

Police chases: a gamble with our lives

Such a waste...Such a terrible waste.

Slowly Acton is pulling itself together after the shock a week ago Saturday that sent waves of sorrow washing over this town.

The sight of a funeral cortege slowly winding its way through the town by itself tightens throats and catches one staring remotely.

Such a waste...Such a terrible waste.

Who's to blame? It's a natural reaction to such a terrible loss of seven young lives.

The police? No, for they were merely doing their duty.

But the police system, that states that pursuing a young man at 100 mph is a proper method to preserve and protect our property and lives; that is where the guilt lies.

There is the culprit at which a town, needing some means to ensure that such a useless, wasteful incident need not happen again, may point its finger of accusation.

Police chases should be used only in extreme cases (armed robbery, murder) and only then if a senior officer, weighing such things as road, weather and traffic conditions, approves and directs the chase via radio.

To put so much at stake merely to recover a \$5,000 automobile is a tremendous gamble with not only innocent victims' lives but with those of the pursuing police officer and, yes, the fellow driving the pursued vehicle.

One life saved far out-balances

the material loss of one very replaceable automobile.

Put yourself in the shoes of any fellow who happens to suddenly see a flashing red light in his rearview mirror. He may be driving a stolen vehicle. He may be just out for a drive in the family car. He may be drunk. He may be stoned. He may be totally under control.

He's got a split second to decide whether to pull over or run.

He doesn't think about the situation. He could merely put his foot to the floor, and the chase is on.

50 mph, 60 mph, 70, 80, 90, 100 mph...

And all the time that flashing red light is shing in his mirror.

Imagine, instead, if the pursuing police car slowed down to the legal limit, be it 50 or 60 miles per hour.

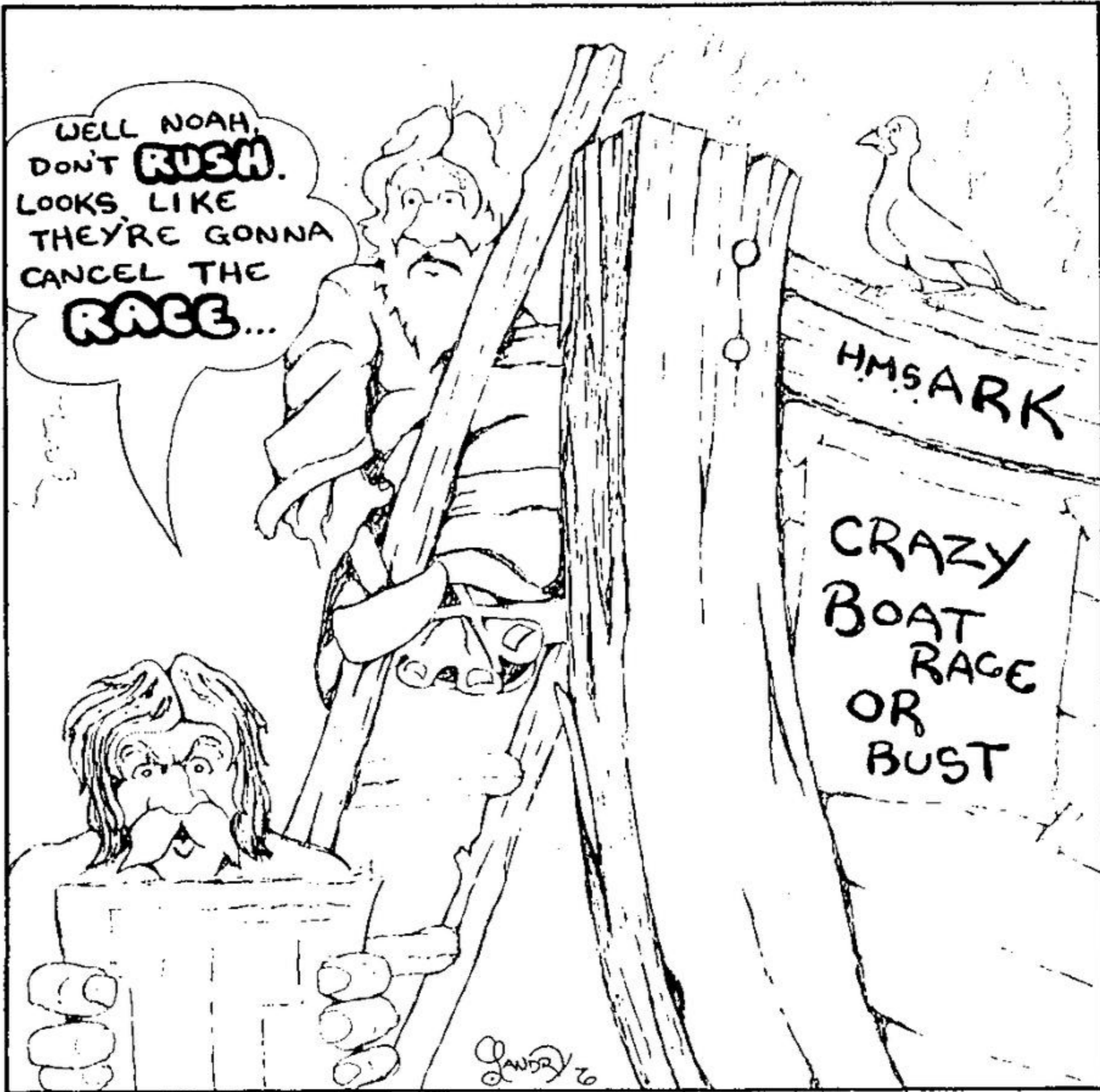
The pursued driver pulls ahead until he sees there's no sense in driving at that break-neck speed. He eventually slows down or heads somewhere to hide. He finally begins to think about the situation.

