

EDITORIAL

with Maggie Petrushevsky

Politicians playing with kids' education

One down. Three to go.

The Halton Separate School Board and its elementary teachers have reached a deal. Now it only remains to see contracts reached with their secondary teachers and the teachers for the public school board.

Unfortunately that could be much more difficult since the separate elementary teachers are the least militant group of the lot and have never gone on strike in this area.

We sympathize heartily with both the boards and the teachers. The culprits in all this - as usual - are the politicians. Education-like welfare - was a nice motherhood place to strike where the public could easily be convinced money was being wasted. We suspect the political agenda aimed at cost cutting with public interest not meriting even a thought.

Political leaders - like many business people - can't imagine a system where teachers are not the ultimate authority. They see no reason for the strain of coping with children. Make them conform and produce or get lost.

And that is a perfectly legitimate attitude - unless you actually plan to provide an education. To do that you need to work with reality and that is never ideal.

True, no one dictated their career choice to teachers. They can leave if they find the job unbearable. But most teachers really do enjoy teaching. It's the side conditions that drive them to strike. And those conditions are usually imposed by the public and the politicians - not the kids.

Strange how we accept professionals like doctors and lawyers setting their fees and their working conditions. They too, bill the public purse and deeply affect our personal lives. Yet somehow we want to deny teachers those same rights. Because we cope with those children during their out-of-school hours we somehow think teachers - like housewives - should provide their expertise for minimum wage and their volunteer services for love.

If you believe that, we've got 22 grandchildren coming for Christmas dinner. You cook and clean and entertain them while also protecting the heirlooms and the cat's life.

Summer

Summer is over, the signs all point to it and it is like saying goodbye to a precious friend. Yesterday I saw a group of barn swallows perched on a hydro wire in preparation for their trip south. Today they have gone and my heart feels sad. The trees are beginning to wear their autumn colours and will soon be in full dress, a glorious sight for our eyes to behold. Summer is a very busy time on a farm, wondering about the weather and hoping to get all the haying and harvesting over before the cool, wet days are upon us. But somehow things do get done and our barns are filled with grain and hay assuring us that the grateful animals will be well fed during the cold winter months. The harvest is in and we thank God for His goodness. Most of us will welcome autumn for a chance to slow down and renew our spirits to face the winter which is ahead of us. Fall is a beautiful time of year, with sunsets like shimmering lakes of fire. And the daytime sky is so majestic. I gazed at it today for a long time and imagined I was looking at beautiful white islands, tinged with charcoal grey, set in a sapphire sea. It was like a gorgeous painting and thrilled my heart. We will miss the birds of summertime but will welcome with love the darling evening grosbeaks, purple finches, bluejays, horned larks and the lovely snowbirds, who come to brighten our days. So, till next year, goodbye summer, we will remember you fondly.

Granny

Granny was Marion Jean Patterson who published her philosophy for her children and grandchildren in a booklet called "Meditations from an Old Rocking Chair".



ONE LAST TIME: The Acton Citizens' Band will be on hand with their marches this Saturday for the last Trunk Sale of this season.

Small Town Quirks - by Angela Tyler

Town changes with the sun

After the sun goes down our humble little town changes. Those few hours of dusk and darkness show a different side of Acton. Gone is the daytime traffic, hustle and bustle and people. How can you tell Acton has changed to Acton after hours? Well, it is quite simple. No longer can you hear the sounds of children playing outside. They have gone inside. The streetlights are flickering on and homes are lit with the rambling flashes of TVs. The most important sign is one that happens almost nightly. The Metro Paving crew heads out.

Many nights around 9 or 10 p.m. a group of four to six red and white various sized trucks from Metro Pavement Markings leave their home on Commerce Court, stop briefly at the convenience store by Robert Little, then head to the latest road repair site.

There are so many different things in Acton when it's dark. A group of young adults has gathered in the IGA parking lot. There may be four or five pickup trucks (a definite sign of a rural community), a dozen or so people and usually a dog. Outside Manny's Roadhouse around 11 p.m., the lady who has the hot dog cart at the beer store appears. Here is a trooper. Not only does she stand in all sorts of weather five days a week for hours on end, but now she has returned to Acton Friday and Saturday nights to sell food and pop to patrons and passersby. Talking to her and keeping an eye on the area is the 'bouncer'. You can't miss him; he has a black t-shirt with the word 'STAFF' on the back. He may not be very tall or big, just an average looking man, but I don't think I would want to test him.

Continuing down the street, many businesses are closing or cleaning up in preparation for the next business day. At Andy's, he and his staff are cleaning the grill and the last few

customers are finishing late meals.

The Doll Emporium window is glowing with lights and precious collectibles. Above the store, the lights are on full. Maybe they are preparing for a show or holding a class.

The banks have their cleaners in. They are busy scrubbing the floors and shining the windows, working around the random people who run in to use the bank machines.

Like me, there are many people who walk in town 'after hours'. They range from people walking their dogs, some who have drunk too much at local establishments, to others who are sitting on a bench enjoying a cigarette and the sights. Others stop and read the death notices in the pet store window and some are racing into convenience stores to pick up the forgotten grocery item they desperately need.

The sub shop has a few patrons, young and old. They sit in booths with minimal purchases, looking deep in conversation.

In the driveway at Shoemakers

Funeral Home, the pre-teens gather with skateboards in hand, wearing enormously wide-legged pants that seem to have a waistband around their knees. Some of the others sit on the steps of Braida and Henry's law office.

At the far end of the downtown core, music from the Red Dog echoes between buildings. It's getting cooler at night so only the fearless sit on the patio drinking a cold draft. Beside the Red Dog is the Station Hotel. It's a meeting place, a restaurant and a place to have a drink. The windows' blinds are slightly shut, but the neon light above the front door hums and brightly displays 'Open'. The parking lot is filled to capacity. I think you have to own a pick up truck to drink there.

At the Trunk Sale lot, a blue van sits with its lights on. Here, late on a Friday night, you can find Jake marking the lines for parking and vendors in anticipation for the next day's sale. He works by the glow of the headlights and marks the lines by his know-how.

Later that night/early the next morning the rotation of people and vehicles starts to change. The GO buses start travelling through town again. People huddle at the bus stops drinking their coffee, holding their brief cases and newspapers. The cars are starting to travel out of the town, trying to beat the rush hour traffic to their work in the city...after a quick stop at Tim Hortons. The businesses that were open a few hours ago have turned their lights off and the ones that were closed are starting to open. The dog walkers are out again, only now there are more seniors and homemakers briskly moving to beat the cold morning air and dew.

Between dusk and dawn the downtown core still has a lot of things going on. If you can't sleep one night, go for a walk around town. It's certainly a different type of Acton. It's a real eye opener.

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Watch out for the dreaded 'Furniture Disease'..that's when you find your chest is falling into your drawers.

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