

## The planning process is far too complex

The frustrating thing about the planning process in Ontario is that almost nobody understands it.

At least that was the way it looked on the opening day of the OMB hearing being held to determine whether or not the Town of Penetanguishene will be allowed to implement its new zoning bylaw.

The reams of affidavits, copies of official plans, assorted bylaws, and maps that covered the tables and blackboards in the council chambers Monday afternoon left one with the impression that it would take weeks of study just to figure out what the town had done in the past and was trying to do now, without even considering what the objections to the zoning bylaw were.

The really crazy thing is that the goal of the planning process is actually quite simple. What the whole exercise is intended to accomplish is the ordered development of municipalities in Ontario. The idea is that if people are left to their own devices, the resulting jumble of development would make life unpleasant for everyone.

It's really not a bad idea to regulate development, but the processes by which we try to do that could surely be a lot simpler. As it stands, every time someone wants to do something, he has to wade through the Ontario Planning Act, the official plan of the area in which he wants to develop and any zoning bylaw in effect there. The relevant

planning board is faced with the problem of deciding whether or not the use suggested conforms to the official plan and the zoning bylaw. Then the council must pass it.

If the developer does not like the decision reached by the planning board and council, then there is the all powerful Ontario Municipal Board to appeal to.

In the event that the appeal is taken to the OMB, it then becomes necessary for both the town and the complainant to hire attorneys and planning experts to battle their way through the red tape.

It's getting to the point where the most valuable people in the planning process are not the planners who know good planning when they see it, but the red-tape experts, who know how the system works, and how to get through it. And that's a little bit ridiculous.

When it becomes necessary to call in lawyers and a provincial judicial body from Toronto to determine whether a local marina can be allowed to build a storage area across the street from its clubhouse, one really has to wonder. When the maintenance and administration of the planning process takes more time and effort than the actual business of planning, the system needs a long hard look at. It's time the process was simplified a little bit so the planners can plan instead of spending their time and energy unravelling miles and miles of red tape.

## Looking the gift horse in the mouth

One should never look a gift horse in the mouth, as the saying goes, but that seems to be what is happening in the case of the east end Neighbourhood Improvement Project.

The program will mean that about \$800,000 will be spent in the area, most of it federal and provincial money. There are certain criteria which must be observed, but by and large the money comes almost as a gift.

There is no question that the town and everybody in it will benefit from the NIP project, but now the organizers seem to be running into slight problems from the people who stand to benefit most from the influx of capital.

To begin with the NIP steering committee received 32 completed questionnaires from the people who live in the area, containing suggestions as to how the money should be spent. There are 389 residential units in the area, containing about 1,550 people. These 1,500 people managed to come up with 32 questionnaires. For people who are about to receive an \$800,000 gift, they don't seem too excited about it.

Add to that the fact that only about 25 people showed up at the public meeting Thursday night, and you've got apathy with a capital "A".

The next problem the steering committee ran into was the problem of how the money

should be allocated. They did the best they could with the response they got, to come up with a list of projects which were wanted by the people of the area. Then at the meeting, the importance of some of these projects was questioned. Why did you include this, they were asked. Why can't we have that, the people wanted to know.

The fact is they can have just about anything they want if they come to a consensus about it and make their views known to the committee.

The committee has done an excellent job of compiling a list of projects, ALL of which were asked for by those people who cared enough to make their views known.

Gift or no gift, there is no reason why the money should be spent on things the people do not want. Of course the money should be spent on things which are needed, and which the people want. But the NIP steering committee is doing the best it can to make sure this is the case. And so far their best has been pretty good. If people would just trust the committee, make their views known then sit back and see what comes forward, there is no reason why the project cannot run smoothly, and accomplish its goals, for the betterment of all the people living in the NIP area.

### Letter to the editor

## Win with biculturalism

Dear Editor: I believe that the people of Penetanguishene would have a lot to gain if they had a pro-bilingual and bi-cultural outlook.

It is not my desire to force anyone to use or acquire a second language, but it is about time that some English-speaking people stop using the bigoted phrase: "French shoved-down-my-throat".

I have seen the reaction of fear (based on ignorance), when the capital letters B. and B. are mentioned. This is, I hope, a free society and in Canada one should be able to speak English or French and not be made to feel ashamed of one or the other.

