

Oak Ridge takes the right approach

Dr. Barry Boyd, the Medical Director of the Mental Health Centre, prefaced his remarks to the Sub-Committee on Federal Penitentiaries at Oak Ridge last Friday, by saying when he heard the committee was being formed, he hoped they would visit Oak Ridge.

It is not without good reason that Dr. Boyd is proud of the set-up at "the Ridge". When one mentions Penetanguishene to people who don't know the town, one of the first things they say is, "isn't that where the penitentiary is?" Or "isn't that where they have the insane asylum?"

It's bad enough that they don't know anything more than that about the town, but it is really a shame that more people do not know more about the hospital.

The tour of the hospital given the M.P.s and their staff revealed that the hospital is not something out of a 19th Century horror novel. There are no screaming patients restrained by straight jackets. The patients do not resemble the title character from Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho".

Aside from the bars on the doors and windows, and the rather austere rooms on the top floor, where the new arrivals and the unco-operative patients are placed, the hospital almost looks like a dormitory. The

patients look like rather normal individuals, and one certainly does not get the feeling of being constantly watched and guarded.

For a maximum security establishment, Oak Ridge seems rather pleasant!

Oak Ridge's record for producing cures is good by any standards; compared with federal penitentiaries, one suspects its record in terms of repeat offenders is excellent. With the cost of keeping people in prison these days we can't afford the luxury of revenge. The more people who can actually be rehabilitated, so they won't return to prison, the better (and the cheaper in the long run) it will be for the tax-payer.

The work done at Oak Ridge is certainly of benefit to those who are sent there for some reason or other, and the humane way its involuntary patients are treated is certainly a cut above the way it's done in Kingston or Millhaven.

It is to be hoped that the committee made extensive notes on the hospital while they were here, so that maybe some of the prisons across the country will begin to be more than just places where we put people who do not fit in. Maybe they will begin to do some good, training criminals to be better people, not better criminals.

Congratulations to a local athlete

Once again, Penetanguishene has proved it can produce athletes capable of competing with the best in the country, and winning.

The outstanding achievement of Brian Orser last weekend deserves the praise and admiration of all of the town's residents.

This young man's devotion to his chosen sport should prove to be an inspiration to anyone with a goal. His long hours of practice

and his total dedication to excellence in the field of figure skating show a determination and a drive rarely seen in today's world.

At a time when society tends to view the young as lazy and coddled, residents of Penetanguishene should be proud of Brian, and proud to see one of their own doing so well in sport at the national level.

Good job by rescue workers ignored

On February 1 four Toronto residents, missing on the icy expanse of Georgian Bay since early Saturday morning, were rescued by the Midland OPP.

The successful rescue mission though must be attributed to the combined and dedicated efforts of dozens of volunteers and professionals, many of which worked through Monday night to locate the missing party.

Unfortunately any Torontonian reading only the Toronto papers is unlikely to have ever read about the valiant rescue efforts of the local OPP detachment, to say nothing of the Maple Valley Snowmobile Club or the Georgian CB's.

The Toronto headlines screamed of dreams

of pizza, of little Tonya Plummer's resilience - but nary a word of praise for those who risked their lives to save others.

Both Gordon and Anne Plummer apparently specifically asked the reporters who barged the family with questions to mention the efforts of the Midland group. Their request fell on deaf ears. (It probably makes for bad reading in Toronto and area).

Midland readers though should be made aware of the rescue efforts of the OPP, the snowmobile club, the citizen band club, whose willingness to battle the weather and the odds of locating four lonely people on the vast expanse of Georgian Bay paid off. In Midland at least their efforts will be long remembered.

