

Free Press Editorial Page

An empty place

One of Henry Harbers' jobs on Wednesday mornings was the preparing of the editorial page for printing.

As you can see, it is different from all the other pages. And so it requires a more experienced hand. There are no ads to move to a place where they fit better. The type is set in wider measure, so there are fewer options in filling the determined space. The pictures can't be changed about as they are on other pages, and the articles can seldom be cut to make them fit.

Henry had the skill, judgment, accuracy and patience needed for this page, and it had become customary for him to do it.

His capabilities as a printer have been known to us for the past 13 years, but his strengths as a person have become better realized over the past eight years. When he learned then he had lost all kidney function, he began a draining program of hospitalization and medication that, inevitably, led to his death December 29 at the age of 38.

Our hearts are wrenched as we see the empty spot in our plant. We recall his courage, cheerfulness and religious faith. He encouraged us; he made us smile; he never complained; never showed anger.

A few months ago, he agreed that an article in the newspaper about his experience with his own dialysis equipment at home might encourage people to donate their kidneys for transplants.

Even then, he knew it was too late for him. His damaged system could not have handled a major operation.

Henry's wife Nellie was a pillar of support to him, and acted as a technician operating the complicated dialysis equipment. Their two little boys were his pride and joy.

Perhaps lives will be saved as a result of Henry's illness, through transplant donations and increased medical knowledge.

Certainly the lives of his family and many friends have already been enriched through knowing him.

Is your chimney clean?

With a cold winter well settled in, those who are fortunate enough to have fireplaces or wood-burning stoves are making good use of these facilities. We all know the coziness and warmth of a nice fire blazing in the safety of a well-constructed fireplace. But how often do we think of the chimney? All too often, only when we are frantically looking up the emergency number of the Fire Department to report a chimney fire.

There have been several chimney fires here already this season.

Chimney fires are caused by blockages, whether it be from unburnt wood particles or a bird's nest built last spring. Most often, however, it is the former of the two. The use of green or wet wood is the instigator in this situation. Large particles of unburnt wood are

drawn up the chimney and cling to the insides where they accumulate and dry out due to the heat of the fire. After they dry out, they are ignited by a spark from the fireplace and this is where the phe call comes in.

This type of fire is common around this time of year and can be very easily prevented by simply checking for blockage prior to its use.

If the chimney is blocked, you should have it cleaned. You can easily clean the chimney yourself by tying chains on a rope and lowering the chains down and knocking the debris down into the fireplace, our firefighters report. Care should be taken to ensure that the debris is contained to the fireplace so that it does not damage floors or rugs. A little time spent now could easily prevent a lot of inconvenience later.

Which doctor has answer?

The future has arrived, Education Minister Thomas Wells told a conference on declining enrolment in the schools, a fact which has hit the educational community with telling effect in the last few months.

"And quite obviously, the problems have definitely not gone away," Mr. Wells notes.

Those who saw the declining birthrate as the avenue to a better quality of life and education may have second thoughts if they listen to Dr. Robert Jackson, the commissioner enquiring into declining enrolments in Ontario.

He says, "Our present depressed economic conditions, and the prevailing and utterly discouraging incidence of high levels of unemployment and underemployment of our young people... can only lead to continued low levels of fertility, and probably to further declines, to points far below replacement levels.

"Dr. Jackson says his conclusions are based on first-hand experience with young people, not only on statistics.

"Most of the young people I talk to, and I try to talk to as many as possible, tell me they simply cannot afford to have children. Young professional women often say they won't be able to re-enter the job market if they leave to have children," Dr. Jackson said. Sociological factors such as the postponement of marriage, high incidence of abortions, availability of birth control pills and contraceptives are also important elements, he said.

The birth rate has fallen below zero population growth to a record low of 1.8 children for each set of parents. Replacement level is 2.1 per set.

And Dr. Jackson says it is economic conditions and the prevailing and discouraging incidence of high

levels of unemployment has made young people lose faith in themselves and in the country's future. "My gut feeling right now is that we are in trouble, and in serious trouble, in all other aspects of our lives as well as education."