Let me illustrate what Penetanguishene could gain with a more pro-bilingual approach:

1) The University: At this very moment a group of dedicated men and women are trying to lay the foundation of a bilingual university. They need our full support if they are to succeed. This institution, to be, would serve English and French needs equally.

This would bring prestige to our area and certainly everyone in Penetanguishene would gain, not only teachers and professors involved, but also merchants, grocers etc.

An institution of higher learning arising from our bi-cultural origin will assure our bi-cultural destiny.

2) The Hospital: In the last few years I have heard the phrase: "To serve the unique aspect of this area", used on many occasions. The phrase, I presume, refers to the French and Bilingual people living in this area. It is also used by politicians and others, who at times feel it can be very influential on high-ranking officials at Queen's Park, in preserving our hospital.

I wonder if the hospital is serving the needs of these "Unique" people. And now I am aware that in a new strategically-located hospital, two miles down the Old Penetanguishene Road, there are visual signs of bilingualism.

May I repeat that only by promoting bilingualism will you save the hospital. If we have something unique in this area, let us be proud of it. Let us not forget that just a few years ago, we almost lost our Obstetric Department, and that the tight money policies of the Health Department are still in force.

In conclusion, may I say that thanks to the French Connection we may retain our hospital and in a few years gain a university. This is what we may gain from a pro-bilingual approach. May the newly elected politicians fulfill their responsibilities.

Sincerely,  
Germain Gauthier.

## Sugar and Spice

The fault with wives

by Bill Smiley

My wife and I had a terrific fight the other night. She's always reading articles and watching television panels. One week it's how you can guarantee that your baby will be a boy (or a girl). The next time it's how to avoid dying in your sleep by positive dreaming.

As you can imagine, some of these topics don't really send me, and she gets quite annoyed when I don't wax sufficiently enthusiastic.

I try to participate in the monologue by reading her one of my favorite articles, something like, "Is The Real John Turner Just a Shy, Humble Little Boy Underneath It All?"

She just retorts, "Who cares?" and goes relentlessly back to her own article, which this week was about battered wives. The article was entitled "Couples That Batter Each Other Matter to Each Other," or something equally ridiculous. Its gist was that married people who fight, even physically, are far happier than those who hold in their resentments and become psychologically warped as a result.

For once I made a stand. I told her, in words to that effect, that that was a lot of women's magazine, soap opera crap. I went on to cite some of our friends who used to batter each other regularly, and are now happily divorced from each other and remarried to non-batters.

For some reason this irked her. I don't know whether it was the male chauvinistic crack or the fact that some of her friends are

happier with a new mate, but she started a fight.

Her article hadn't said anything about battered husbands. I'll draw a veil over the next few minutes, for those with tender sensibilities who have never been hit by a sneak punch from a woman when they weren't looking.

Anyway, when I had picked myself off the floor, wiped the blood from my nose, and locked myself safely in the bathroom, I issued an ultimatum. "If you ever lay a finger on me again, I'm leaving. I'm going home to your father."

Her reply: "Go ahead, you crumb! If you walk out of this house, you'll never get back in. It's in my name. So's the car. I'll clean out our joint account, garnish your salary, hire a lawyer, and put you on Skid Row, where you belong."

I needn't tell you here that she had recently read some shyster's article about how to go about doing just that to your husband.

I was so mad that I was adamant for quite a while. If there'd been a phone in that bathroom, I'd have called the police for an escort and walked right out of there. But there wasn't.

I ignored her further taunts, all of them on a similarly low, despicable level, and maintained a dignified silence. She calls it sulking. Fortunately, there was a good paperback novel on the back of the toilet, and I was soon absorbed.

She can't stand this. Bitter invective,

coarse comments, even bad language rolls off her shoulders. But she nearly goes out of her skull when there's nobody listening to her.

Finally, "Do you want a cup of tea, you cowardly bum?" I didn't make a sound for a full minute, then grunted, "Maybe. What else?" I meant a full apology and an abject admission of her guilt in instigating the donnybrook.

"And a piece of apple pie," she snapped. "With cheddar cheese." I gave up. How can you reason with someone like that?

