

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Decline of railways

The railway line through Acton and Rockwood used to be part of the main Canadian National line (CN) from Toronto to Sarnia. Now, as you may have read in the Jan. 14 issue of The New Tanner, CJ has leased the line to RailTex of San Antonio, Texas. It is now a feeder line for CN which runs most of its freight on the line from Silver, west of Georgetown, to Bronte and then disperses to London, Hamilton, etc.

The changing role of the railway in our lives is based on the notorious "bottom line", a euphemism for cut the jobs and the service. Such VIA passenger service as still exists will still use the line but it's a far cry from the days when 14 passenger trains a day stopped at the Acton CN station and Rockwood's as well. And there probably has never been a time when the use of railway lines for passenger service is as necessary.

Railways, one of the most environmentally safe transportation systems for produce and people are concerned mainly with freight. While our highways are clogged with vehicles and the air is rank with their pollutants, we continue to pile more cars and trucks on badly beaten roads, and continue to cut back on passenger services.

Sure, we know VIA will continue to run its passenger trains over the local lines until such time as CN decides it is propitious to cut them. We've seen the pattern over the years.

Gradually, the service deteriorates, the trains run less frequently and the railway applies to the national transportation board to cease passenger operations. It has happened here once and even though passenger trains no longer stop here or in Rockwood, they are still accessible in Guelph and Georgetown. For the present anyway.

It should be enough to make bland Canadians stand on their feet and yell: "That's enough! Leave the railway alone." Surely they should be encouraged, not discouraged, by those who plot our future.

One day, if present trends continue, we'll wonder what happened to the railroads. Bumper-to-bumper traffic on congested highways is already here. One way to alleviate it would be to use the railways more as passenger vehicles proliferate. But don't bet on it. As long as the people in charge are determined to lease and sell off part of our national railway system the less likelihood that it will be there when real really need it.

Postal service woes

The New Tanner keeps getting calls from rural people complaining about the service they have been receiving from the post office since the routes were contracted out to the lowest bidder. They keep coming from different areas from people who have never complained before.

There have always been complaints about the postal service, especially in the winter months when roads sometimes are impassable, but never in the numbers and anger that has been exhibited in the last few weeks. Many of the callers complain the level of service is meagre as compared to when rural carriers were hired and paid by Canada Post.

The service declined, they say, when Canada Post decided to let the contract out to the lowest bidder and an Ottawa firm picked up the contract for Rural Routes 1 and 2, a firm which has routes all over Ontario. The former carriers were offered jobs at a much lower rate than they received as contractors with Canada Post, which was not overly generous. Some quit in disgust after years on the job. Others stayed but just until another better opportunity appeared.

Until the remuneration for the job makes it worthwhile the level of service will continue to decline and carriers will continue to use a revolving door.



Another in the series of class photos of Mrs. Kay Alger's classes. This one is the Grade 1 class of 1965 of M.Z. Bennett schools. In back are teacher Kathleen Alger, Eddy Ensing, Paul Hansen, Gary Bannon, Eric Couture, Peter Mason, Russell Elliott, John McHugh, Ronnie Turkosz, Carl Currie. Centre row: Teddy Dumarsh, Scott Bulmer, Susan Peycha, Kim McCristall, Jane Higgins, Jill Scutt, Betty Sojka, Hugh Lowe, Brian Larsen. Front row: Beverly Duval, Jane Pargeter, Monika Schmidt, Christine Pollard, Carol Jordan, Susan Bruce, Gloria Brown, Connie Albano, Carol Grant.

Hairlooms, bald spots and Al!

Whenever Michael O'Leary decides it's time to vacate this space for an issue it becomes my problem to dispense words of wisdom on current events of the week. Since the articulate O'Leary has a style I could never hope to emulate, readers will have to contend with my reactions to what ever fills my noodle.

That, of course, leads to an opening bit of wisdom - To light a birthday cake with many candles, use a piece of dry spaghetti. Funny, I've never tried it but it seems perfectly logical. At least as logical as advice in an edition of The Farmers' Almanac which I chanced upon recently.

In a story called Castration and Other Surefire Ways to Prevent Baldness, the Almanac notes people used to think you could save your hair, if:

- You ate parsnips every day.
- You cut your hair only on the first Friday of the full moon.
- You rinsed your hair in salt water.
- You poured rum on your head.
- Or became a eunuch.

In the unlikely event that none of these nostrums worked for you and voila you lost your hair, the recipes for recovering it were many. All you had to do was:

- Smear the bald spot with fresh cow manure.
- Oiled your head with the venom of a viper caught at the full moon.
- Cover the bald spot(s) with bear fat.
- Spread cream on the bald spot(s) and let a cat lick it off.

Current wisdom suggests all these ancient nostrums are nonsense. After all the reason we lose our locks is hairidity, err, beg your pardon, heredity. And where could you find a viper during a full moon? I thought Cleopatra found the last one in a basket. And it bit her.

