

Citizen comment

So who wants \$1 million anyway?

One million dollars is a lot of money. When it is to be spent in a small concentrated area of Penetanguishene, one would think people would get excited about it.

That did not seem to be the case last Thursday night, when the approximately 1,500 people who live in the east end NIP area were asked to come out and give their approval of the way in which nearly a million dollars is to be spent in that area.

Of those 1,500 people, a little less than 20 turned up.

Granted, the weather was not the best. The rain was falling, and it was generally miserable. But the meeting was held in a central location. Even if everyone on the block on which Burkevale school is located had turned up, there would have been more than 20 people there.

One suspects there are a number of reasons for the poor turnout Thursday night, and the weather is probably not one of the major ones.

Perhaps a large sum of money to be spent on public works no longer impresses people. But this town is not so large that \$1 million is just a drop in the bucket. With the condition of some of the streets in town, that type of expenditure in an area the size of the east end NIP area represents a significant amount of work and improvement.

A more likely reason for the seeming lack of enthusiasm is that people feel their contribution is unnecessary, or unwanted. Some may feel that regardless of what the NIP steering committee says about public input, the town probably already knows what it wants to do with the money and the people are merely being asked to rubber stamp the town's priorities.

Others, who don't question the town's motives in setting up the NIP program here, may feel that the majority of those who turn up for the meetings will get what is needed, and the small contribution of the individual

will be lost in the shuffle.

While both these arguments may have a certain amount of validity, they hardly constitute a valid reason for not attending the meetings.

The town does have a certain idea of what needs to be done in the various NIP areas in town even before the meetings; and town officials may even have earmarked certain portions of the NIP money for certain jobs before suggestions from the general public are received. If one believes this, and if one disagrees with the way the money is to be spent, one should make one's views known.

The other argument, that those who do attend the meeting will do an adequate job of seeing that the money is spent properly, is also to a certain extent true, but what happens when nobody decides to take that responsibility. Those who have been attending the meetings regularly have done a good job of coming up with appropriate ways of spending the money. But they are human, they have their own individual gripes and preferences, and they may overlook work which would be useful and appropriate.

To all those who live in the east end NIP area and who did not attend any of the public meetings on the program, and who feel the money is being spent on something they don't want or need, or who feel something has been overlooked, don't complain to the committee now!

You had your chance and you blew it.

There is an old saying that one gets what one deserves. In the east end NIP area, this newspaper suspects the vast majority of the residents are getting more than they deserve. If the program were structured in such a way as to insure that the money would be withdrawn by the senior levels of government if it could not be shown that at least, say, 50 per cent of the people affected really wanted it, Penetanguishene's east end project would have died at the first meeting.

Book on entertaining is a welcome change

With all the commotion lately about the social acceptability of drinking, it's nice to see the Volunteer Association at the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre coming out with a book that, while it doesn't actually encourage drinking, allows that drinking can be fun when done properly, and is an acceptable part of entertaining.

We've heard people complain that advertising for beer on television and for liquor in magazines always shows young people enjoying themselves with alcohol. Why not show old drunks lying in street gutters, they ask.

The fact is that many young people, and many not-so-young people as well, enjoy a drink now and then, and often they use alcohol in conjunction with, or following,

sports and other physical activity, just like in the ads.

Let's face it. Alcohol can be a problem, but it is not the root of all evil, and there is no reason to discourage people who know how to handle it from using it.

At first glance it may seem incongruous that a group at the Mental Health Centre, where they have a problem drinkers program, would put out a book which contains recipes for alcoholic drinks. But it really isn't. It is merely an acknowledgement that there are a great number of people who enjoy drinking socially, and for whom drinking is not and never will be a problem. For these people the book on entertaining, will be a valuable and useful guide.

Congratulations

A rink composed of Larry Merkley, Bob Ruston, John Moreau and Al Fournier has proved once again that Penetanguishene has what it takes to produce sportsmen who can compete with the best of them.

Last Saturday, they played in the All-Ontario Colts finals in Midland, and put on what could only be termed a fine show.

They didn't win, but they made it to the semi-finals, after winning 12 straight games, and went down to defeat in a close game to the team which eventually went on to win the tournament. It was a terrific effort, and one which, it is to be hoped, will be

repeated next year, perhaps with even better results.

It's the first time a team from Penetanguishene has got that far, according to Merkley, but it looks as though it won't be the last time.

Between his showing in Colts, and Midlander Russ Howard's showing in Consols, this area is really beginning to make its mark on curling at the provincial level. To these fine teams, it's too bad you didn't win, but congratulations anyway, for proving that rinks from this area are not to be taken lightly.