He believes the falling birth rate will have severe implications on the future. He doesn't expect there will be a baby boom to save "the gravest crisis in education we have ever seen."

Discouraging words. But are economic conditions and high unemployment really to blame? MP Dr. Frank Philbrook says the population time-bomb is still ticking away in developing countries where conditions are far worse than in Canada.

Have we educated our children to expect such a high standard of living they don't want children if they have to make any sacrifices?

It is ironical Dr. Philbrook should deplore the growth of population in the poorer countries while Dr. Jackson deplores the lack of children in affluent Canada.

—The Georgetown Independent

Of this and that

Did any of those children who wrote so eagerly to Santa, telling what they wanted for Christmas, write a letter of thanks?

A year has passed; a new one lies before me; A pathway runs afar to scenes unknown;

I lift my eyes, the sky is arching o'er me, The day is fair and God is on the Throne.

And as I listen I can hear Him saying "Lo, I am with thee, be thou not afraid."



TINY ICICLES GRACE branches of Acton's trees during cold weather. Icicles consist of frozen water and more often occur in winter than summer. Usually

they hang downward, as they do here, and if you ever see one growing any other direction, you should take it to a psychiatrist for counselling.



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

Chinese, among other peoples, honor their ancestors. It's a nice idea, but about this time every year, I start calling down maledictions on mine.

When they were kicked out of their Scottish crofts by landlords who decided sheep were more important than people, or had to suck their feet out of the Irish bogs because even the praties were getting scarce, why, oh why did they have to emigrate to some stony farms in Pontiac County, P.C.?

Why didn't at least one of them head for Australia, or South Africa, or Mexico, or South Carolina, anywhere south of the snow belt?

Nope. With unerring instinct, they headed out of two of the worst winter climates in the world—Scottish highlands and Northern Ireland—and straight for the worst in the world—middle Canada.

There are those idiots who claim that the Canadian winter is a healthy climate. Perhaps that's why I had 12 students absent today out of 32. Perhaps that's why I hark from November until June so loudly that my wife knows when I've entered our block, let alone the house.

This year, we didn't get our usual few skiffs of snow, two or three inches at a time, so we could get our snow tires on, our winter grumbling tuned up, and our winter blaspemy geared for what was coming.

Not a chance. By the 10th of December, we'd had two feet of snow around our place, and the temperature had hit 10 below. Fahrenheit! I had to dig the lawnmower out from under a snowbank to put it in the toolshed. What kind of a way is that to live?

Had to dig my rubber boots out in November. I hate those boots with a loathing I have never felt for any other creature, animate or otherwise, in my entire life.

Every year, they seem to get farther away from the top of me, and harder to pull on. I either topple over on top of them, or get one foot halfway in and can't get the rest in or out, or the blasted zipper sticks after one inch, and I get snow over the top and into my shoes.

Getting them off is even worse. I use the heel and toe method. Too proud to sit down and pull them off with my hands. That's for old people and smart people.

No, I stand teetering, put the toe of one foot against the heel of the other, and pry. The zippers never zip down more than halfway. I grunt and pry. Either nothing happens, or there's a sudden whup, and the boot comes off. With my shoe inside it. And I am dancing around in one sock foot in the snow that has fallen off my boot.

Or the zipper breaks and I can't get the boot off at all. The other one comes off like an eel, and I walk around all day with one rubber boot-shod foot, and one in a shoe.

And that's only the beginning. There's winter driving. Oh, you may be one of those guys with a warm garage, a snowblower to clear your driveway, a block heater to keep your engine warm, and an inside car heater to prevent instant pipes when you sit on that icy plastic seat cover.

I ain't. My 10-year-old Dodge sits out in the elements. On a typical morning, I go out and spend 10 minutes cleaning off the ice. Then I get in, say a short but fervent prayer, and turn the key.