If he's driving a stolen car he'll likely ditch it, but how many police chases eventually end up that same way?

If he's driving his own car he'll realize that, through his license plates, he's probably already caught.

Nothing good can ever come of that fiery instant on Highway 25 late on the evening of March 13, 1976.

However, we hope that Halton Police will be critical enough of their own procedures to at least consider alternatives to their pursuit present methods.



Viewpoint

by Gerry Landsborough
This week Viewpoint takes a look at three individual topics that will prove to be somewhat related: high speed police chases, rights as applied to the families of criminals and government cutbacks.

The recent tragedy in Acton resulting in the death of seven young people has brought about what we consider a somewhat inappropriate response. It is usually too far reaching one way or another.

Today we have given so many rights to individuals who break our laws, that we seriously hamper the work of those who would enforce them. A police officer on the job has to make a split-second decision. It is something he is trained to do; an integral part of his job.

It is fine for our lawmakers and the general public to sit back in judgement when a tragedy results but unfortunately they don't sit in patrol cars or walk beats or make their judgements with the split-second timing that an officer on the scene has to.

If the police chase in question had resulted in the prevention of loss of life an equal number of people would arise to proclaim the validity of police chases.

Last year in Metro a high speed chase by the police was aborted. The getaway car raced on and eight minutes later hit and killed a pedestrian. The public then complained that the police were negligent in their duty.

Police chases are dangerous—that is true—but a far more dangerous course of action would be to remove the decision-making authority of an officer at the scene of a crime.

It would be impossible to say whether or not the accident would have occurred with or without the chase. It is unfair that the officer involved has to bear the brunt of public criticism. After all, he was pursuing someone who had broken the law and allegedly stolen a car. Who can say what state of mind the driver of the stolen car was in. Very often in

Rights!

the rights of the innocent family?
It has happened in some cases that the accused is found innocent—what happens then when the papers have already tried and condemned the alleged criminal? We should demand the exercise of more prudence in dealing with assumed criminals who have not yet been tried.

The families of such persons are innocent victims of a society that demands sensationalism and "unnecessary information" at any price.

Our last topic also involves the complicated subject of "human rights." The "belt tightening" policies of the Davis government seem to appear somewhat questionable. We cannot deny the need to curb government spending. We do feel however that it was the lack of restraint by the Davis government that created some of the present problems.

