near, W. King.

Tom Troop was the lucky winner of the 12 pound candy cane in Wiles' window. Master Jack Blow fell and struck his head and for several days lay in a semi-conscious state. On Friday the little lad took a turn for the better.

The demand for the products of Mason Knitting plant has so increased that it must be operated all year now.

The short course in Farm Mechanics is being held at the town hall.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, January 3, 1878

An inquest was held at Crewson's Corners on Thursday, December 27 by Dr. Freeman of Georgetown over the body of the man who was killed on the track the previous night. A jury was empanelled and inquired into the facts of the case, but could not come to anything definite as to the name or where he was from. The back of his skull was crushed in, which, coupled with the fact that his hat was found on the track, led the jury to conclude that he had been struck by a passing train and thrown into the culvert. The jury therefore returned the verdict to that effect. The remains of the deceased were interred in the cemetery in Crewson's Corners after the inquest.

D. Rolph Lee, dentist, in town for two weeks. All requiring first class dentistry should call at English Church PARSONAGE.

Be sure and poll your vote next Monday for the men you think will do the most for the advancement of the village.

On Sunday last, the ministers of the several churches referred to the fact that the old year was near closing and impressed on the hearers the necessity of turning over a new leaf with the New Year.

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Business and Editorial Office



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