



by Shirley Whittington

The household version of the Academy Awards

This seems to me to be the whole reason for competitions and festivals. They represent a reward for a job well done, and a challenge. That's why I think an annual award ceremony might make things run a little more smoothly at our house. It would give everybody something to work for, and it would be a fitting reward for outstanding service on the domestic scene.

Gold plated statuettes would be meaningless trophies. I lean to the awarding of gift certificates for the pizza of one's choice.

And first pizza goes to me. I have modestly nominated myself for an award for the best actress in any category. Last Christmas the Squire's gift to me was a short-skirted dress with iridescent stripes going round, barrelwise. It's suitable for one of the flying Walendas, or for an eighty-pound 16-year-old, but it makes a middle-aged mother of four look like a retreating zebra. For my simulation of undying gratitude, (unmatched since I opened last year's present - a book on how to clean everything) I think I deserve an anchovy pizza.

The award for the best performance by an actor goes to the Squire, who regularly pretends to be jolly, patient and nerveless, while teaching our oldest son to drive.

The award for the best production of the year goes to the second oldest boy who, with a friend, secretly organized a massively successful going away party for his brother last June, complete with refreshments and a six piece band.

An award for special effects goes to the

oldest boy who thumps and smashes away on his drums, and drenches the whole house with the percussive atmosphere of an artillery practice range. (Those drums are the reason his brother put his whole heart into planning the going away party.)

The award for the best screen play of the year goes to our cat, who performs half-gainers and double-loops on the outside of the kitchen door, suspended by his claws.

The award for the best documentary goes to the whole family who greeted me after I'd been away, with an overwhelming collection of dirty laundry, broken zippers and unwashed pots with cooked food caked in the bottom. It was a thoroughly convincing demonstration of how much I'd been missed.

The award for animated shorts goes to the Squire, who wears the most colourful underwear in town. When there are half a dozen pair flapping on the clothesline, even the birds wear sunglasses.

For original set design, the award goes to the Little Kid for the cunning way in which he has disguised his bedroom as the back room in the Salvation Army thrift store.

For years Bob Hope has been the master of ceremonies at the Hollywood Academy Awards. I dallied with the idea of asking him to come up and officiate at our family award night, but I don't think I'll bother.

He knows, just as I do, that attempts at self improvement around here are doomed to be Hope-less from the start.

Shirley Whittington is a staff writer with Markle Community Newspapers.



Start of spring runoff



by Ron Jones

Farms mean more than being able to drive to see a cow

production and their unwillingness to remunerate food producers for their efforts can only result in greater rural hostility to land use controls.

The local potato growers having to market their stored crop at a fraction of its production cost are likely to have little sympathy for suggestions that their land must continue to produce potatoes. Particularly as they must surely view with dismay the shelves of the local food markets crowded with the competitive Maritime product.

It is interesting to note the little response to their plight, as compared to the controversial actions of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency several months ago. The egg board embarking on the monumental task of

bringing order to chaotic Canadian egg markets stumbled once or twice and earned the scorn of the entire urban media.

This isn't to say the potato growers should bury their product even though they have ample justification, given the recent efforts made in transporting the unsalable maritime frozen product to this area for local distribution. Particularly when that processing company was given government permission a few months ago to import huge quantities of New England spuds to their New Brunswick processing facilities.

Even though potatoes in local stores are over priced in respect to their wholesale cost (34 cents per lb. PEI, Toronto wholesale), few can argue it is not a good food buy, but the poor returns to the local producers are

benefiting no one. And the obvious response will be reduced plantings, resulting in inadequate supplies and higher prices to the consumer next winter.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture told the provincial cabinet a few weeks ago that society must be prepared to share the farmers' risks in return for a consistent supply of high quality food. The province-wide farm organization proposed to the Davis Government a "Farm Income Protection Act" that would guarantee the proper use of farmland if society through government would pay part of the premiums to an Income insurance fund and provide backup funding in long periods of depressed prices.

Public participation in the continuance of Ontario agriculture must be from the view of

the Ontario economic scene. Not from the standpoint of indulging in a unique and satisfying toy. Often urbanites in their passion to preserve farmlands are heard to say "we must keep the farms - so our children and grandchildren will be able to take a drive to the country and see a cow in a field."

