

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Times HAVE changed!

This is the time of year when many people look back on the past 12 months to see if they're ahead or behind in life's game. Since this is also the end of a century, as well as 1,000 years, the search could go on ad infinitum.

There have been many changes in the last year, let alone the last 100 or 1,000, much of it recorded on Page 12 by Frances Niblock through The New Tanner files. But looking back over the last century is a daunting task.

Experts say more has happened to the world in the last century than all the other recorded histories of centuries combined. And it may be true.

Most of us, however, are bound by the years in our own lifetimes and changes we have noticed as the years slipped by. Those of us long in the tooth can remember back to another era when this community had a population of about 1,800 people. Nearby Georgetown had about 2,000 souls, Milton about the same while Oakville and Burlington were considered large towns with about 5,000 people, Brampton about the same.

The only paved road in Acton then was No. 7 Highway with an extension along Main street from Mill to the top of Church Street. Trains and buses were the main mode of travel with the Toronto Suburban Railway stopping here on its way from Toronto to Guelph as well as the Grand Trunk with 14 trains a day.

Buses were the orange coloured Arrow Bus Lines coaches that also had a busy schedule, stopping at Wiles' Bus Depot where Harold and Laura Wiles dispensed the tickets behind their candy counter at the store where Touch of Harmony is now located.

There was a movie theatre in town, The Gregory, located where the Thomas fitness centre is now located. Lloyd and Elva Masales presided, selling tickets and managing, while "Did" Price manned the projector upstairs. There was a white line across the theatre about two-thirds of the way down its sloping floor, dividing the kids and the adults. The kids, of course, were in front, adults in the choice seats. It stood to reason. After all the adults had just shelled out 25 cents for a ticket to see the flicks while the kids had only dispensed a dime.

Over at "Pa" Jones's store you could fill up a small brown bag of chocolate coated peanuts for a penny. Or maybe jelly beans which the genial host sometimes made you sing, dance or yodel for.

A.T. Brown and "Teddy" Hassard dispensed drugs almost directly across Mill Street from one another in their drug stores. There were several grocery stores such as Carroll's, Brown's, Red & White (Jones's), Ernie Barr's, Woods's, and Elliott's General Store.

The village's clothing needs were looked after by Cooper's Men's Wear, Ben Rachlin's Clothing, Pallant's Clothing and maybe more which have slipped my memory. Hinton's 5¢ to \$1 store was a busy place as were the two hotels - the Dominion on Main Street and Station Hotel on Mill, not far from the railway station. Still there, too, in the same business.

"Sandy" McLean and Harry Mainprize had their barber shops on the south side of Mill Street while Morton's Tonsorial Parlour was close to the juncture of Mill and Main. Later Bill Grundy shore locks at a Main Street bungalow close to River Street.

There were at least two bakeries going full tilt while the butcher shops were manned and owned by George Benton, the Lovell brothers Len and Gord, Bill Evans, Orrie Lamb and later came Cliff Bradley. There probably were others I've forgotten.

Hardware stores? There were two - Bill Talbot's and Symon's Hardware, of course, only recently vacated by Home Hardware. Vic Rumley had the furniture store on the corner of Mill and John in conjunction with the funeral and embalming business. Later he purchased the old Storey home for this funeral business, keeping the furniture business until it was bought by Alma Braida and Rae West.

There's just not the space to go on but it was an entirely different time when the needs of the people were looked after in this small village which made its own entertainment at the old town hall and kept the post office on the corner of Willow and Mill the busiest place in town.

There's been a tremendous change over the last half century and only the foolhardy would attempt to foreshadow the changes coming.

HAPPY NEW YEAR
and New Century



LETTER PERFECT: Members of the primary and junior choirs, under the direction of teacher June Tribe, spelled out a holiday message for proud parents, families and teachers at the Robert Little school's annual Christmas concert last Wednesday. - Frances Niblock photo

A millennium of change

At the turn of the last millennium, most people on the planet would make contact with no more than a few hundred other people in their entire lifetimes. Today, it's possible to connect to that many people in a few minutes on the Internet; that's how much technology has changed our lives in the last 1,000 years.

Human beings now have unprecedented access to information, products, and services that our ancestors would never have dreamed possible. In fact, we have become so immersed in our modern, technology-based world that the potential loss of services such as bank machines, internet access, television, electricity, gas, garbage collection or city-supplied water, even for a short time, terrifies us.

And for good reason. Most people in industrialized nations live in large cities and are so far removed from our biological underpinnings that without our technological support, it seems we would be virtually unable to fend for ourselves. An entire industry has actually developed around preparing people to deal with the potential loss of these modern amenities for a period after Y2K. For many, not having access to cell phones would constitute an emergency - not having access to clean water would leave them dumbfounded. Simply surviving would be like learning to walk again.

Imagine for a moment what would happen if Y2K was a real disaster, so most of our modern conveniences were unavailable. Suddenly, the world would seem much larger, but conversely, our place in it would seem much smaller. Without a reliable supply of fuel for our cars, trucks and airplanes, travelling any distance would become a huge challenge.

