

## Rules of all roads

Substantial accumulations of snow open up a whole different range of opportunities for those who like to enjoy the winter weather in the great outdoors.

As has often been the case in other years, the greatest accumulation of snow has come at a time when most of us would sooner be welcoming the spring.

The important thing is to remember not to try and cram more winter fun into a short period of time than is safe - particularly if you enjoy snowmobiling.

As with any motorized vehicle, snowmobiles must be respected and the "rules of the road" must apply to their operation.

With snowmobiling having risen to the level of popularity it has in the last several years, safety should remain foremost on the minds of those who operate the snow vehicles.

Yet police departments point out that there have already been more deaths attributed to snowmobile incidents than there were all last year.

Snowmobiling can be exhilarating for those who enjoy the sport in winter, but safety must remain in high regard for snowmobilers.

## Go on, impress me



### Editor's Notebook

Mike Turner  
Herald Editor

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, I can remember a Grade 7 history teacher telling me something that has stayed with me to this day.

I'm not entirely sure if it was the profound nature of his statement or the fact that he was a "no-nonsense" educator that prompts me to recall this little jewel of wisdom, but surely it's one or the other.

At any rate, he noted that of all the thousands of jets and other aircraft that take off and land each day, we never hear about the ones that arrive safely - the only ones we hear about are the ones that don't arrive safely. Or I suppose you could include the aircraft that arrive safely, as long as there was something eventful that happened while it was en route.

I suppose if someone was to impart this bit of knowledge on me today, after I'd never heard it before, I'd probably look at him and go, "Yeah... and?"

But when you're in Grade 7 statements like that seem a lot deeper.

I suppose what it points to is the idea that with each passing year we become more and more jaded. We actually challenge the rest of the world to do its utmost if it plans to even slightly impress us.

At the turn of the last century it was still a pretty impressive deed for man to have actually mastered flying. At one time, when any sort of airship went up, it was news.

Likewise, just a few years ago when the United States launched its space shuttle program there was much excitement. People watched in wonder as the shuttles, one by one, made their way into the

heavens and returned in virtually the same condition as they were in when they left. And instead of dropping into the ocean, these peculiar craft landed on an open desert, just as jetliners land each and every day - until one day one didn't.

No one will forget the images of that fateful day when one of those shuttles burst into flames on take-off, killing all aboard.

That was probably the last time the space shuttle program made "big" news.

I was surprised to hear last week that the space shuttle Discovery was preparing to return to earth from a mission in space - I found it surprising because I never even knew it had gone up.

It's strange how we view things today. Yes, I guess you could say we've become jaded.

Dear Sir,

The Durham Nuclear Awareness (DNA) Project's letter in your March 8 edition announced with pride their role in stopping the use of a Slowpoke reactor at the University of Sherbrooke hospital. Your readers deserve to see another point of view. This reactor would have provided the hospital with an economically competitive heating source and a source of radio-isotopes for treatment and diagnosis in nuclear medicine. DNA claims its position is based on environmental concerns, however they appear to ignore the environmental impacts of alternative heat sources such as oil, coal or natural gas related to acid rain and the greenhouse effect. Even heating by hydro-generated electricity can have impacts through flooding of large tracts of land and in some cases mercury contamination of water.

DNA also says that there is no satisfactory method of storing or disposing of the Slowpoke's waste. This is incorrect in that Canada

## Deaf education review is due

In our information-saturated age, little successes in politics can often be buried either by big events or a mass of trivia.

Yet a "little success" can affect a lot of people.

Take the deaf, for example.

It is estimated there are 80,000 people in Ontario who are profoundly deaf, 5,000 of them children. About 10 per cent of the children attend the three provincial schools for the deaf.

About 95 per cent are deaf from birth or are deaf before the age of two years; 90 per cent have two hearing parents, and the cause of the deafness is unknown in 50 per cent of cases.

Others are hearing-impaired to various degrees.

On Nov. 1 last year Education Minister Chris Ward announced two reviews of hearing-impaired education, one internal and one external, with a final report to be completed this summer.

It may not sound like much, but it is the first major look at deaf education in this province since a royal commission tackled the subject in the 1940s.

Remarkably, Ward's announcement resulted from the effort of an opposition MPP, New Democrat Richard Johnston.

It illustrates the system working at its best.