These otherwise well-meaning people are totally ignorant of the role agriculture plays in society. Rather than being able to perceive the economic benefits accruing from a healthy, vigorous farm industry, particularly to rural towns and villages, they see the farms as one more luxury item. They want, it seems, a half million acre Simcoe County agricultural zoo, and if the potato situation is any indication, complete with attendants

earning something less than the minimum wage. In other words they are advocating the preservation of agriculture for all the wrong reasons.

In this county today there are several hundred young people who are already trained in basic agriculture concepts. They, coupled with the areas' massive land base, add up to the county's most significant resource.

This province, having become dangerously dependent on outside energy sources can little afford to allow this to happen to food. But as was said recently, "It's no use preserving the farmers if we don't keep the farms" - and certainly it's equally futile to preserve the farms and not keep the farmers.

Ron Jones is a Tay Township farmer.



by Vianney Carriere

The perjured clocks in our halls of justice

built after the source of the Nile was discovered, or if it has more than three stories.

The truth is I used to feel pretty well that way myself - heavy on the gargoyles - but no more. I am newly converted to 20th century eccentricities and structural accidents.

For the last six weeks, I have been working out of a building here in Toronto which is known simply as The New Courthouse. It sits six stories high right downtown in the heart of the city to the west of the new city hall, in a part of town which the proponents of the above myth might call the veritable epitome of aridity where personality is concerned.

The New Courthouse, just to the north of the original Osgoode Hall which is to the north of The Old Courthouse is the centre of justice in Ontario. Built in the mid-sixties, it looks like a concrete ribbed shoe-box with a scoop of ice cream beside it.

I'm finding, though, that it is a veritable gold mine by way of character.

The royal commission I've been covering sits on the sixth floor, and my office is on the

fifth. For a 27-year-old man who's been on the labor force for only about five years, I have had a lot of offices in various parts of the province, but never one with a hole in the floor before. I can hardly imagine forgetting the first time I walked into Room 508 at The New Courthouse. Armed with a briefcase, I pushed the door open and put my best foot forward only to freeze in awe as I noticed that I was somewhat precariously balanced over an aperture of about 18 inches in diameter that seemed to lead into the very bowels of the building and gaped an estimated two million miles.

The hole is not always there, but I see it about three days a week. I've since found out that about every telephone cable in the building is channeled through my office, and telephones are frequently in need of repair. It just seems that the workmen frequently forget to pull up the building's britches when they're done, and I've taken to making mental bets with myself in the morning. Like: "An extra beer at lunch if the hole is open this morning."

Clocks. The New Courthouse has more

time zones than Calais to Peking. Also more clocks. They're all over the place, and so help me, I swear no two of them give the same evidence. There are circumstantial clocks, perjured clocks, hearsay clocks and estopped clocks.

They lie by as much as 40 minutes, and to tell you the truth, I couldn't at this moment tell you what time it is, because my watch is set to the clock in my courtroom which is a half an hour ahead of the clock in the hall, which is 20 minutes behind the clock in my office.

How can one respect justice when justice has no respect for time? I have visions of a learned judge sentencing a citizen to ten years, give or take seven.

From where I enter the courtroom, there are two doors, one labelled "Press Entrance" and the other "Barristers' Entrance". They are solid oak doors and they are about six inches apart. There must be something that makes the construction of a sign that would read "Press and Barristers' Entrance" impossible, because both those doors lead to a small room from

which one enters the courtroom through one single undiscriminating door.

Perhaps members of the public are simply not supposed to know that journalists and lawyers would soil each other's hands by using a communal door. And by the way, what does a solid oak door cost?

I'll spare you the elevators that go up instead of down or change directions inexplicably, because they really aren't needed. There are also escalators that run up and down from the first floor to the sixth and vice versa. Usually, I would begin to feel paranoid if, standing on an escalator, it suddenly emitted a guttural GGRRRRRRR and stopped between floors. But it's happened to me three times now. In a previous incarnation, this particular escalator must have been a Manhattan cab driver with a propensity to stop in the middle of the traffic and tell a fare "Get out and walk Buddie."