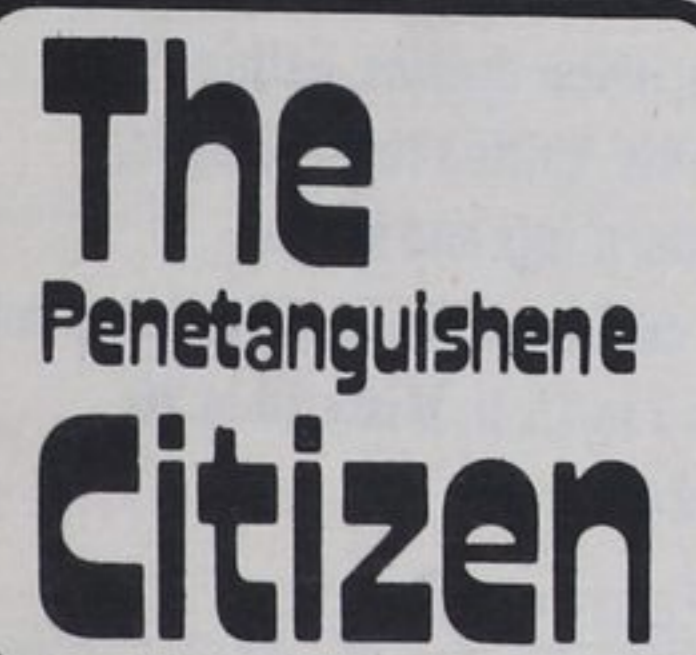
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The editorial page of this newspaper is open to any reader who may wish to express a thought or opinion on any subject in or of the news. We'd especially like to see letters or articles dealing with local issues and concerns.

Our only limitation is space. If necessary, letters or articles may be edited at the discretion of the Editor, for good taste or legal reasons. Material may be of any length, and if possible, typed or hand-written clearly so no mistakes will be made.

We will not print any letter sent anonymously to the paper. We ask that writers include his name, address, and phone number in the letter or contribution so that we may verify the authorship.

We can no longer publish a letter whose author has requested that his name be withheld. We feel that a person willing to voice his or her opinion on our editorial page should also be willing to sign his name to it.



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This week, with no great, stark theme demanding my intense and earnest attention, I thought we'd have some mid-winter musings, for a change. Show me the Canadian who can be fiery in February, and I'll show you a saint. Or a devil.

One thing I'm sure of. They're going to come with a large butterfly net one of these days, and cart my wife away.

She doesn't sleep well. Many a morning, in the pitch dark, when the boy wades through the snow with our morning paper, he looks into our brightly-lighted dining-room and sees this funny lady in her nightie-gown, sewing a fine seam at the dining-room table, on her new sewing-machine.

Last night, or rather at four a.m. this morning, a curious passerby might have been rather intrigued had he looked through our cellar window. There, crouched on the floor, was this peculiar woman, with a blowtorch burning brightly, in her dressing-gown and slippers. She was removing the wax from our skis. It's a good thing we don't have anything resembling a Gestapo in this country. They'd have had her in a concentration camp long ago, on general principles.

My daughter's going a bit the same way herself. After a mere 20 years of education,

and only two children, she's decided to enter the real world. She's going to stop being a student, and go to teachers' college. Maybe. My son-in-law, who has a measly 22 years of schooling, is no such fool. He knows that when you end your education, you run into the world's dirtiest four-letter word: "work"

and he wants no part of it for a few years yet. "A pound of coffee soon \$5?" queries a newspaper headline. Who cares? There's still a lot more mileage in a pound of java than there is in a quart of good rye, at \$7.80. And nobody will force you to drink either. So we still have some freedom of choice in this country. The news story said "People will get hysterical in June, just as the Brazilian winter ends." I doubt it. And if they do, as Marie Antoinette would have said, "Let 'em drink brandy." At 12 bucks a bottle.

A Toronto borough is battling to keep unrelated people from sharing a dwelling. Why? I'm not related to my wife, and we've shared the same dwelling, even the same bedroom, for many a year. What's the fuss? The only reason I can think of for the concern is that people start looking like each other if they live together too long. For some, this is a real bonus; for others a nightmare.

Rene Levesque disappointed me hugely when, after first refusing, he gave in and

agreed to wear a tuxedo while addressing a bunch of American big-shots in a pitch for loans for Quebec. So much for the vaunted independence of the new Quebec.

West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt says Germans are annoyed about the way they are depicted in World War II movies on British television. Tough toenails, Helmut. How would you like to be represented? As a dedicated band of social workers. A movie about Germans in wartime without a couple of good "Schweinhunds!" in it wouldn't be worth the powder.