Two years ago, Johnston knew little about the subject of the deaf. But the more he became informed of it (as his party's education critic) by an activist for the deaf, the more he became enraged by it (as only Johnston, one of the more passionate politicians here, can).



### Queen's Park

Derek Nelson

Thomson News Service

For instance, he noted that in the 1920s there were 17 deaf teachers in provincial schools. Today, there are only eight. There are no deaf administrators and no deaf advisory groups with clout.

He discovered that in the three provincial schools two sign languages are taught (called "signed English" and "exact signed English," both essentially spelling out words with hand motions).

Meanwhile, American Sign Language (which tries to draw pictures by hand movement rather than spell out the words), the "street language" of the deaf, is forbidden. Nor, interestingly, is there education in signing itself, as opposed to what is signed.

Mutually difficult-to-comprehend signing dialects are developing, too.

To these problems can be added disputes within the deaf community itself, between supporters of signing, for instance, and those who believe mechanical aids will eventually be able to bring actual hearing to everyone supposedly deaf.

In short, you have a picture of deaf education as being fragmented and confused.

So what was Johnston to do?

Not being a government member, he couldn't raise the mat-

ter in caucus privately, which is where government backbenchers tend to make their views known in order to avoid embarrassing ministers in public.

So he moved a resolution during private member's hour last May which called for a review of deaf education with the aim of implementing reforms. He even attached a Nov. 1 deadline for the government to respond.

As noted above, the Liberals did, and in a way that met most of Johnston's objectives.

It isn't that the government had to respond to Johnston, mind you. Normally, ministers simply ignore the opposition which, naturally, is one of the great frustrations of sitting on the opposition benches.

But sometimes they listen. It can be a result of concurrent events - in Johnston's case years ago he called for hearings on family violence just when such violence was receiving major publicity.

But for the deaf it was simply that the case was "so overwhelming," Johnston said. "If there had been any sign of denial it would have blown up in their faces."

The opposition would have labelled it another symbol of flagging Liberal reform instincts.

And it might be true that such cynical reasoning influenced the Grit decision. But they also probably just thought Johnston had some good ideas. Except on some ideological touchstones (bilingualism, for instance), the Liberals do listen to people.

On the other hand, they likely needed Johnston to call the matter to their attention in the first place.



## Another view on the Slowpoke reactors

has been effectively storing similar wastes from nuclear electricity generating plants for over 30 years in water pools located at the plants and more recently in concrete canisters. These facilities are licensed by the regulator, the Atomic Energy Control Board, for long term storage. Regarding ultimate disposal there is a major study under way into a concept of disposal in hard rock caverns located one kilometre below the earth's surface. The Federal Government is presently arranging for a full environmental assessment of the concept which will involve active public and regulatory participation.

Pregnant women, children and sick people would not be exposed to any risk by a Slowpoke reactor. The radiation levels associated with this type of facility are negligible. The reactor core is located under 12 meters of water and even in the "Authorized Personnel Only" areas levels (there) would be only a small fraction of the natural background radiation that all of us face daily.

There are no adverse health effects associated with the Slowpoke reactor. The probability of an accident is extremely low since the design is inherently safe. If anything unusual occurs, the reactor would automatically shut itself down. The operating experience with the Slowpoke reactor installations at seven Canadian universities has been excellent.

DNA also questions why the government continues to fund the nuclear program at a level of \$200 million (not the \$400 million quoted) when no new reactors have been ordered in the last 10 years. The lack of reactor sales reflects a world wide situation which resulted from a low electricity demand growth in the late seventies/early eighties. This situation is rapidly changing in North America. For example in Ontario over the past five years the demand has been increasing annually at four to five per cent compared to the earlier, zero to two per cent. If this growth continues new generating stations will be re-

quired by the year 2000. Investing in the nuclear business makes good business sense. In Ontario alone by the mid-nineties electricity consumers will be saving about \$1 billion per year by utilizing nuclear-generated electricity. In addition this government support has resulted in the development of other important nuclear technologies such as in the medical diagnostics and treatment areas with immeasurable benefit to the public.

Environmentalists should be supporting the slowpoke reactor since it definitely has a role to play in dealing with the above environmental concerns. I hope that in time organizations such as the Nuclear Awareness Project will recognize this fact and start to support the program. I would strongly encourage your readers to consider the environmental impacts and risks associated with all of the alternatives in meeting our energy requirements.

P. Burroughs,  
Terra Cotta