Cutting back on Children's Aid seems a shallow way of controlling over-spending. Queen's Park is forcing Metro to cut welfare payments. We are all fed up with free loaders but what we look on with concern are the priorities. What kind of government or society takes from its neediest in order to save precious dollars?

Dollars lost by a free spending government that now has to pay the piper.

Nothing can continue without change. We cannot continue to spend what we don't have without drastic changes taking place. But why place the burden on those least able to handle it either emotionally or financially? Those who are least able to fight any such cutbacks?

"Rights" can cripple us economically and socially if we can't maintain a balanced approach. In the face of tragedy or crisis some feel the need for action—any kind of action whether appropriate or not.

In the home stretch it becomes a case of priorities. Whether people come first or dollars? Whether the right of the individual to a life that offers hope and true justice for all—exists, or is it just another foolish illusion?

Queen's Park Commentary

Throne speech pounds home restraint

By DON O'HEARN
Queen's Park Bureau
Of The Herald

TORONTO—Throne Speeches never give much comfort or political ammunition to the opposition.

Normally they are a list of promises; and promises expressed so vaguely that they are not open to any sharp attack.

The almost automatic reaction of opposition leaders to Throne Speeches is that they are uninspiring or that there is "little that is new" in them.

This standard reaction was the response of the two opposition party leaders to this year's Speech here.

But actually with this Speech they were probably even more frustrated than usual. For it didn't even have many of the customary promises.

And it must have set a new high in vagueness.

For men leading major parties, facing a minority government and champing to get going at criticizing it, the document must have been a terribly annoying one.

Took Offensive
More than annoying, it could have been a worrying one.

For to an unusual degree the government used it to put the ball squarely in the opposition court.

Normally in a Throne Speech there is some mention of the economic state of the moment.

But in this Speech the dominant theme was economic.

The government used the Speech to restate at length its position on restraint.

This quite properly belonged in the document.

But it also was highly political. For it has been becoming clear that the main division between the government and the opposition lies in this restraint program, and that probably in some form or other it will be at the core of the next election.

It probably also has been becoming clear to the NDP and the Liberals, particularly the former, that for them it may not be the best of issues.

On Parliament Hill

Who's with Lord Godiva?

By Stewart MacLeod
Ottawa Bureau

Thomson News Service
Ottawa—Things are bound to be a bit distorted when you lie in bed with a newspaper and try to view events through the heated haze of a devilish flu bug.

That may explain it, but in any event my recovery has been slowed through all these recurring arguments with women. And I don't like mental arguments with women. But it seemed that every time I turned a page, some women was saying something to upset me or confuse me. And this never happened during International Women's Year.

There was little in the paper about Conservative Leader Joe Clark, but his wife Maureen McTeer, was speaking her mind. And she was saying that any future friendship with Margaret Trudeau would be within the confines of the next election in other words, she's a political enemy.

Struck me as a bit heavy. Surely if John Diefenbaker and Paul Martin were able to maintain a marathon personal friendship while slashing each other to bits on the hustings, spouses of politicians should be able to manage.

After all, politics is a game, not a war.

Next Page

Anyway, I turned the page and there was huge picture of Evelyn Gigantes, attractive New Democratic Member of the Ontario Legislature for Carleton East. She was making a speech at the Ottawa Women's Centre in honour of International Women's Day.

"Women are still being legally discriminated against, and it may take too long for politicians to realize the way things should be," she was quoted as saying.

And the next paragraph of the story went on: "Ms Gigantes displayed her political tact early in the evening when a male photographer arrived at the Centre's door asking to be admitted so he could take some photos. She explained to him that men are not allowed in the Centre; he left smiling."

That's fine. But not long ago, a woman was refused admittance to an Ottawa "men-only" club and she laid charges under one of Ontario's anti-discrimination laws.

Anyway, I am not convinced it requires much political tact to inform someone that his or her entry is barred.

So much for that page. Here was another story about Betty Ford and how she has suddenly become Gerald Ford's No. 1 asset as he seeks another term as U.S. President. And what has helped her most, said the story, was her "openness and honesty" when she said, among other things, she wouldn't object to her daughter having an affair providing it was with "a nice boy."