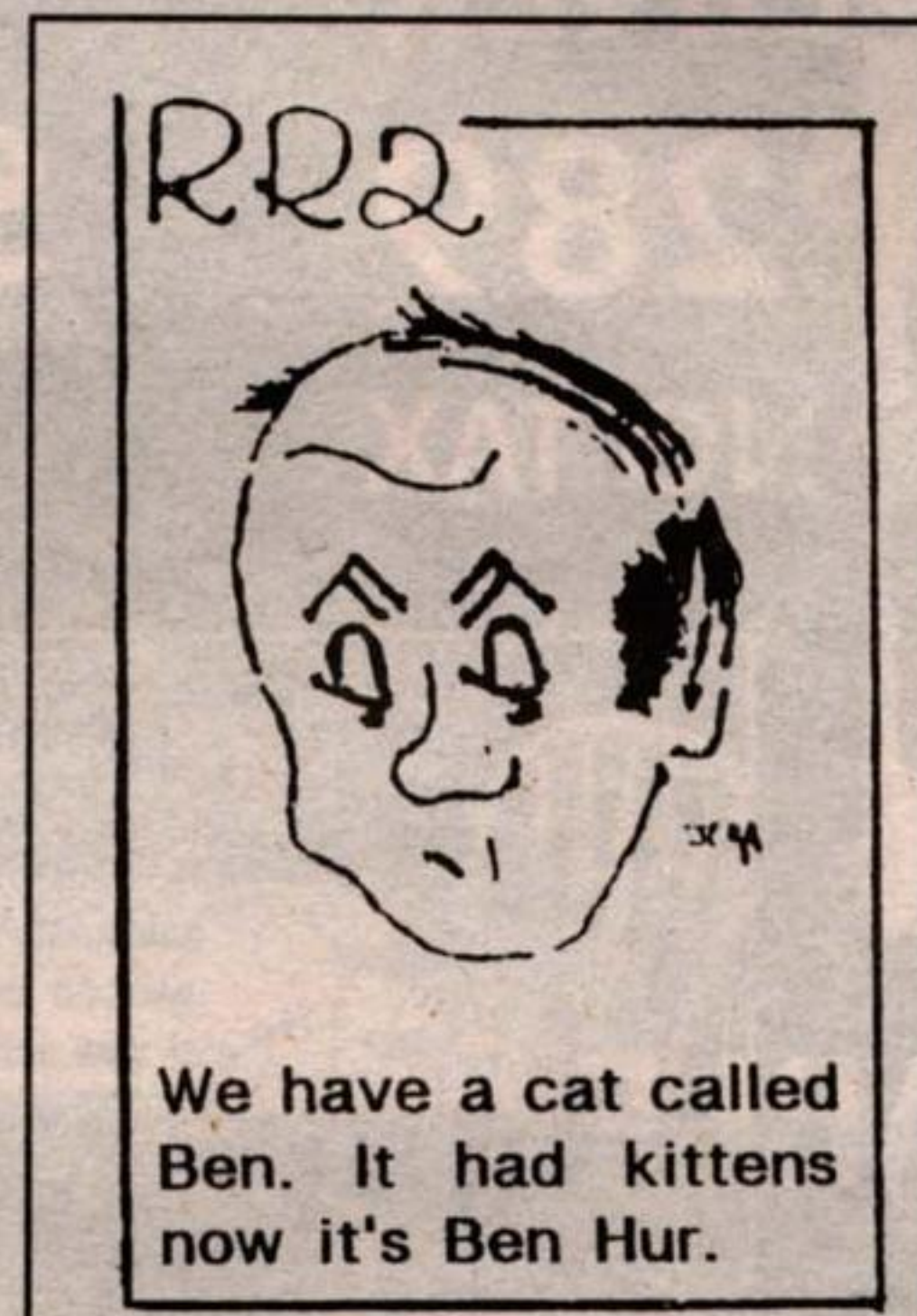
Science Matters

d by David Suzuki



Without television, radio, telephones or newspapers, we'd have to rely on word-of-mouth from our neighbours for local news. International news would be infrequent and unreliable. The loss of the ability to instantly access information and communicate with the world for some would be akin to separating an ant from its colony.

If transportation ground to a halt and food could not be delivered to our cities, just finding enough to eat would be difficult. We could grow our own food, but that takes long-term planning and is pretty tough in Canadian winters. Growing food indoors is possible, but not without electricity to provide heat and lights.



Gathering would be impossible in cities and besides, most people probably don't know which plants in their neighbourhoods are edible and which are poisonous. Hunting would also be a challenge, since most big game have been extirpated from cities and surrounding areas. If they aren't hibernating, squirrels and other rodents might be a good target, but ammunition would soon be in short supply, and hunting in urban settings would be downright dangerous.

Finding clean water could be even more challenging. Without the city water supply, people would be forced to father rainwater or snow. Lacking precipitation, they would be forced to drink surface water or dig wells by hand. Waste disposal would become a huge problem and the lack of proper sanitation could lead to outbreaks of disease.

This scenario may seem shocking and outlandish, but these were the sorts of problems faced by our ancestors 1,000 years ago. Even more shocking is that these are still common problems for millions of people around the world. Those of us fortunate enough to live in industrialized nations tend to forget that finding food and clean water, and staying healthy - in short, basic survival, is still the dominant preoccupation for a huge number of the world's people.

Any problems the industrialized world encounter due to Y2K glitches will be likely trivial in comparison to the daily challenge of survival. Cell phones, DVD players and video games are as far removed from the lives of millions as the need to find clean water is for us. We've come a long way in the past 1,000 years, but we have much further to go if we want the rest of humanity to share in our prosperity.

THE NEW TANNER

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