"Well, O.K. But no more battering, baby, or I call the cops."

After a while, we had cooled out a fair bit, and she got me an ice pack for my nose. I was willing to forget it, but underneath I was still simmering, and I entertained thoughts of cashing my two \$100 bonds the next day, skipping off to the Canary Islands, and leaving her high and dry.

But, like every woman I've ever met, she wanted to "talk things out." That's one of the most disgusting phrases in the English language. Right, chaps?

It was finally decided that we'd each make a list of our worst faults, let the other have a look at the list, then try to do something about it.

I worked away assiduously for what seemed hours, my tongue stuck out of one corner of my mouth. My list went something like this:

a) too ready to forgive wife; should be firmer

b) too generous with my children; must be tighter

c) too fond of grandchildren; must be sterner

d) complain too much about arthritis; should complain more about hemorrhoids

e) too ready to see good side of others; must be more realistic.

Well, my list went on and on and on. I didn't realize what a truly rotten guy I was until I started to put it down. My wife finished hers quickly, and resumed her overt affair with her sewing machine (one of the things that are driving us apart).

Handed over my list. She started to read it with a benign smile. The smile began to curl down on the corners. Her face got red.

"Why, you lousy little cockroach!" she exploded. I didn't point out that she was being redundant.

I'd like to tell you this little marital drama had a happy ending, that it wound up in a clinch.

Well, it did wind up in a clinch. I had her arms so tied up that Muhammad Ali couldn't have thrown a punch in the same situation. So she kneeed me you know where.

When I had stopped grunting, and got to my knees, I picked up her list of faults, which she'd thrown in my face as I lay prostrate.

I half expected that she'd write something like, "My only fault is that I don't appreciate what a wonderful husband I have."

It was a little shorter than that. It just said, "None."

## And nothing can go wrong... go wrong...



by Ray Baker

This week I'm combining film reviews, book reviews, TV reviews and a personal meeting with a robot into the column. So I'm pinching all the reviewers jobs this week. Ah well, it's about robots and clones, bionics and waldoes.

A 'waldo' is a mechanical extension of the human anatomy. Like you can get one that attaches on your arm so that hydraulically you can lift a full 45 gal. drum with one hand.

Well, I saw a robot the other week. An industrial robot made by Unimation Inc. of Connecticut. He (or she) was building up wood blocks into a pyramid pattern. You could move one away and he would find it and carry on. When he'd finished he faced the crowd and clapped his 'fingers' we applauded and he then took a bow. He knew we would applaud and his program had been set accordingly.

It was designed to work where we couldn't. Inside a furnace moving red-hot ingots around, or in a mine without choking. One of his distant cousins was sampling the soil of Mars quite recently with no air to speak of, even if he could speak.

### Give me a hand

Give me a hand, or a leg or an arm. Six sensible 'shrinks' said that the reason for the success of the TV series "The Six Million Dollar Man" and "The Bionic Woman" was because the average person could identify with them. We would all like to leap tall buildings in a single stride, or see in the dark. Even the kids Christmas toys are Bionic dolls with interchangeable modules for repair, as these kids grow up and go to University they will make it happen.

Now for the books. No. 2 son came home from grade 10 recently with two books. "I robot" and "The Rest of the Robots" by Azimov. Now I've been an S.F. fan since grade seven and was beginning to worry about him. Having been weaned on Azimov.

Sturgeon, Heinlin and Kornbluth I read avidly. Even wrote a couple myself under the name Becker which sounds better for S.F. than plain old Baker. Anyway the two robot books dealt with a robot Psychologist, a Dr. Susan Calvin (written before women's lib too) with positronic brain-paths built right in there the poor old robots needed some mental guidance from time to time. After all they are only human. So No. 2 son is hooked. He's a chip off the old blockhead.

### What's in a name

The exotic names in S.F. which sound authentic are carefully thought out. My favorite author, Kurt Vonnegut, the only one in recent years to have his books publically burnt, came up with a lulu. He writes S.F. under the name of "Kilgore Trout" beautiful.

