

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Back to school

Next Tuesday local schools open their doors again to admit thousands of students, many of them bored with free time and ready to get back to structured living. It can also be an anxious time, leaving home for the beginners.

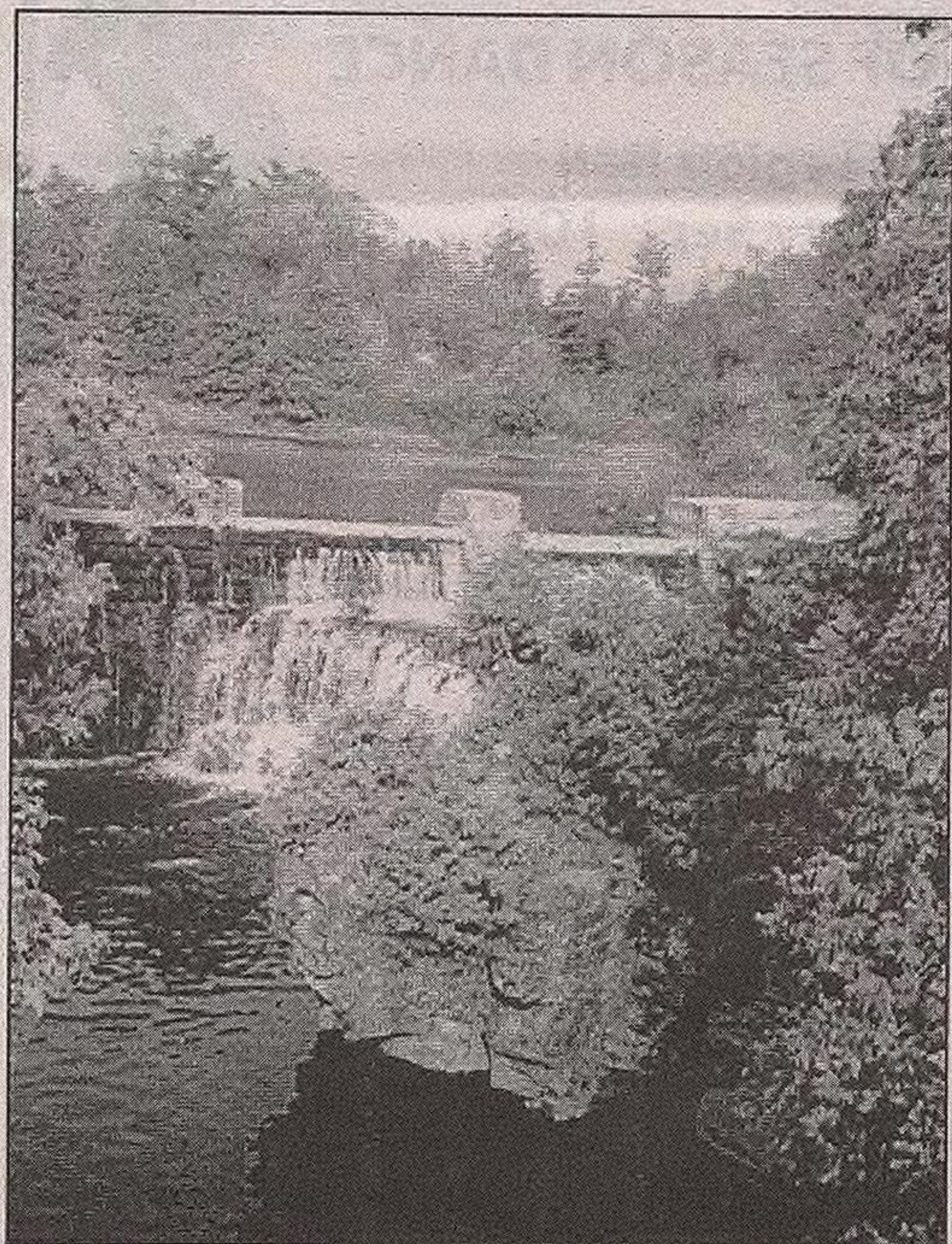
Most parents will be breathing sighs of relief to hand the kids over to teachers for a few hours each day, giving them breathing time again. Teachers, many of them bitter over changes dictated by Queen's Park in the last school year, nevertheless seem content to resume normal classes again.

