

Lifestyle

Wednesday Aug. 16, 1989

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Community Notebook

Garden Competition: Nominations close tomorrow (Thursday) for the annual Milton and District Horticultural Society garden competition. Members of the group will be looking for potential prize winners but nominations are most welcome. One can nominate one's own garden or one that he or she admires. Gardens must be visible from the road so judges don't have to enter the various properties. Rural and urban gardens are eligible as are apartment balcony gardens. To enter, call Krys Good at 875-0495 and tell her the address of the entry. Winners to be announced next week.

Pet Show: Milton Mall will be crawling with critters Saturday when the annual pet show will be held at 1 p.m. Pets of all shapes and sizes can compete in categories including the smallest pet; the most obedient; the cutest and the longest tail. Entry forms are available at Valu Plus Pet Centre at the mall. Deadline for entries is 9 a.m. the day of the show. Entry forms must be returned to the pet store.

Free Concert: The season of free summer concerts wraps up this Sunday with appearances by Milton District Pipe Band and Milton Senior Citizens' Orchestra. The performance will be at Victoria Park in front of town hall at 2 p.m. Members of the audience should bring a lawnchair or a blanket to sit on. The rain location is Hugh Foster Hall. The series is sponsored by the Town of Milton and Milton Arts Productions.

Corn Festival: Freshly steamed corn-on-the-cob is a big crowd pleaser at the annual Family Corn Festival at the Ontario Agricultural Museum. The celebration of the golden days of summer runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday Aug. 20. There will be musical entertainment, square dancing and numerous live demonstrations throughout the 32-hectare site. The museum is located on Tremaine Road just south of Highway 401. For information call 878-8151.

Pottery Workshop: Learn the art of making Indian pottery at Crawford Lake Conservation Area on Sunday. The pottery workshop is among the activities planned around the summer theme "Season of the Three Sisters". There are slide shows daily at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the interpretive centre as well as demonstrations of Indian life at the reconstructed Indian village. Children will find plenty to do at the Kids' Room where crafts can be made and taken home. Crawford Lake is on Guelph Line at Steeles Avenue. To find out more about the activities, call 854-0234.

Sailing at Kelso: The reservoir at Kelso Conservation Area will be a sea of colour as sailboards take to the water for the annual White Cap Sailboard Regatta. The event Sunday provides an opportunity for sailboard enthusiasts to try racing for the first time. There will be prizes given in various age groups and for several ability levels. The event runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For details call 878-5011.

Blood Clinic: The need for donations of blood is rarely higher than at this time of year. There will be a blood donor clinic at E. C. Drury School for the Hearing Impaired on Thursday, Aug. 24 from 1:30 to 8 p.m.

Children's logic

There's no simple questions or answers

By ROBERT BIDDLE
Special to The Champion

"My father said I'd learn from my mistakes. So, I learned a lot today."

This profound statement of logic from one of my pupils would stand well as my epitaph. From that first utterance, I have, over the years, used the words many times, usually muttered under my breath as I try to comprehend the logic of answers to what I considered simple questions. As most of the examples used in teaching are in the form of a question, I was doomed from the start and I never learned from my mistakes.

The one room school is packed with 49 pupils. If you do your preparation reasonably well you can get all the grades working. My big problem was not teaching arithmetics, it was getting those miserable kids to transpose the text book example into simple sums and hopefully the answer.

I never learned. I must have been the eternal optimist or a bigger fool than the kids because I was always trying to devise new working examples in an effort to motivate what little grey matter they might have lurking between their ears. Creative teaching which had an uncanny habit of being destroyed by their insidious logic. An inherited form of total destruction which defies understanding.

My defeats

I made notes of my defeats to logic in the hope I could use the modified examples another time, but to no avail.

"Graham, if you had 10 apples and you gave Jimmy four, how many would you have left?"

"Who's Jimmy?"

"Another boy."

"Do I know him?"

"No."

"Then I wouldn't give him any apples would I?"

He should go a long way, and here's someone to keep him company.

"Sam, if you had 14 potatoes and there were eight boys how would you share them equally?"

"Mash them."

Girls are no better.

"Shirley, if buttons cost four cents each and you need 14 to finish a dress, and you have 50 cents, what do you do?"

"Use hook and eyes."

Young Brian Gibbs was a likeable lad, always willing to help around the school. He was a sturdy boy who enjoyed the farm, an



occupation for which he seemed destined and I was sure he would excel at. He had trouble spelling but enjoyed reading and as hard as I would try, he just could not grasp arithmetic.

The day came when we needed some supplies from the General Store. It was quite a walk there and back, but I jumped at Brian's offer to go. Now I could give him a practical exercise that would mean something to him.

I made him write down the shopping list and put in the estimated cost. He added it up and I gave him enough money to cover everything. When he was at the store he was to write down the weights and cost of all the items, add them up, pay the storekeeper and check the change.

It was a golden opportunity to learn by doing.

Brian got back later that day with two large bags. We checked the items. He totalled the weights and the prices, subtracted from the money I had given him and he had the correct change.

"I certainly learned something today, sir." Results at last. "And what was that, Brian?"

"With that load, if you carry one bag over your left shoulder and the other in your right hand, you can walk a lot easier."

Strength to carry on

It's results like that that give you strength to carry on. The General Store was the arena for another encounter with a child's logic which was mistaken, at the time, for a more honourable trait.

Mr. Randall, better known as Rumrunner Randall, was serving in his store when I happened to be there at the same time as little Edward Beard. The kids called him Teddy Bear. Anyway, he had got two stitches in his head where he had taken a fall and Mr. Randall heard all about it from Teddy and me. As we were about to leave, in a generous act, Mr. Randall lifted the lid of the glass jar that held the jelly beans and said to young Beard: "Here take a handful of jelly beans for yourself."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," said Teddy. "Well I just said you could," replied Mr. Randall leaning well over the counter to make sure Teddy understood. "Go on take a handful."

"I don't think I should sir unless you would like to give some to me."

"Alright," said Mr. Randall smiling at the polite little boy. "Hold your hand out."

And he promptly took a handful of jelly beans and put them in the boys outstretched hands.

Stepped outside

I nodded my good-bays to Mr. Randall and stepped outside.

"Well Edward you displayed some fine manners in the store but why didn't you take the jelly beans? Mr. Randall did offer them to you."

"His hands are bigger than mine, sir," was the quiet logical reply.

This boy will go a long way.

There is a yard stick which hangs on a nail at the side of my desk. It was 36 inches long, and clearly marked in fractions on both edges. The yard stick is now only 22 inches long. Here's a testimonial to the pitfalls in translation of a logical explanation from teacher to pupil.

Every year we would have to cut wood for the stove and I used the occasion as lessons for the older boys. They had to cut the wood into usable lengths, about 14 inches. They used the cut pieces as a guide and they were getting progressively longer. That's when I gave them the yard stick to use. Hold the

• see LOGIC on page LS 7

ROBERT BIDDLE



Condensed from *A Man Without Class or Principle* by Robert Biddle.

Robert Biddle is a retired school principal ("those miserable kids forced me into early retirement") a character full of yarns and stories about his one room school and country life. The school has long since gone and the system changed. Although time is taking its toll, old man Biddle remembers those occasions when text book education left you ill prepared for the treacherous world of a child's logic.

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