She gives a startled grunt, wheeze and bellow, resembling a cow giving birth, groans, and falls silent. I start to get mad, pump the gas, and flood her, shouting imprecations. She responds with a scornful and gradually diminishing, "Arrghh, arrghh, arrghh..."

On the rare occasions when she does kick over, I warm her up carefully, look fearfully over my shoulder at the three-foot bank the town snowplow has thrown up behind us, and give her the gun. She either stalls and we end like a stranded whale, belly on the snowdrift, or she bombs right through and I hit the telephone pole on the other side of the street with my rear bumper.

Even worse than the driving in winter is the attitude of a good portion of the populace. I totter in to work, wheezing, one boot unzipped, relieved and yet furious, and some pink-cheeked young colleague chirps: "Wasn't it a terrific weekend? All that snow. I skied all day Saturday and Sunday. It was just beautiful out in the bush, on the trails..."

At these times, I would like to trail that young pink-cheek out to the bush, point out how beautiful it is, manacle him or her to a Christmas tree, come home and sit down by the fire with a good shot of anti-freeze, smiling broadly as the temperature dropped and the wind rose.

Even more obnoxious are those who sit around, the bourgeois bums, and natter about the great winter holidays they've had, each trying to out-do the other.

"Yeah, Barbados is all right. I guess, if you like getting your foot pierced by a sea urchin. Not much to do but lie around in the sun and drink cheap rum."

"Jack and I took a cruise last year in the West Indies. Stopped at 10 different islands. Fantastic!"

"But aren't there a lot of ugly Canadians on those cruises. You know, hairdressers and salesmen and school teachers? We like Mexico ourselves."

"We thought so too, but then we discovered Hawaii."

May they all get triple arthritis, have their pensions cut off, and have to spend all their winters in Canada.

Our idea of a great winter trip is to take the ill-considered Christmas presents back to the store and get a credit, if we're lucky.

summer's day, with the band in full spate, the old place seemed to throb and rock to the rhythm of numberless feet and the swish of the ladies' party dresses. The cacophony of sound, amplified by the old timbers and wafted from the open windows of the hall into the night air would reverberate among the nearby residences. In the Parsonage opposite, the Minister, seeking inspiration for his Sunday morning sermon might well have wondered if-Babylon was being re-enacted outside his front door.

Seriously, I do not know what is planned for this historical site of Acton's past, but, speaking from a Country which jealously guards and preserves its buildings of historical value, I trust that something may be done in respect of Acton's old Town Hall, for only in an appreciation of a Community's Heritage can it gain a true perspective of the present.

Yours fraternally,
Norman Gibson.

The Free Press Back Issues

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press Thursday, January 10, 1878

Last night, about 15 minutes after ten o'clock, the citizens of this village were startled by the alarm of fire. Those who first gave the alarm stated that the large tannery belonging to Mr. Beardmore was in flames, but on proceeding to the place no signs of any fire could be ascertained for some time. It was at last discovered that the leech house in connection with the tannery was found smoldering in the bark carrier. With assistance of a number of persons who were present and a plentiful supply of water, the fire was soon extinguished.

The cause of the fire cannot be ascertained as there had been no work done, nor machinery in operation in the department since three o'clock in the afternoon. Had the fire got its own way for five minutes longer, there would have been no possibility of saving the whole tannery from destruction. The loss will not amount to over a few dollars.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, January 12, 1828

The first meeting of the Men's Club of the United Church was attended by 140. A banquet was provided by the Ladies' Aid Society and the Sunday School orchestra played. Judge Mott was the speaker. President John R. Kennedy was toastmaster and speakers included Duncan McTavish, Rev. C. L. Poole, H. P. Moore, W. J. Akins, Reeve Mason and A. E. Nicklin. A quartette composed of Grenville Masales, Rudolph Spielvogel, George T. Old and J. C. Matthews sang.

Plans for a new covered rink were discussed at the inaugural meeting of council. Mr. John Kentner, of the Stratford professional hockey team, was home for the weekend.

