

Real Estate MARKETPLACE

Wednesday, March 28, 1979



Spring is sprung
The grass is riz
I wonder where the birdies is.
The bird is on the wing,
Now ain't that absurd
I always thought
The wing was on the bird!

There seems no doubt that spring is here. On this the first day of spring it's sunny and nearly 60 degrees (F). Oh, sure, we may get more snow yet, winter never gives up easily, but spring must be here—we have 39 baby bunnies!

I can't remember so early a spring, can you? It's the first time the kids have had a decent winter break since the school system started doing the old Easter-vacation-in-March bit.

I took the old truck for a jaunt this afternoon. Actually, I was heading to the dump but I took the scenic route behind the road-grader. Most of the snow has gone exposing crocuses, beer bottles and dog dirt.

The peacock has been thinking spring for a couple of weeks now showing off his magnificent tail and trying to seduce the ladies. Now that he's a grown-up three year old, Gabriel has a tail rivaling the NBC peacock. Unfortunately, only humans appreciate his beauty. His wife certainly couldn't care less—she's too busy looking after last year's kid and complaining about her headaches.

The chickens are getting the treatment, too, Gabriel flutters and vibrates, fanning the four foot tall full of iridescent feathery eyes. They ignore him and busily cluck their way round the driveway pecking gravel.

Which way to lop?

The baby bunnies are in various stages of development from cute furry floppy six-weeks to blind hairless newborns. All baby bunnies are cute but there's nothing, absolutely nothing, as priceless as a multi-colored French Lop with his ears making like helicopter wings as they try to decide which way to lop.

Lops have droopy ears as adults but the babies have regular ears till four weeks of age. Then the ears start to waft around—one up, one down—both on one side—both straight out at the side. Couple this variety with faces like Persian kittens and you've got the most charming little beasts this side of heaven.

By the way, the wee bunnies born during that horrible cold, cold weather in February, not only survived (every one of them) but they grew up to be credits to their mama.

The donkeys and old Gypsy are so surprised by the warm weather they're anxious to shed their winter woolies. Every morning I put them out with a picnic breakfast, only to hang on to the west barn wall as ton-weight Gypsy scratches her neck on the loft stairs. I swear they'll come down in a heap one day if she doesn't get rid of her hair to her satisfaction soon.

Making a donkey happy is easy—just stand in the sun for several hours scratching her back. The eyes close, the lips droop and an attitude of total bliss is effected—the donkey likes it, too.

Last farewell, new column

It feels good to write a happy column about spring because this is the last "Sideroad 5".

Next week, in this spot, we'll be doing a column about people for a change. You know, people can be nice, almost as nice as animals. Anyway, we'll give it a try and see what happens.

Don't know yet what it'll be called but it'll be good. Our editor has given me permission (after I'd hurled myself round the office, kicked, screamed and frothed at the mouth) to branch out and do a weekly column on an interesting person in the readership area. Believe me, we have a truckload of interesting people around here. There's so many I may be writing this column till I'm 80—there's method in my madness.

So if you have a fascinating relative who's led a colorful life, or a friend with an unusual hobby, or a travelling neighbor, please let me know. We'll talk.

FEATURE HOME OF THE WEEK



SOMETHING SPECIAL

Set on a beautiful double-sized lot overlooking picturesque woods, in a prime area near Fairy Lake. This immaculate brick bungalow features 4 bedrooms, 1½ baths, rec room, dining area and kitchen, a paved drive and large lot. Asking \$64,900. CALL G. ALEC JOHNSON LTD. REALTOR 853-2086.

Ah! Spring—mud, slush and rain!

Like most people in this country with any intelligence, I welcome the advent of spring, which in Canada consists mainly of mud, slush, cold rain and colder winds.

It is the end of that suicidal season in which we get more and more depressed, irritable, and bone-weary of living in a land where the national sound symbols are the wet snuffle and the barking cough, the national sight symbols are the filled-in driveway and the rusting fender.

It's a trying time. For years, I've advocated a mid-February holiday to save the national psych from self-destruction. I've suggested calling it National Love Day, the third Monday in Feb.: a day to love your neighbor, your neighbor's wife, yourself, and life, not necessarily in that order.

But I've been blocked, year after year, by politicians, who fear the opponents might score a victory if it were named Sir John A. Macdonald Day or Sir Wilfrid Laurier Day; and by the industrialists and business community, who blanch and terror at the thought of paying their employees for one more non-productive day in the year. Hell, a third of their employees' days are non-productive anyway. They may as well throw in a bonus.

Yes, I welcome spring, but there's one aspect of it that I very nearly loathe. That's when the first yellow sun begins to filter through those murky storm windows, which we daren't take off until mid-May.

It isn't the sun that bothers me. It's the Old Battleaxe. She throws away her survival kit, the cataracts are peeled from her eyes, and she starts driving me out of my skull.

"Bill Smiley, look at those drapes!" I look. They look fine to me. Same old ones

by

Bill

Smiley



we had in January. Green and gold, turned to a sort of gold with cigarette smoke and hot air from the ancient furnace, but perfectly serviceable drapes.

"Look at that rug. Filthy! Look at the chesterfield. The Boys have ruined it: jam, bananas, yogurt! Look at that woodwork. It was off-white in the fall, and now it's off-black! The wallpaper is disgusting!"

Well, I look up from my paper with every demand, and everything looks just the same to me as it did a month ago. Comfortable. Warm. Lived-in. I venture such an opinion. It is met with a torrent of abuse, self-pity, and materialistic avariciousness.

"You don't care, do you? You'd live in a pig-pen, wouldn't you? Other men help their wives keep the place decent, don't they? Have you no eyes in your head? Aren't you ashamed of this "wreck" room that used to be our living-room?"

Faced with a barrage of rhetorical questions, I shift uneasily and answer, "Yes." or, sometimes, "No." I never know what to say, but it's always the wrong thing.

Frankly, I don't care. And yes, I would live in a pig-pen, if nothing else were available. And no, other men don't help their wives keep the place decent. Not decent men. And yes, I have eyes in my

head, two of them, one apt to be black after this column appears. And no, I'm not ashamed of our wreck room. I know who wrecked it, and I love them just the same. And if visitors don't like it, they can go and visit someone else, with a real rec' room. It is confusing, is it not?

However, I am an amenable chap. I don't kick a dog, just because he bays at the moon. I don't kick a woman, just because she begins raving when the March sun filters into the dugout where we've spent the winter.

I merely blink benignly, start talking supportively. Yes, we should have new drapes. How much? Yes, we should have a new chesterfield suite. How much? Yes, it's time we got rid of that old dining-room suite, which we bought second-hand for \$100 20 years ago. How much for a new one? Certainly, the rugs need cleaning and the whole house redecorating. How much?

It always comes out to somewhere around \$8,000. I remind that we have to borrow from the bank to pay the income tax. That we have two cars which we could sell in a package deal, to an experienced mechanic, for \$400. That if we don't have some brickwork done, the whole house will fall down, and we'll be sitting there, in full view, on our new chesterfield.

I suggest that she save money from teaching her piano pupils, pay back the \$1,000 she has spent on long-distance phone calls to her relatives, and take a job as a cleaning lady for a year, and all will be doozy. New everything.

She counters with arrows about the booze bill, the cigarettes account, and all the money I gamble away on lotteries.

I remind her gently that if she hadn't
(Continued on Real Estate 2)