So conventional wisdom nowadays says bald guys should join groups like Hair Club for Men. Or wear a rug, have surgery or flaunt your baldness like Yul Brenner. Better yet, content yourself with the old

Coles' Slaw

by Hartley Coles



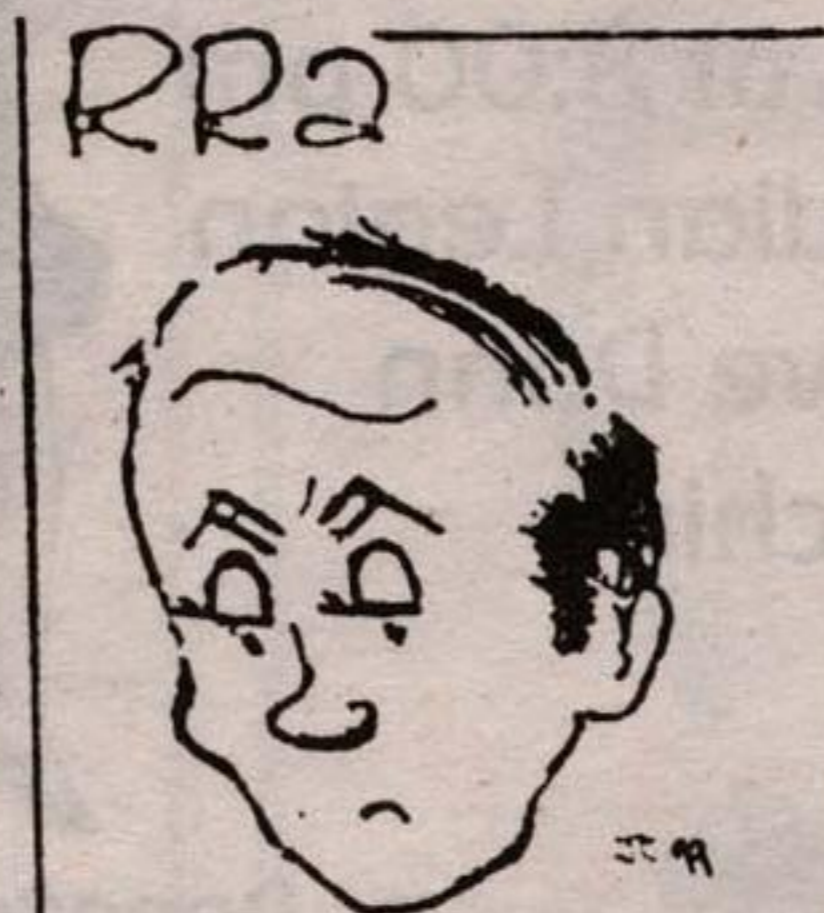
maxim: The Lord created only a few perfect heads - the rest He covered with hair"

I suspect my wife is cheering for Bill Clinton to be impeached so she can boast that she has already talked to Al Gore, the new president-in-waiting. And shook his hand to boot.

It happened one summer when she and I visited Ottawa on a mini holiday. After visiting the Rembrandt exposition in the National Art Gallery, we saw a long line of limousines stopping at the new memorial. Sensing something big was afoot we joined the rapidly growing crowd clustered around the site. Noticed on the steps were several men speaking into their sleeves, which we suspected harboured hidden microphones.

"What's going on?" I casually asked another man who looked knowledgeable. "Dunno," he answered, "looks like some big shot is going to land."

"Yeah," said another tourist. "The Mountie told me it was Al Gore and



The wife told me I have the body of a twenty year old. ...Chevy.

Tipper, (vice-president of the U.S.A. and his wife). Going to lay a wreath."

Since there was a military band there, plenty of Mounties and dark-suited secret servicemen, military brass and Sheila Copps, the information seemed plausible. As I turned to relay this information to wife she had disappeared into the crowd for a front row view.

Before I could push my way in doors opened on the limos, and the vice-prez and his wife were mounting the steps for a brief ceremony, which included the national anthems of Canada and the US, some speeches and wreath laying.

All of this I observed from the crowd's fringes beside a young man I suspected was secret serviceman because he kept talking up his sleeve. When the ceremony ended and the principals started to descend the steps I spotted wife in the front row, directly in the part of the U.S. Vice-President.

Sure enough, when Al Gore got alongside the wife he put out his hand to shake hers and said something about Canada being such a beautiful country. Then he met several Americans visiting Ottawa in the crowd whom he also traded greetings with before the party stepped into their limousines and sped off to some other ceremony or luncheon.

This all happened before I even had a chance to accost Sheila Copps who was in her element and looking after Tipper Gore, whose blonde locks shone like the burnished helmets on the honour guard.

"Handsome, isn't he?" wife observed after we managed to get together. "Who?" I sweetly asked knowing all along she had upstaged me but good. "The vice-president, of course," she replied sweetly.

I can't swear to it but I suspect she never washed her right hand until the next day. That's why I think she's dumping Slick Willy into the ashcan in favour of Al Gore as President of the U.S.

After all she shook his hand. How many people, even Americans, can say that?

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