No Logic

But even after this, I can't grab the logic of Mrs. Ford's statement. I can fully understand the importance of a daughter settling down with a nice guy, but for purpose of an affair I can't get excited about personalities.

And it could lead to problems for the parents of other teenagers. "Hew, Mom, I'll be sleeping out tonight, but don't worry, he's studying to be a missionary."

I put down the newspaper and picked up a magazine. And a women's convention in Chicago was being told that throughout history, great contributions from women were systematically forgotten, while men were being placed on everlasting pedestals for lesser contributions.

To check the authenticity of this I phoned Mark McClung whose mother, Nellie McClung, was once Canada's most famous woman—the first one elected to a legislature. But that's not why I phoned him; it so happens he has a magnificent sense of humour. "It's not entirely true that men are always remembered while women are forgotten," said Mr. McClung, himself hoarse with the flu.

"I am thinking particularly of Lord Godiva."

He paused briefly. "Then there was Whistler's Father." And he thought for a few moments longer. "And Joseph of Arimathea." Time for another aspirin.

On The Home Front

By Susan Don Jail?

by Susan De Facendis
How I envy those fortunate people who bear the classically pure names of Smith, Brown and Jones.

If Mr. Smith wishes to complicate his life by adding an incorrigible little 'Y' or 'E', that is his privilege, but his reasons for doing so elude me.

It has been asked—"What's in a name?" Well, if your name happens to be De Facendis, the difference amounts to about half the alphabet.

I always believed my children would have to be university graduates before being capable of writing their full names. Surprisingly, two of them mneue u by grade 3 while the little one is still valiantly working on it.

No matter how many times I have written the correct spelling when paying my

gas bill, after 15 years it is still being mailed to someone living at our address called Defaceotis, which sounds remarkably Greek to me.

When I reach desperation point and can no longer put off ordering catalogue merchandise, I settle down for an entire morning at the telephone, as though gearing myself for a full season of hibernation.

I prepare coffee and a sandwich, put my feet up and start dialling. It takes three minutes to order the required items and three hours to spell my name.

"Dee" as in Donald. No! Not Ronald y'know - 'Dee' as in Don Jail? Don River? Yeah Lady! Don River, as in pollution."

Now when it comes to 'eff' we're away to the races. No trouble here at all. "'Eff', as in Fonz. Right!", after all, everyone know that.

Years Ago

Hyde wants combined liquor store downtown

From the Files of the Herald:

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO
Mrs. D.A. Boyd of Georgetown was guest of honour at a surprise party held by her family and friends to celebrate Mrs. Boyd's 51st Birthday. The party was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hillcock.

The Interested Citizens Group of Georgetown, which has been investigating the possibility of bringing the YWCA to town seems to be making favourable progress. Members of the group appear before town council Monday evening and after explaining their goals to the council received favourable and positive comments from all the councillors present at the meeting.

Mr. Jim Walsh has taken over ownership of the local

Dyson Sewing Centre, which was opened four years ago by owner Ollie Dyson who is moving to London where he will continue in the sewing machine business.

TEN YEARS AGO
Farley Helfant of Howard Wrigglesworth Public School, Georgetown, and Pamela Norton of Glen Williams Public School were winner and runner-up respectively in the Inspectorate final of the Ontario School Trustees and Ratepayers Association public speaking contest final here Friday. Ten schools were represented in the contest.

Monday's door to door blitz by the Georgetown Red Cross canvassers netted \$2,275, about \$575 above last year's one night canvass.

FIVE YEARS AGO

Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Davis lost their furniture and most of their clothing in a fire at 68 Main Street, North, Friday morning. The house is owned by Mr. J. Alexander of Toronto. The fire started in the upstairs bedroom destroying all the contents in the room and burned through the roof. Extensive smoke and water damage was done throughout their half of the dupl

Projected removal of the liquor store from its present Mill St. location has prompted Councilor Ern Hyde to urge that a second store be established in the downtown area. At a council committee meeting Monday night Councilor Hyde said that he intends to bring a motion before council to petition the province to have a combined liquor and beer outlet in the downtown Georgetown area.