

Acres of Memory

BY D.A. CAMPBELL

Standing in the semi-gloom of the blacksmith's shop, I watched Charlie Grant move the wooden arm of the bellows up and down in slow rhythmic motion. The induced air enlarged a small red eye of fire into a bright yellow glow, which spread across the coals and spewed up a blue tinged flame with every downward thrust. The firelight lit the hairy chest of the smith and reflected from the glistening trickles of sweat, which collected the dust and appeared as black streaks upon his face.

The earth floor was strewn with the remnants of shoeings and in the middle of it all was a neat pile of fresh manure - the calling card of a recent visitor. Charlie's tools were a mixture of the old and the new, to provide a service for both horse and tractor. There was an anvil resting upon a block cut from a tree, long before the smith had known the smell of scorching hooves or the hiss of steel from the quenching tank. He was a squat, thick set man, with a well worn leather apron tied around his middle. His free hand produced a dirty scrap of paper and when he spoke it was slow and casual.

"I want this in the classified," he said, passing me the note with a blackened hand. "Just a small ad - you'll know how to word it better than me."

Picking up a half finished shoe with a pair of tongs, he thrust it into the heart of the fire, agitating the coals until he found a position to his satisfaction. He nodded towards a Case "D" tractor in a dark corner of the shop, the symbol of his pride and workmanship.

"Gonna 'ave to sell 'er," he said sadly and almost to himself. "Gotta do it. I need the money real bad."

At that moment, an old horse appeared at the entrance to the smithy and the rider slid off its bare back.

"Looks like you got yourself a customer," I said. The smith glanced towards the doorway then spat a sizzler into the fire with disgust.

"Yeah," he drawled. "I get too many o' 'is kind. Credit customers - if they'd all pay me, I wouldn't be sellin' mi tractor."

"I don't think I know him", I said, fishing for the newcomer's identity.

Charlie's face took on a contemptuous leer. "You ain't missed much - that there's Windy Perkins. Spends more time an' money in the hotel than 'e does on the farm." He paused with a white hot shoe on the anvil and the hammer poised about to strike. "But 'e'll pay me today - so 'e will - by the jeeze, 'e'll pay

me today." He brought the hammer down with a force that emphasized his anger and sparks flew in all directions.

Windy Perkins advanced towards the forge whilst Charlie continued his task. As the smith paused to consider each blow, he continued to strike the anvil with short taps. It produced music which only a blacksmith can play - a clang, clang, clit-clit, clang, which resounded down the dirt road of Redtrees.

When the glowing heat of the steel had died to a dull red, Charlie replaced the shoe into the fire and began once again to pump the bellows. The lull in the clang and clatter gave Windy a chance to speak.

"I'll leave 'er with you Charlie. Got a little business to do in town. No 'urry as long as I git 'er before chore time."

Charlie nodded, biting his lip to contain his anger, and Windy and I left the shop. I headed for the newspaper office and Windy made a beeline for the Redtrees Hotel.

Throughout the afternoon, I laboured over the re-write of the "who visited who" copy, and tried to inject some excitement into an editorial about the projected sewage system. "Nuthin' in your stupid rag," a disgruntled subscriber once told me. "Only lit for use in the out'ouse!" Hence, the product of my literary endeavours became nicknamed the "Redtrees Grunt and Thunder."

From time to time I peered out of the window, curiously awaiting the appearance of Windy Perkins at the smithy to recover his nag. How would the blacksmith collect his debt? Having the long nose of a newshound I was determined to find out!

It was past my closing time when I spied Windy weaving unsteadily up the street. I grabbed my coat and hat and closed up the office. The race to the smithy was no contest and I was already showing Charlie his advertising copy, when the flushed face of Windy appeared.

"You ain't finished - you ain't shoed mi 'orse," Windy complained with alcoholic bitterness. "It's time for mi chores - so it is."

Charlie faced his debtor squarely, hands on hips and feet astride. His black face cracked into a triumphant grin.

"I've pulled the old shoes off an' I'll fit the new uns - as soon as I git paid. That'll be for three shoeln's. Twelve number sevens at seventy cents and twelve settings at thirty-five. That's twelve dollars and sixty cents."

Windy broke into a drunken fury and he puffed and

blew in exasperation. "I'll take 'er some place else - so I will - you sonnovawitch ... you ... you."

"Ride 'er into 'ell for all I care," Charlie interjected, "but she's goin' no place without shoes." He clenched his fists in anger and his arm muscles rippled in the firelight. "I want my money Windy, and I want it now!"

Windy threw his hands in the air in utter defeat. Had he been a chess player he would have known that he had been placed in checkmate by a horse - his own horse! Reluctantly he pulled out a tattered wallet and extracted a couple of crumpled bills. "Gimme the change," he said.

The game of high finance was over and it was time to return to my other occupation at the "Hungry Hundred." Charlie hurried towards me as I left the smithy.

"Say" he said, bubbling with success, "would it be O.K. if I didn't put that ad in the paper? If I could collect a few more debts this way, maybe I could hang on to mi tractor!"



Fall Reflections

J. Maier
REAL ESTATE BROKER

Home of the Week

CUSTOM BUILT EXECUTIVE HOME

This fine quality built home is located just north of Milton on a park-like 10 acre lot with mature trees, has a 2 car garage, 4 very large bedrooms, formal dining room, main floor family room with a brick fireplace and a walkout, country sized kitchen with a walkout, built-in dishwasher. It is priced for an early sale at \$124,900.

\$57,900.

Cosy 3 bedroom bungalow, only 3 years old, fenced yard, convenient Dorset Park location.

\$59,900.

OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, October 15, 1978 2-4 p.m.

Completely renovated 3 bedroom stone house, barn, large lot.

DIRECTIONS: Go north on Trafalgar Rd. about 3 miles after passing Hwy. No.7 watch for OPEN HOUSE signs. The house is located on the north side of Halton Hills and Erin Townline about 500 ft. west of Trafalgar Rd. in Ballinacree.

Listings wanted - If you need a buyer call J. Maier

J. MAIER REAL ESTATE BROKER

17 Wilson Drive, Milton
878-2811

John Maier, 878-0178 Gerry Rotzal, 877-3196