Election results, which gave Premier Mike Harris the Province's tiller for another term, cooled out some of the more militant teacher federation leaders. Nevertheless, bitterness still exists over the cavalier methods the government employed implementing big changes in education.

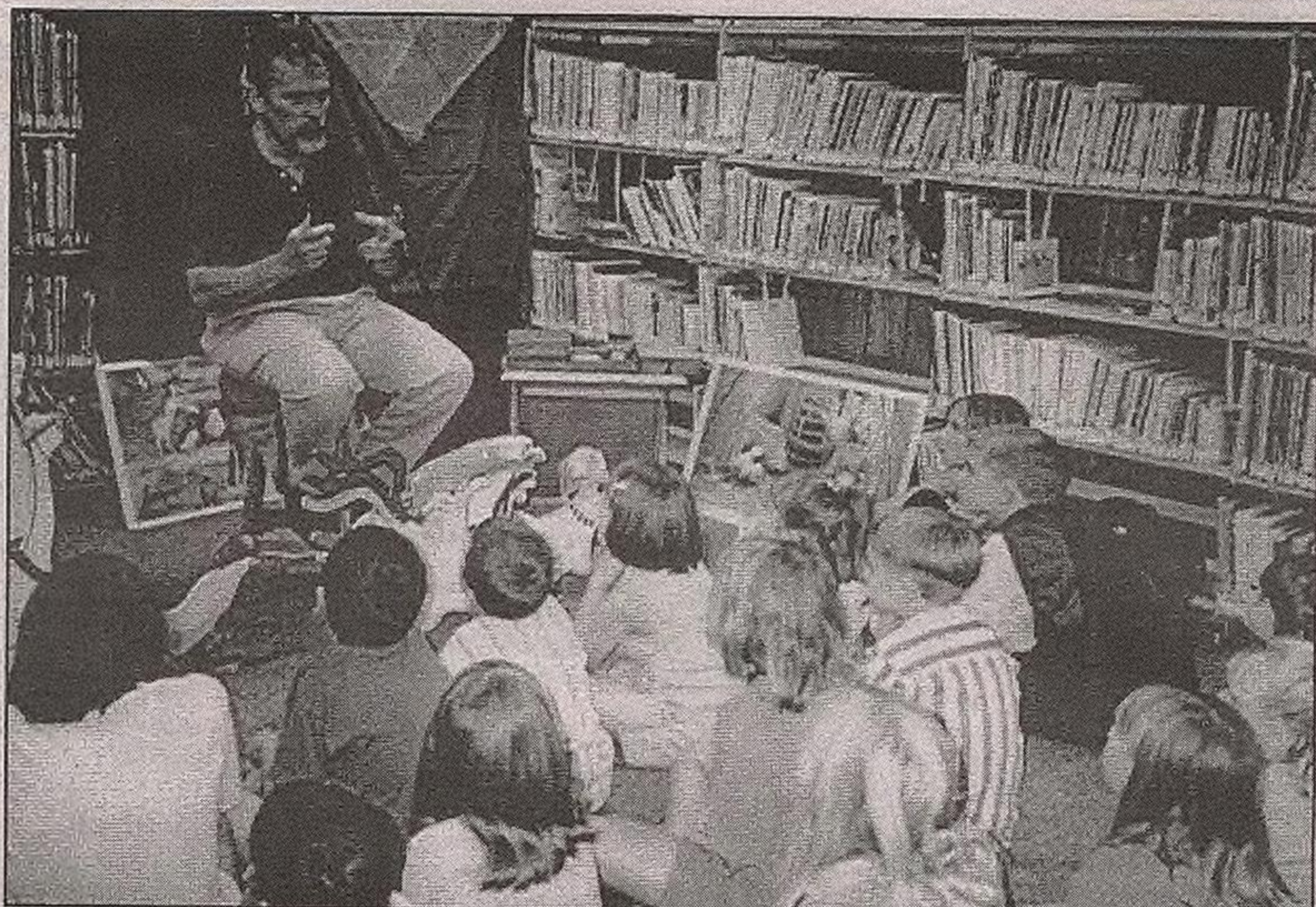
Despite differences over policy and curriculum, the government would be well advised to listen to the legitimate grievances of rank and file teachers. They deal with the children on a day-to-day basis. Their experience is more valuable than bureaucrats, whose only aim, in some instances, seems to be cutting budgets.