20 years ago

Taken from an issue of the Free Press January 10, 1958

John D. Glen, technical sales representative of the Plastics Division of the C.I.L. Industries, was guest speaker at the installation meeting of the Acton Chamber of Commerce on Monday evening in the Y.M.C.A.

Thirteen members turned out in snowy weather for the weekly swim, with Jack Denny and George Lee assisting with transportation, as the Water Y's Swimming Club held their classes on Friday, January 10 at the Guelph pool.

Another new business has been established on the outskirts of Acton, known as the Caroline Nurseries. Now open for business the new establishment is situated two miles west of Acton at Crewson's Corners and is operated by J. Rol, formerly of Toronto.

The Knox Presbyterian C.G.I.T. girls held their first meeting of 1958 in the Church rooms on Monday evening. In the absence of a group leader, Mrs. J. Greer, Mrs. A. J. Buchanan and Miss I. McLellan conducted the meeting.

10 years ago

Taken from an issue of the Free Press January 10, 1968

Charles Heard, a former public school board trustee, will fill the vacant seat on the board for his final year. The vacancy was caused by Bill Benson's resignation.

Bill Buchanan was elected president of Acton Citizens' Band at the annual board meeting Wednesday night. He succeeds Ted Tyler Jr. who held the post for the past eight years.

Other officers elected were Charles Kingsmill, first vice-president; Gordon Ramsden, second vice-president; Bandmaster George Elliott, secretary-treasurer. Committee—Chuck Wright, Joe Vostro, Sims McPhedran, Barry Buchanan.

It took 11 days of waiting, then a rush trip to the hospital in a police cruiser in the bitter cold of early morning, but Nancy Lynne Vander Eyken finally arrived on Friday morning January 5, to become the first baby born in Milton District Hospital in 1968.

I doubt if there will be many more inaugural meetings of Esquencing council, said newly elected township reeve George Currie in his inaugural address to Esquencing council at their daytime meeting Monday. Reeve Currie "hazarded a guess" that regional government would be in this area by 1970.

Our readers write

Appreciate our heritage

Flat 4, 58 Brunswick Pl., Hove, Sussex, England. 22nd December 1977.

Dear Sir: Having lived in Acton during fourteen of my most impressionable years before going overseas with the Second Canadian Division in 1940, I have naturally followed with special interest the old Town's fortunes and general progress as a Community, in spite of the fact that I have made my home in England since the end of the War.

I therefore write to you in a mood of nostalgia upon hearing that the old Town Hall may now disappear to make way for the re-development of the site.

What memories that old red-brick building evokes! Of course, it was never an architectural masterpiece as public buildings go, but in itself it comprised a complex that for much of the Town's history was the very heart of the Community's administrative, cultural and social life. For small boys of course, the centre of interest was focused on the fire-hall at the rear. The Beardmore siren announcing a fire was the signal for a general exodus towards the Town Centre. There, like a greyhound straining at the leash, the red engine would surge from its garage, its volunteer crew having left their various occupations, would be clinging to its sides as the red monster raced into the quiet

streets, the clamor of its bell alerting the populace on every side and exciting a hundred boyish hearts.

Election time brought to the platform of the hall a galaxy of prominent public men of all political parties. There, with a display of their oratorical gifts, they wove their particular spells, heavily laced with well-worn platitudes and invective. For many it was the jokes and anecdotes that lingered on in the memory, told and re-told for weeks afterwards with, of course, the inevitable embellishments.

In those days, when radio had not yet dominated our lives, the Town, like many others, possessed an abundance of local talent and the town hall provided an ideal venue for concerts and plays of every kind. The latter remain in my memory as being particularly unique when looked at in hindsight after many years of attending the live theatre in England. For an hour or two on a particular evening one would witness a transformation on the stage that could persuade us that the girl we saw behind the counter in a Mill Street store was really a Countess and that the local doctor or lawyer we knew so well was here displayed as a deep-dyed villain. This was the true essence of the living theatre. "The suspension of disbelief"

However, for the larger part of the Community the Town Hall was the Mecca for local dances. In the late evening of a hot

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Business and Editorial Office



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