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Families that grew up grow apart

Isn't it strange, in modern times, how families can grow apart and be little more than well-acquainted strangers when they do meet, with nothing more in common, nothing more to talk about, after the family gossip has been exchanged, than their physical problems: partial plates, bursitis, high blood pressure, piles?

These are the people who slept two or three to a bed when they were growing up, fought bitterly, had the same parents, endured the same ups and downs of the family fortune. Weird.

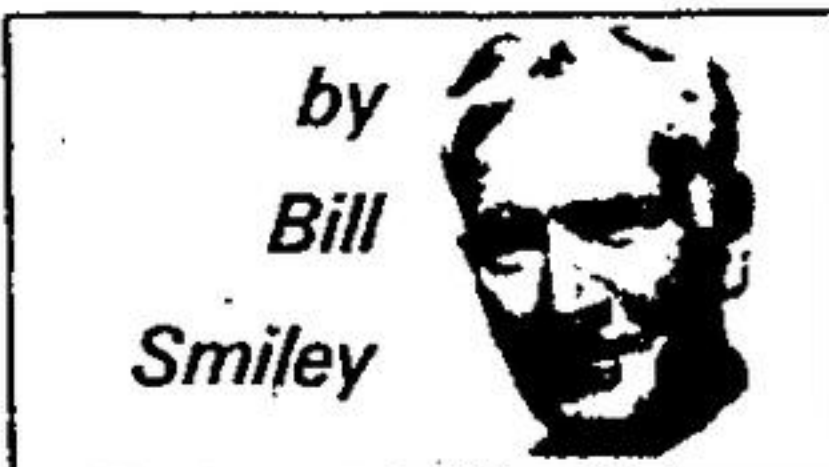
In most of Canada today, the old family unit has pretty well disintegrated. Those of us who were brought up with grandparents, legions of aunts and uncles, too many sisters (or brothers), and dozens of cousins, are scattered into thousands of tiny, one-cell units, with little or no connection with the other old familiar cells except for the occasional phone call or Christmas card.

I find this a little sad, but it doesn't really destroy me. The times they are a-changin'. Our once-warm, once-large, once-close families broke into fragments and we just had to accept it, as we did the pill, deodorant and ring-around-the-collar commercials, women's lib, and other great steps forward by mankind.

That's what I thought. In fact, I didn't mind it that much. Families can be a pain in the arm. An older sister who still thinks you are 12 years old and need straightening out. A younger brother who doesn't realize that under those dull gray socks of yours is another dull gray-clay.

That's the way I thought. But once in a while, for some reason, or no reason, the whole dam family comes roaring out of the woodwork, all at once, and your phone is so hot the wires are melting, while Ma Bell sits back with a satiated leer, almost post-coital, and you take out a third mortgage on the house to pay your telephone bill.

Families don't write any more. They telephone. With the state of our mail service, it's no wonder. You could send two Christmas cards in a row to Uncle Ed, before you got the letter from Auntie Agnes, mailed 13 months before, telling



you that he was either dead, or had run off with a strip tease artist.

That's what happened to us recently. My kid brother had been taken suddenly and rather violently ill. We had a couple of 334 conversations from his hospital room in Montreal. He was to let me know of any change. Total silence.

After a month of this, I phoned my older sister, and asked whether he was dead. She hadn't a clue. Said he'd just vanished. Fair enough. I wasn't going to phone.

Then my daughter began phoning from Mooseonee, telling my wife about her troubles with beating off the bachelors, and telling me innocuous stuff like she was going to buy a snowmobile, and would we take the kids while she attended a weekend conference, and asking me how to cope with students who threatened to shoot the principal if she kicked them out of class.

Each of these calls was returned, almost nightly, by my wife, who had thought up more piercing questions and answers in the intervening 24 hours. And I had to talk to the grandboys, find out what they wanted for Christmas, and who had won the latest fight, and such-like.

Then came a call from my son, collect, as usual, who said he was in Florida, on the way home from South America. When he'd arrive he didn't know. Grind, grind. Teeth.

Then a close relative jumped through the window of a fifth-floor apartment and was pronounced D.O.A. at the hospital. This spewed a frenzied round of long-distance calls to police, relatives, her son

and so on. It also elicited similar calls on the in-line for us.

Just got over this, intermingled with frequent calls to great-grandad, telling him we'd be over any weekend now, a call from a brother-in-law to ask if he could sleep at our house on the way back from a music festival, arriving at 3 a.m., a call from another brother-in-law to ask if he could help about the suicide, and a dejected call from daughter to say her conference was washed out and we wouldn't see them until Christmas.

Prodigal son phones, now 100 miles from home, collect, broke, unrepentant. He's home now, driving his mother crazy because he's a health-food nut and won't eat any of the great meals she is busting to prepare. Result, she cooks one pork chop for me with a baked potato, some squash and a bit of broccoli with cheese, and she like a pig.

Kid brother calls from James Bay project to tell me he's alive, but has had serious surgery and medication, but now feeling great. He's two years younger than I, and is going to retire next July, with a fat pension. This goes over big, as you can imagine.

Sixteen phone calls for prodigal son, from friends who seem to have received news of his arrival by tribal drum. He's never here when they call. They all want him to call back. On our bill.