A three hour special the other week 'Life goes to the Movies' from the 30s to the 70s evoked a lot of memories. After World War II we were all scared of the atomic age, films like Giant Birds, Ants, you name it came along, even the Atomic Man. Then along came some decent stuff like '2001' and 'The Andromeda Strain' and the 'The Omega Man'. Then the mystics crept in with 'The Exorcist' and 'The Omen'.

### Meanwhile back at

#### The Laboratory

Enter the movie 'WestWorld'. Where the tourist could outshoot, outride and outlove a series of robot bad guys. No sweat...until the robots rebelled and began slaughtering the tourist, as they were indestructible you can imagine the rest. Now along comes 'FutureWorld'. Same idea with a Frankensteinian twist. Cloning. To 'Clone', take a sample of skin and analyze the cells. Identify the genetic traits, the personality, and the very stuff of life itself. The D.M.A. than duplicate it. Presto, a living duplicate. With a blank mind you can fill in.

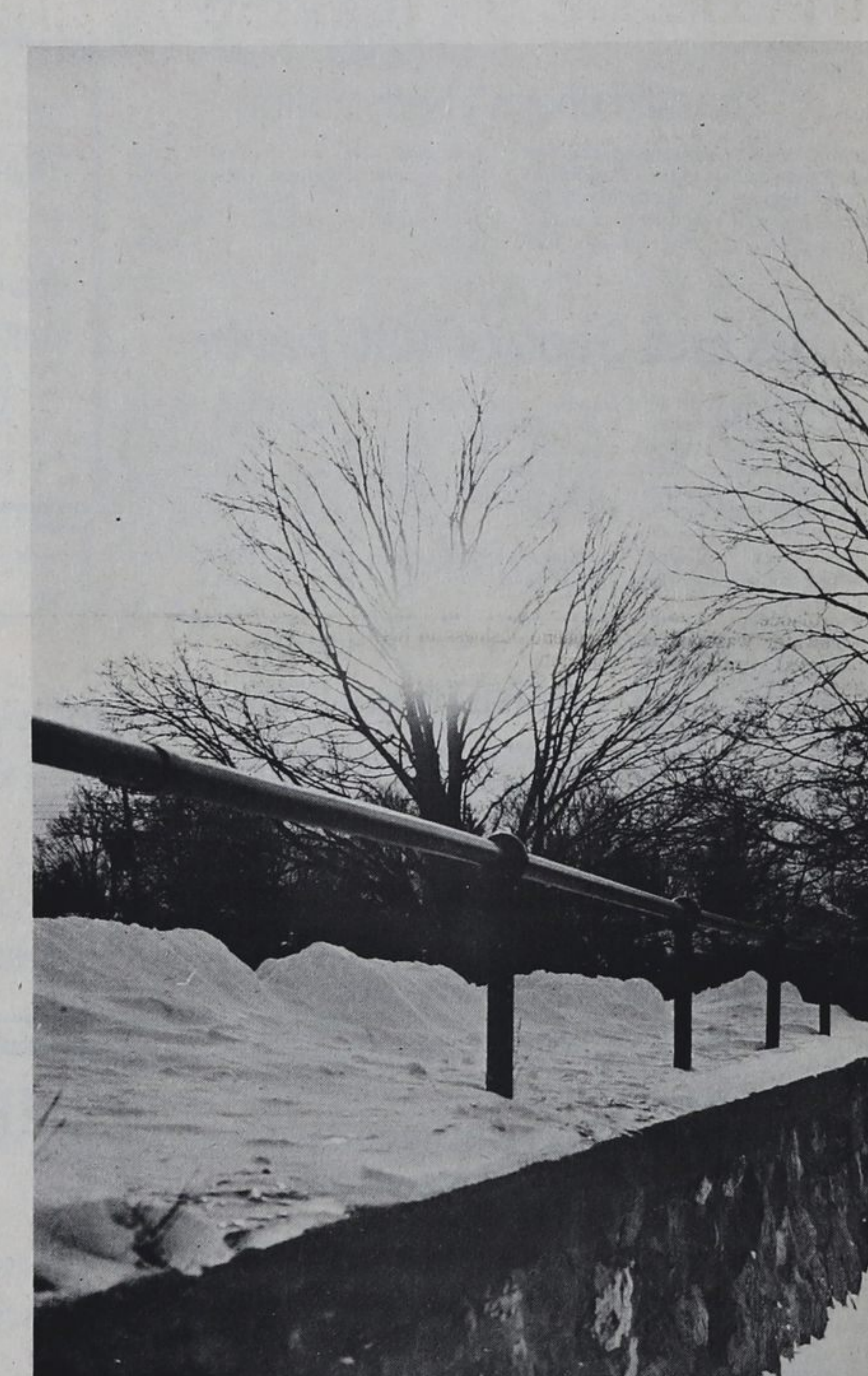
Now the good guy and the bad guy are the same guy, are you still there? The whole film is worth seeing just for one scene where the maintenance man has to leave his old pal, a robot who cheats at cards.