Our letters policy

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 will 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.



75 Main Street
TELEPHONE 549-2012
Andrew Markle
Publisher
Victor Wilson, General Manager
David Ross, Editor

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Sugar and Spice

End of the blahs

by Bill Smiley

Ah, there's nothing more exhilarating than a good old-fashioned Canadian winter! (Is this the same guy who wrote a glum, lugubrious column last week about the physical and financial horrors of just such?)

We've just had three days of sun and no snow, and all those red-eyed, drippy-nosed, hacking, whining, snow-shovelling Canadians of a week ago have been transformed into virile, vibrant, smiling, sickly-hearty exponents of the fabulous Canadian winter.

I made my stand a day or two after last week's column. I thought to myself "Screw this," or words to that effect. "I'm gonna go berserk. The Old Lady is getting weird. All my friends are either depressed or eerie. I'm gonna make the great escape."

So I did. A certain group of young punks to whom I am forced to refer as my colleagues, have been after me, slyly and maliciously, for about two years, to attend one of their poker evenings. They knew perfectly well that my wife wouldn't let me go, even if I told her it was a group of Sunday School teachers, and we were only going to play for matches.

They got after me again last Thursday. Maybe it was the weather, but something snapped. I said "Right. What time?"

They started to snicker, and poke each other with their elbows. This is known in their circle as humor. "Sure you won't have any

trouble making it? We sometimes stay up as late as midnight, you know, Smiley. How ya gonna get through the next day's work?" And so on. I treated this juvenilia with the respect it deserved.

There was only one more hurdle, and you know what that was. But there was no real problem with her. All I had to do was get out and check all my insurance policies, make sure the cars and the house were properly signed over and promise not to have a drink before dinner, in case I had one at the poker den, and the Old Battleaxe caved in. Oh, not completely. As I went out the door, she was yelling: "And don't expect the door to be unlocked when you get home, and if you're not here my midnight I'll call the police."

But that was nothing. In the old days, when she really loved me, and was really jealous, she'd get physical. She'd throw her arms around my neck and her legs around my waist, and I'd have a hell of a time getting through the door before I could brush her off against a tree, or dump her in a snowbank.

Anyway, the boys picked me up, and off we went into the wild night. The last of the blizzards was just easing off, but it was blowing great curtains of snow off the mighty banks. I thought we were going a couple of miles, in town. Turned out we were heading for a chalet out in the hills, about eighteen

miles away, and the driver of the Datsun in which I was ensconced fancied himself as a contender in the Grand Winter Rally of Montenegro, or something. Had to call on the old steely fighter-pilot's nerves to refrain from screaming, "Lemme Out! I wanna go home and watch TV!"

However, true grit prevailed, and six hours later I was home, steady as a rock, about even on the night's poker, and ready for a few hours sleep.

I wouldn't bore you by telling you what kind of a poker these aging juvenile delinquents play. Almost no stud or draw poker. They play what we used to call, before the male chauvinist crap began "Women's Poker". Games like Twenty-seven Skip to My Loo ninth card wild anything in your armpit doesn't count and split the pot four ways. It took three times as long to describe the game to be played as it did to play it.

Had a Mississippi gambler, or even an old cowhand, been asked to sit in on just one of those deals, he'd have pulled his derringers, or his .38, as it might be, and started shooting "poker" players right and left.

I hate to mention one more detail. But, old enough to be the father of most of them, I was at work the next day bright as a shiny new dollar, teaching with my usual superb elegance, and looking askance at some of

these bleary-eyed young "gamblers" who thought they were showing the old boy a big night out. Migawd, I was in rougher games than that when I was 17.

However, I forgive them their misconceptions, and if they want to call a hangover being "down with the flu", that's their problem.

Point is, I had made the big breakthrough of the winter blah's. On Saturday morning, was up at the crack of noon, and off skiing in the bush with my wife. She fell five times. I fell once.

Sunday, off again skiing with a gang. My wife fell four times. I fell once. Followed this with an apres-ski party with old friends. Dandy fire going. Wizard mulled wine. Massive injections of hot home-made soup and home-baked bread. And home to bed at ten o'clock with a tremendous sense of physical and moral rectitude.

I've been feeling good about winter ever since, and all depression is gone. Why don't you try it?

You don't have to begin with a poker game out in the wilds. Especially if you happen to be an 80-year old lady.

But do something. Kick the cat. Give your grumpy old husband a goose. First thing you know they'll both be chasing you around the house, and your winter blues will vanish.

Back to the Old Ironing Board



by Shirley Whittington

And what are you wearing tonight, as you leaf through your newspaper? A drip-dry shirt? An orlon sweater, perhaps, and no-iron polyester slacks?