As though Ma Bell wants to rub it in, a Bell Telephone crew, complete with huge trucks, backhoes and other vile machinery, arrives at 8 a.m. every morning, sounding like Revelations will, and tears great holes in my lawn, to plant a cable, cutting the roots of my maples, so they'll all die.

It's nice to have family. But if I'd cut the phone line 20 years ago, and put the money into its stock, I'd be a major shareholder in Bell of Canada today.

Educator selects dollars as issue

Of the six major issues facing Halton's Board of Education in the next decade, economics rates as the most important issue.

The raising and spending of money was explained by Education Director Em Lavender during his progress report of the board's Long Term Plan.

The other issues named in the report, tabled at Thursday's board meeting in Burlington, were employer-employee population and declining enrolment.

With the Long Term Plan the board hopes to chart a steady course it can into the '80's. Halton educators and staff started work on the plan, which is to be completed by October 11 months ago.

In his report Lavender predicted a mill rate increase of 65 per cent by 1985 if existing Ministry of Education funding continues at the present level and if the board permits for annual salary increases based on previous averages—and add no more program or staff.

Under the heading of employer-employee relations Lavender

wrote, "While the history of negotiations in Halton can be described as reasonable, responsible and professional, there is no doubt that the pre-occupation with negotiations and the expenditure of time, human resources and money in negotiating and implementing the collective agreements have diverted our attention from other important educational matters."

The education director's report also hinted at disappointments with respect to rising expectations of the board in special education. Better programs for the gifted, early identification programs, maximum class sizes are some things the board will be expected to undertake following release of the province's revisions in special education.

"It seems clear also that careful planning implies the completion of a set of priorities. And it suggests that not all good things can, or will, get done."

Halton's population is growing older while it shifts from the south to the north, according to the report. The drift

north is leaving behind most of the school buildings; a change which poses many problems for planners. "Does the Board 'bus or build'?

Declining enrolment in Halton had implications for program staffing, school facilities and administration. However, the director says the change in enrolment is not the major issue in the region. This year elementary school pupils compose 12.02 per cent of the population of 240,240 while high schoolers amount to 8.89 per cent. By 1984 the population is predicted to reach 266,000 and the percentage for school children is expected to slip to 10.45 in elementary and 6.59 for secondary.

Trustees iron out boundary problems

Milton and Oakville trustees joined forces to ensure uniform treatment of students caught in a Halton Board of Education school boundary change. About 90 students from White Oaks and L.B. Pearson high schools in Oakville were slated to take classes at Milton High School in September. However, because of action by trustees Thursday at Burlington the students have the choice of either going to Milton or remaining for the rest of their school life at Oakville.

Trustees concerns date back to June 14 when several recommendations for boundary changes were presented and passed. One of the presented recommendations was turned down, however. All the recommendations would be effective next September.

The result, had the board taken no follow up action, would see the board treating one geographic area or group differently than another.

Environmental guidelines are sent to Region

Halton Regional Council will be asked to pass a set of environmental guidelines which will effect future development plans within the region. Halton Region is currently without the Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines recommended last week by Planning Committee and it has already caused one problem.

Halton Region is considering an auction to get rid of older equipment and supplies. Treasurer Don Farmer told the Regional Administration and Finance Committee such auctions have been very successful in other areas of Canada.

Guidance will be led by David Foster from Milton District High School, while David Wright from the North Education Centre will head the science department.

Rob Bloxham will be in charge of physical education. He hails from Lord Elgin. Orien Calver

Trustees iron out boundary problems

according to Milton Ward 2 trustee Bill Lawson. One implication of the June action was a commitment to provide transportation for students to White Oaks, instead of the two years as was proposed, said Lawson.

The board took his motion and combined it with an amendment from Milton Wards 1 and 2 Trustee Ivan Armstrong, seconded by Oakville's Jackie Cutmore, to fix the situation.

Thursday's move means that, next September students who live between Steeles to just north of the Lower Base Line and west of the Peel border who are going to White Oaks and L.B. Pearson, may remain in those schools instead of shifting to Milton High School. The board's action, however, does not guarantee transportation, according to Trustee Armstrong.

Acton-Esqueving Trustee Betty Fisher determined from staff that the effect on students staying at White Oaks would mean two

more portables, the same number if they remain where the board originally wanted them at Milton. Burlington Trustee Cam Jackson said he was leery of making decisions based solely on statistics of grade nine and 10 students. "Seventy per cent of the kids don't reach Grade 13 for their diplomas. In three to four years there will be significantly less students in question," Jackson said.

A letter from 18 Milton and Hornby area parents was filed with the board. The parents indicate their concern about the shifting of the border again. They were happy with the June decision. "We are more convinced now than ever that we do not wish to jeopardize our children's stability, steady progress or cheerful attitude to their studies, which is now evident in White Oaks," the parents wrote.

The parents stressed another change threatens their children's studies and perhaps their year.

Subject to approval the members are: Milton, Bill Johnson with Gus Goutouski as alternate; Halton East Wood, Oakville, Laurie Mannell with Terry Mannell as alternate; and Burlington, Joan Allingham.

Any person feeling he or she is being unjustly assessed under the equalization system will be able to apply to the committee for a hearing date.

The applicant will be required to bring in his or her own report and this can be done with a consultant.

The region committee will be back up by a technical committee composed of public works staff members

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