I can honestly say I never met a robot I didn't like.

So there you go. The future is rosy. We already have Waldoes. Bionics are just around the corner and robots are with us now, even if they only fly hundreds of people in bad weather every day, and Cloning will be the ultimate goal. With our electronic Solid States and microscopically small circuits what more could we ask. Enjoy the future, with your wish their command - your every need and pleasure taken care of.

And nothing can go wrong...go wrong...go wrong.

Ray Baker is a Manager at Midland's RCA plant and a freelance writer for Markle Community Newspapers. He and his family live in Penetanguishene.



A crisp winter's day

## Confessions of a good girl



by Shirley Whittington

Dear Santa: Remember me? I'm the little kid who used to write those annual letters that went: "Dear Santa. How are you? I am fine. Please bring me a doll with real hair that wets and goes Ma-a-a when you turn it over. And a little stove that gets hot and little pots and pans to go with it."

You're a busy man, I realize, and I hope you won't think I'm nit-picking when I tell you that the stuff arrived - about twenty years late.

That little stove must have gone astray in the chimney but that's all right because eventually I got a big one and lots of pots and pans to go with it. I spend hours playing with them.

Later, I got not one, but four living dolls with real hair, that wet prodigiously and went Ma-a-a all night long. I've taken good care of those dolls, and you'll be glad to know that although I've knocked them about a bit I haven't broken them.

I know now why you were a bit slow in filling my childish requests. I spent all that time telling you how I was and asking you how you were, and I never once mentioned that I had been a good girl. This was because my mother told me you were watching me all the time, and I thought you knew.

This year I'm not taking any chances. Right off the top I want to make one thing perfectly clear. I have been a good girl all year, and don't believe anything you may hear from my bank manager, my boss, or members of my immediate family.

For one thing, I'm still here. Although several times the temptation has been strong to flee to Tahiti to fulfill myself under an

assumed name.

Have I been a good girl? Listen. I'll prove it with statistics.

Since last December I have made 525 paper bag lunches. I have cooked over 300 hot dinners, several of them tasty and nourishing.

I have washed 3,912 socks and mated almost half of them.

I have logged hundreds of miles in the car, driving kids to music lessons, band practices, basketball games pyjama parties and similar events of cosmic importance.

I have fed the cat, emptied the wastebaskets, straightened the bathmat, cleaned the basement and shoveled the driveway, and sometimes it hasn't even been my turn.

At least twice I have been polite to door-to-door sellers of salvation. I wrote to my kids when they were at camp.

I don't buy aerosol cans any more and I use my postal code.

says, "Geez. What happened to your hair?"

I still can't cope with a daughter who tells me how hopelessly out of style I am as she goes out the door wearing half my wardrobe. Or with a son who tells me he'd like to live in a commune where everybody shares in the work and loves one another.

I'm wandering, I fear, from the point of this letter which is to issue the annual Christmas want-list. No see-through baby-doll pyjamas this year, please, and no books on how to clean everything.

My wants are simple. If you would stuff my stocking with the following, I'll continue to believe in you.

I'd like a couple of good trashy novels, not necessarily written by Canadians.

I'd like a lot of pencils, and 525 small paper bags to pack next year's lunches in.

I'd like permission to stay in bed, with the covers pulled over my head, on those mornings when the family is milling around looking for clean underwear new shoelaces and last night's homework.

Aside from a 28 hour day and a Canada Council grant to study the wines of France, I can't think of another thing I need to make me happy.

Except the promise of another year like the last one - imperfect, but happily satisfying.

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