You're behind the times, Kiddo, and I'll tell you why.

Ironing is on its way back in. A fancy department store is advertising cotton as the latest fashion fabric because it's "healthy, fresh, strong and versatile." And here's the punch line: "Because cotton doesn't scorch easily, it can be pressed with a hot iron."

You remember what an iron is. It's a heavy thing with an electric cord attached, that women used, in the olden days, to press creases out of fabric. In my own personal olden days, I slid my Sunbeam around on more things than Carter has relatives. (The white shirts, I remember, took twenty minutes to starch and iron.)

When technology gave us drip-dry and no-crease fabrics, I pressed them to my bosom with a glad cry and converted my iron to a door stop. These days, about the only time I use it is when one of the kids needs a birthday present wrapped in a hurry. (You don't throw gift wrap away, do you? A warm iron recycles it beautifully, but use the dry setting.)

A home economics teacher I know told me once that in the Sixties she used to open her classroom early so the girls could go in and iron their hair before nine o'clock. The kids don't do that any more, but my daughter is practically welded to her curling iron. It's just like the one great-grandma used, to frizz up her bangs, except it's electric.

It appears that Time, like everything else in this whimsical upside down world, has ceased to be an ever-rolling stream, and has

become the Reversible Falls.

They tell me, for instance, that ballroom dancing is in the throes of a revival. (Younger readers will have to be told that ballroom dancing is what your mother and father do when they go to the annual Bird-watching Society Dinner Dance. The man puts his arm around the lady and grasps her hand firmly in his. She places her hand on his shoulder (or tickles his neck if she knows him well) and together they step off to the music in a spirit of cooperation and mutual enjoyment. If partners are well matched and fond of each other, this can be a lot more fun than independent spastic twitching.)

If you don't think that time is marching backwards, take a look in the jewellery store window. Pocket watches are the latest craze and if you have a digital watch quietly pulsing away on your wrist, you'll soon be as dated as a two-toned Sinatra jacket.

The return of the pocket watch was inevitable because men have lately begun stuffing themselves into vests. A watch chain with a dangling fob is needed to break the monotonous abdominal landscape. And a watch chain without a watch is like a weekend love affair - a glittering linkage that leads nowhere.

You may be old enough to remember the days when brave men stormed the gates of elegant restaurants, demanding admittance though they were wearing turtle necked sweaters instead of shirts and ties.

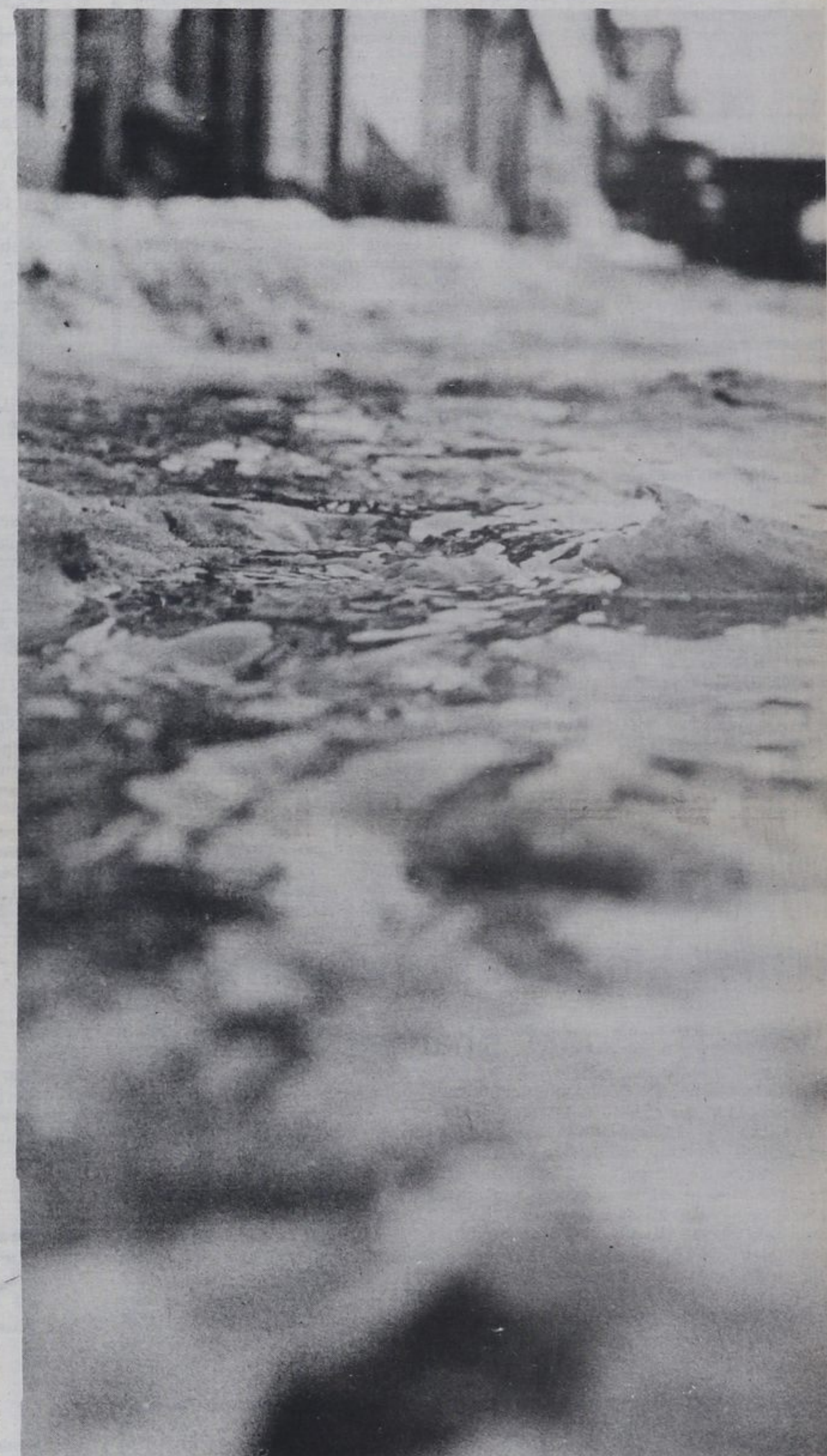
The battle has been won, but it's an empty victory because the turtle neck has been returned to the ski slopes and all the dudes these days are wearing white shirts and ties, even to drive-in restaurants. With the vest, and watch chain, they all look like my uncle Noah, taking up the collection Sunday morning.