A couple of neat items: a judge in Brampton ordered a 20-year-old woman who was defrauding the Unemployment Insurance Commission to donate a pint of blood every six months for two years; a guy in Illinois is living with his family in a cave and his heating this winter will cost him only \$1.29 for gas and oil for his chain saw. This is the type of stuff that restores my faith in the ingenuity of the human spirit.

The deadly dullness of Maclean's magazine underlines the reasons so many of us read Time and Newsweek, those horrible purveyors of American free enterprise, lively news stories, and excellent book and movie reviews.

The annual NHL all-star game is the least

exciting sports event of the year.

British Columbia is talking about giving everyone a guaranteed wage. Why in the holy old jumpin' was I born 30 years too soon?

After spending about 20 bucks on battery boosts from the tow-truck, I installed a block heater in my new old car. Naturally and inevitably, the cold spell ended, and I don't need the thing. Another \$15 down the drain.

When the ice on my roof built up to a height of about 36 inches, I moved swiftly and got a gang in to remove it before we were plunged, willy-nilly, into the basement. They did a great job, for \$50 and threw in a bonus — if a dozen shingles removed, along with the ice.

A columnist says our government is staid and exhausted. I would have used the words Hamlet did: "Stale, flat and unprofitable." It has the same stale demands for taxes, the same flat denial of any reasonable appeal against them. And the only people who ever make a profit from dealing with it are civil servants and bureaucrats.

It hasn't been all bad this winter. There's been some great news from Florida. All those rats who leave the ice-coated Canadian ship every winter to bask in the sun have been freezing their butts off this year.

So much for mid-winter mutterings.

Behind the scenes 'gossip' on winter



by Shirley Whittington

"This is a real old-fashioned winter," I said to my Aunt Fanny last week.

"This is," she replied grimly, "a bleeping bleep of a winter but I wouldn't mind it half as much if I could find somebody to blame it on."

That set the old journalistic nose twitching, and I immediately contacted my secret source in Ottawa to find out who was responsible for our current white nightmare.

"It's hard to pin anybody down on this," he said. "I called the weather man and he said it was a municipal responsibility. City Hall put me off to some flunky in the Provincial Government who told me weather was a Federal matter. At first the Feds tried to blame it on secret nuclear testing in Disneyland, but the official story finally leaked out. That's not snow outside your window. It's fall-out from Nixon's paper-shredding machine."

"Surely you don't expect me to believe that," I said. "Haven't you heard any gossip around town?"

My informant paused, and then confided that he'd been a guest at a benefit dinner for people with static cling in their undershirts, and that he'd picked up a little scuttlebutt.

"They are saying," he said, "that it's the Mainland Chinese."

"The Chinese?" I said. "That's ridiculous."

"Not really," said he. "It seems the Peoples' Republic has upset the global balance, and all that cold air and snow is kind of sliding over to our side of the planet."

"That's the silliest thing I ever heard."

"Think about it," he said. "There are about eight hundred million Chinese, right? Remember that their standard of living has improved a lot over the past fifteen years. If you add, say - one kilogram to eight hundred

million separate bodies you're looking at a lot of extra weight. Add on the 1.3 million tons of wheat they just bought from Canada, and you've got a heavy scene - easily enough to shift the global balance of airoirdupois. I don't mind telling you that Ottawa mandarins consider this a matter of utmost gravity."

"This will add a whole new dimension to the fortune cookie," I said. "Are there any more rumours circulating?"

"The word is out in the East Blah of the Parliament Buildings that the PM has arranged a trade deal with Northern Quebec. They export their snow. He doesn't have to fly out to British Columbia to ski, and La Belle Province stays in Confederation. Anyway, if it snows a lot in Ottawa, Margaret's photography classes are cancelled, and she gets to stay home and cook dinner and sort the kids' mitts out."

I was astonished. "Can you give me a direct quote from the Prime Minister on this?"

"Well, no. When I approached him, he just shrugged and muttered that Rene Levesque had always been pretty good with a shovel, and it was time that the rest of Canada learned how to do it. He also said that ever since the cold snap he's noticed a growing number of Canadian draft dodgers, but he's promised to pardon everybody in the spring."

"There must be more to it than that," I said. "A source close to External Affairs told me that Russia could be behind the big freeze. They're trying to turn the whole world into a gigantic hockey rink, but they could be bought off if we gave them Bobby Hull."