With a new minister of education, anxious to mend fences with the teachers, it should be time to get rid of the belligerence on both sides. That would require a mere receptive ministry and less militancy on the part of the teachers.

Both sides declare their policies are meant to make education better for the students. As it stands now no one benefits from the stalemate.



BEAUTY SPOT: Rockwood Conservation Park offers some picturesque views such as this one of the falls near the ruins of the Harris Woollen Mills. -Maggie Petrushevsky photo



FROM THE EXPERT: Author/illustrator Werner Zimmermann enthralled his young listeners at the Acton Library last week talking about how he began his artistic career. Originally a doodler, he discovered a need to make more - Maggie Petrushevsky photo



Editor's Notebook



From bathtubs to rain barrels

I remember when Saturday night was "bath night", and the family all lined up for a soak in our tub which was galvanized and used as a wash tub on Mondays. It was a weekly ritual, one that goes back into the cobwebs of history. But I never realized that our old galvanized tub had a story that ranks up there with old Roman ruins.

The Reader's Digest illuminated me with a press release called A Soak Through History. It was a title which put me off. I thought it referred to the town drunks, you know the "old soaks". But no, the release was all about the pure pleasure a relaxing soak in a tub can have. The Roman Emperor Gordian used to take four or five dips a day in his own marble bath while Napolcan Bonaparte enjoyed a piping-hot bath in the middle of the night.

Perhaps the most notable bath, the Digest says, took place in 1793 when Charlotte Corday stabbed Jean-Paul Marat, a scientist and politician during the French revolution. Marat had a skin condition treated by immersion in cold water. After Charlotte got his knife into him, his corpse - and the tub - were taken to a nearby church for a "bizarre" lying in state.

Well, the paparazzi of the day, the artists, Jacques Lois David ensured the fatal bathe would go down in history by painting, Marat Assassine, a celebrated work of art.

It's easy to see that Jean-Paul's bath didn't have the desired effect. Baths are supposed to restore our spirits, disperse our lactic acid and ensure a swift recovery from fatigue and to the aches and pains which sometimes occur after an exhausting workout. In Marat's case it led only

Coles' Slaw

with
Hartley Coles



to a grave situation, if you'll pardon the pun.

I've never been involved in such a dangerous dip although I can recall once hiding in a rain barrel with the truant officer on my tail. An unscheduled shower cascaded down the cave-trough downpipe and forced me out of my hiding place wringing wet, while the elderly official watched with evident glee.

That soaking led to a confrontation with my parents and a visit to the teacher, an understanding lady who sought some mysterious psychological reason for my absence from classes. The truth was my buddy and I were digging a cave in a hill when the truant officer appeared. We had forgotten all about school, thought it was Saturday. His sudden appearance galvanized us into action - he climbed a tree. I jumped in the rain barrel.

