

# Library looseleaf

Acton library was 80 years old, July 7, the date of its opening to the public in the town hall to the right of Council Chambers and within sniffing distance of the cells, where lawbreakers were accommodated overnight. During the Depression, transients were permitted to lodge in the cells, an arrangement that sometimes discomfited old-time librarians who had to pass through the little corridor in order to reach the telephone. According to the Acton Free Press, July 14, 1898: "The library is evidently filling a long-felt want. A number of books have been read and exchanged, and many kind expressions have been made relative to the character of the books and

their interesting contents. Miss Etie Laird is proving herself well qualified in every respect for the position, and the patrons generally appreciate her prompt and obliging service." Over 70 members enrolled that first week. Eighty years later, the membership exceeds 5,000, although not all of this total are active patrons. If the shades of Acton's first library members happen to be lurking around the 11-year old centennial building on River Street, they will be double-taking every inch of the way, especially when they peer into the junior department. It's a space age theme, Close Encounters Of The Future Kind. Planets and Sputniks produced by the skilled hands of junior

librarian Margaret Merrin are in orbit over the heads of kid readers, including those enrolled in the summer space-age reading club. Back in 1898, citizens had to be 14 to join the library. Whether the vanguard library board mistrusted youngsters is not recorded. Even gifted with foresight, they could not have foreseen the drastic changes in library rules and service. Nor in their wildest flights of fancy would the original board members have predicted the sweeping changes in moral- and literary standards. It amuses this staffer sometimes to picture the reaction of village Actonians to certain novels on our shelves. Certainly if they had been available 80 years ago the books of Robbins and John Updyke for example would have been flung on the nearest bonfire, especially lit for the occasion. Not that Harold Robbins' athletic

heroes and heroines would be too much of a loss - in this reader's humble opinion. Even librarians have to admit that a lot of garbage is being written, published, sold and read - the latter two operations thanks to costly promotional campaigns. Therefore it gives library staffers a thrill of honest pleasure to be able to recommend books like *Hungry As The Sea*, by top-ranking story teller, Wilbur Smith. *Hungry As The Sea* is an action-packed thriller about a deposed captain of a salvage tug who rescued a cruise liner in some of the most terrifying weather on this planet. Whether writing about Africa, a favourite locale or the Antarctic, Smith never misses. Start one of his novels, and chances are you will not put it down until the end. One literary critic describes Wilbur Smith's scenes as "something between Alistair Maclean and

Nicholas Monsarrat." Other Smith novels in the library are: *Cry Wolf*, *The Eye of The Tiger*, *The Dark Of The Sun*, *Gold Mine* and *A Sparrow Falls*. Another prolific favourite with local readers is Catherine Cookson whose latest novel about a so-called born loser, portrays a man in search of himself. The Cinder Path begins in Edwardian England, rural Northumberland, and carries the reader into the holocaust of the Western Front in the first World War. Cinder Path is well up to Cookson's exacting standards of realism and drama. Mary Higgins Clark of *Where Are The Children?* fame has written another shocker: *A Stranger is Watching*. Almost guaranteed to be read at one sitting. A different type of thriller is Josephine Bell's *Such a Nice Client*. Edmund Crispin

in the Sunday times has this to say about her writing: "Miss Bell's cool, clinical style is a delight." Physiotherapist Lucy Summers on her first visit to 70-year old Mr. Lawrence spotted the old man in his wheel chair in the garden trying to filch crusts off the bird table. Was he senile or was he being starved to death by his daughter-in-law? Before she found answers to these and other questions, Lucy had several frustrating encounters with a social worker, the worst kind of blinkered do-gooder. Without accelerating one's flow of adrenalin, *Such a Nice Client* is a good read. Other Bell books on hand are *The Catalyst*, *Death of A Con Man*, *Jacobean Adventure*, *No Escape*, *Over The Seas*, *Historical*, *The Uphold Witch* and *Victim*. Jacobean Adventure and The

Seas Historical are historical fiction. "Many people are married to people who have been married to other people, who are now married to still others to whom the first parties may not have been married, but to whom somebody has likely been married." "How's that for a sentence? It's a quotation from the article *Omnigamy*: The New Kinship System in the July issue of *Psychology Today*. Author Lionel Tiger claims that our society "Has shifted towards a pattern of serial polygamy in which people experience more than one spouse, if only one at a time." Tiger suggests *Omnigamy* as the name of a new and imprecise system, in which each will be married to all." Other July articles in this magazine are *Science-Fiction Fantasy* and *The Brain*, *Stepping Up The Search For Early Man*, *Origins Of The Mind*, *The Not-Quite Stepmother and Why Some People Seek Revenge Against Doctors*.

Library nature notes: a library duck who nested somewhere along the school creek hatched three babies and after a week or so, Mom conveyed her family down creek to Fairy Lake. Before she departed to the Big Water, Ma Mallard caused ulceration amongst the staff by taking her little brood on foot across busy No. 7 highway. On at least two occasions, she stopped traffic on both sides, while watching library patrons held their breath and prayed. One afternoon a staff bird-watcher heard a frantic squawk. Dashing outside in sock feet, she saw Mom being pursued by a joyous black dog galloping, not swimming, after her in the shallow creek.

As the duck narrowly escaped poach's jaws, the bird-watcher also began to gallop and shout rude commands which the dog understood. He loped out of the water, was grabbed by his collar and trotted home. Just one hitch his master was not within. In desperation, bird-watcher hauled him back across the road to the office of veterinarian Dr. R.G. Trenton, whose staff provided afternoon lodging, until the duck-chasing canine was reunited with his master. It was a relief when Mom Mallard abandoned the creek for roomier water space. There's an apartment to rent on a ledge above the rear door of the library. Robin parents taught their trio of youngsters to fly without incident. The nest was vacated about three weeks ago.

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