"I think," I said, "that you are full of hot air."

"Why thank you," he said modestly. "Maybe that's why I've been invited out so much lately. I should tell you that John Diefenbaker's cleaning lady let it slip that this whole miserable winter is a plot to keep Canadians preoccupied. If people are busy shovelling out their cars, and wiping the drips off the ends of their noses, they haven't time to notice a little pay-off here, some silly spending there..."

"That seems a little far fetched," I said. "Listen," said my informant. "Have you noticed any revolutions in Canada lately? Any coups d'etat? Of course not. Canadians are so busy surviving that they don't care what happens in Ottawa as long as the oil truck arrives on time and their cars start in the morning."

I took my report to Aunt Fanny.

She just pulled her hat down over her ears and handed me a shovel. "Some people," she said, "are so gullible they wouldn't recognize a snow job if it hit them in the deadline. Get busy."



So who wants to swim?

The great toilet seat saga - part II



by Ray Baker

I get all kinds of feedback from you gentle readers. Phone calls, a nice letter from a Lady Missionary in Borneo (Lois Belsey two columns last Winter '76). But no shouted abuse from passing cars yet. I get stories in the street and hints and tips. But no fiery crosses on the front lawn, and good column

material. But so far no heavy breathing or obscene phone calls...but I keep hoping for those. An interesting letter came my way the other day from a Toronto couple who love this area. One of the crosses they bear is reading my column. The letter goes in part "if only Ray, you had bought an antique wooden toilet seat you would have had it forever, and even then if you became tired of it you could have stripped it" etc. etc...

The wife, Norma Biden, had read my column on the purchase of a toilet seat and it had tickled her fancy (the column not the seat). Norma and husband Charlie have to keep popping down to Toronto to run their antique market. Then come back up here. So they should know what they are talking about in the antique business. An offer by them at this point to present me with an antique toilet seat to show what they felt of my column, was treated with the seriousness it deserved.

With due pomp and ceremony the official handing over ceremony took place in the Times office.

It's in good hands Made to normal dimensions the seat shows that people haven't changed that much in stature or composition over the generations. It is assumed hardwood, otherwise splinters would have appeared with disastrous results if the proud owners had "rubbed it the wrong way" so to speak. The previous owners had not got tired of it enough to have it stripped as

suggested in the Biden report above. It is painted a delicate shade of pale black. A careful analysis shows this to be "Balspar non-stick enamel, circa 1921" a very good year.

There are two basic options at this point: a) Leave it as it is. b) Markle pay to have it stripped at Marcelleville Antiques.

Either way it is retained in the Times office for posterity, I mean posterity. Looking at the workmanship obviously crafted by hand with loving care from non-warping material by a skilled toilet seat maker I made a suggestion. The great annual antique seat presentation. Or G.A.S.P. for short. A panel of editors would carefully pick at random any Letter to the Editor from the preceding year. The writer would be presented with it and allowed to retain it until the following year, or the next family row about it (whichever comes sooner).

1. It will keep this precious heirloom in the area.
2. It will keep this precious heirloom out of the Times Office.
3. It will increase the flow of letters to the editor as more and more people become aware of the annual G.A.S.P. and wish to acquire it.

It is being considered by a standing committee The Bidens were only too happy to pass the

seat on in a worthy cause. At some distant past the top half, the lid, has become separated from the seat proper. I have it on good authority that in the good old days this would be most likely to happen under the following conditions.

Normally located in an outhouse or privy, the seat (complete) would be in somewhat violent use during the winter months. Not wishing to stay around too long the user would tend to jerk the lid up and down, thereby giving rise to the old saying "up and down like a toilet seat".

Allowing for the co-efficient of contraction and expansion under extreme variations of alternate heat and cold the lid hinges (always a weak point) would give under the strain. Normally at thirty one below zero 'F' at one thirty a.m. I feel I would also give out under those conditions.

So there it stands in the corner, awaiting its new owner. You may be the lucky one, I do not wish any more seats, lids, fittings, or fixtures at this point. So if you were thinking of it, thank you, no.

And that does it for the toilet seat. That puts the lid on it. (so to speak).

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...