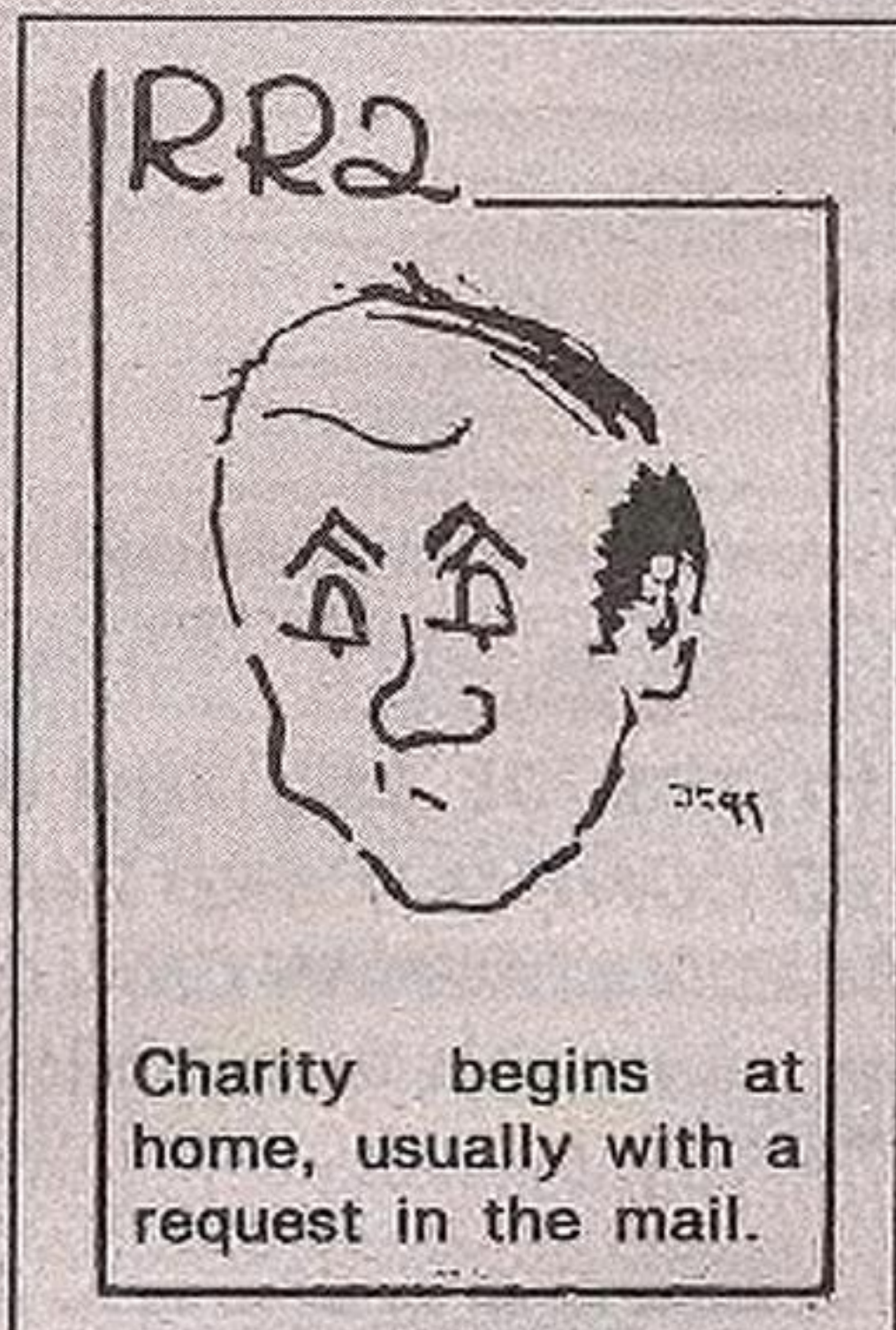
It was just misfortune that Jupiter Pluvius decided to tip his watering can at that juncture. We were both flushed out by the sudden downpour. His parents were less understanding, having arrived from Yugoslavia only a few years before, and possessing only a passing acquaintance with English.

Joe sized up the situation pretty well. Acting as interpreter he told them the truant officer was there to give him a medal for perfect attendance at school.

In any event both of us learned a lesson from that incident. After all with the forces of nature and school officials on our tail what chance did we have?

So my experience shows a show may be just as efficacious as a bath, a fact the late Lord Baden-Powell noted in his manual Scouting for Boys. He declared a cold shower was just the right medicine for boys when their sexual proclivities overrode their common sense, or words to that effect.

A few of the boys nowadays who imagine they are God's gift to humanity might ponder Baden-Powell's advice. After all conditions might change but human natures hasn't.



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