I'll spare you the bright purple carpets in the courtroom.

I'll spare you the cafeteria in B-2 which means it's a floor beneath the garage, and the guard outside it who enforces an edict

that food shall not be bought and taken out. Impossible even to get a take-out coffee.

I'll spare you the signs on innumerable closed doors that read ominously and enigmatically "Execution of Writs", "Divorce", "Sheriff", and one that I like especially which reads "Private-Women". The possibilities raised by that dash are momentous.

My very favourite quirk though, is one that I contributed myself. I may be working out of Room 508 until July or August, and when I learned of the formidable coffee rule at the cafeteria, I brought a Kettle down, only to find that 508 was virtual as far as knowing electrical outlets. I phoned the building superintendent and asked if anything could be done. Today, bulging from the floor in seven different places are seven different outlets - double outlets - including one on top of the cover of my hole. Now that's engineering. That's character.

Vianney Carriere is a reporter for Toronto's Globe and Mail and a freelance writer for Markle Community Newspapers.



by Ray Baker

Times questionnaire — the real results

accurate as the compilation. Cause and effect. Circulation trouble - see your doctor.

The Good Old Days
Before the media, before the town crier or Spanish Inquisition even, the earliest question and answer sessions set the pace. The tenth Roman Legion in Sicily was unhappy. Enter an Imperial consul from Rome and a good 'rap' session followed. The responses were evaluated with the following decisions:

1) The Legion would be disbanded and sent to the hell holes, from swamp to dessert, throughout the Ancient World;

2) Every tenth man would fall out and be whipped to death. We gained a new word in our language - decimate.

The Chinese had a more civilized approach. For the good news - honoured guest. For the bearer of bad news - put in a felt sack and trampled with wild horses.

The news was always good. So think how lucky we are.

You can fill in the questionnaire without being whipped to death. Fill it with bad tidings, and not come within stomping distance of a felt sack.

Editorials
I had previously heard a rumour (unsubstantiated) that people actually read the editorials. Now. Guaranteed of anonymity

you have confessed to this. At last count one-hundred-and-seventy-one of you said that the editorials were both fair and unfair, Conservative Liberal, NDP and radical, and you agreed with them. That's a good track record, satisfying all of the people all of the time.

Everyone wants a crossword puzzle and a horoscope. Well, how about it Markle Community Newspapers?

In the columnist class, Shirley (The Wit) Whittington was most widely read. With a style of writing that is universally pleasing, she has achieved the virtually impossible. She has kept her shoulder to the wheel, ear to the ground, back to the wall and finger on the pulse.

Ruthie (Times cartoonist), proving the Readers' Digest maxim that Laughter - the world's best medicine - is highly acclaimed as a cartoonist.

Well done Shirley and Ruthie. Why not? I mean, why not?
Under the heading Sex there were the usual answers 'please' or 'yes'. There were no 'don't knows'.

Bugs Bunny is most popular with the over 65's, while 'Winthrop' appears to be a crowd pleaser. There will now be a station break while you all read Bugs Bunny and Winthrop.....

Welcome Back
Now for the body blow. There is no John Dorsey: He was a dummy name put last on the list of columnists, as nobody wanted to be last I guess.

You know what, he has a good readership, ranging from 'always read' through 'sometimes' to 'never'. Anyone wishing to adopt the name, jump in, you have a guaranteed readership ready and waiting.

One serious suggestion which I thought was excellent said "Can you carry an Ombud-

man column, where you would print the case and leave the identity unknown".

The Times should rise to the occasion and then some. Not only could they do this, but what could be more natural as a choice of Ombudsman but our old friend John Dorsey. You can't be any more anonymous than that can you.

Seriously, though, I like that one. The questionnaire should have asked also 'What do you read first?, second, last, etc.?' As a working tool this would be invaluable.

Then I could get the front page with horoscopes, crossword puzzles, editorials and color photographs. The bad news on the back page.

What we need now is a questionnaire asking you gentle readers what you thought about the questionnaire. But it is an excellent start.

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