You will have noticed that women are wearing skirts again. What you may not know is that underneath their skirts and dresses, they are wearing something my daughter never even heard of - slits. The irony of this is that most of us older, interesting women had drawers full of the lacy things, which we gave away to the Salvation Army when the pantsuit was invented.

Ladies are also wearing hats again - not for warmth, but in order to look more fetching. What's next? Hat pins? Hair nets?

I don't know where this reverse progress is taking us but it may help to solve our unemployment problem. Working wives will find it hard to stay in the labour force if they're chained to the ironing board.

For men, the future's brighter. I hear the mini-skirt is on the way back. Ironed or not, that should set a lot of gold watch chains a-quiver.



Could spring be far away?

No, it's not a raging river. It's only the runoff on Main Street, Penetanguishene last Thursday as it rained, and warm temperatures made a start on melting the blanket of snow which covers the town. Staff photo

Library reminiscences



by Ray Baker

We called in to see a couple of friends over the weekend, Paul and Christine Rollinson. They live in the old red brick schoolhouse at the beginning of the Old Fort Road, nestled under the Martyrs' Shrine.

It's always like stepping into another world when we go there. Not the fact that it used to be a schoolhouse and blackboards and the occasional atlas are still on the walls (Not that you can sit in a desk made for an eight

year old at the turn of the century while you talk.)

No. It's the air of nostalgia, of yesteryear, maybe from the thousands of books. After all its their "Odd Copy Book Store" as well as their home. Maybe it's the foot operated spinning wheel in daily use, or the wall hangings but anyway...

While my better half and Christine talked, and the children ran about underfoot, Paul and I went browsing, looking at some recent acquisitions and some newly emerged after the latest shuffle around. Between a Harlequin romance and a keep fit book of the 30's I came across a real gem.

The Way We Were

I didn't bother going into the basement as I normally do, to go through the six hundred science fiction. That can be another day. I settled down with "The Farmers Advocate" published in Dec. of the year of our Lord 1922. Printed in London Ontario it said No. 1876 so I figure it started off in 1890 or so.

The motto up front said "persevere and succeed" the contents ranged from agriculture to family circle. This looked good so I flicked the pages.

On page 1623 (it started at page 1576 and went to page 1631) it said "for a real smoke get 'Sir Haig' cigars, 5c each at every store."

How's that for openers??

Two pages over it read "Navy cut tobacco, always satisfies, at .80c a half pound" the illustration showing a young man with his hair shaved above his ears wearing a clean

cut smile and a pipe.

But that was only how to spend money. What about earning it? Well a full page ad. The "Hemphill" trade school in Toronto says that transportation will be the world's problem and you can qualify as a tractor mechanic, a barber trade or vulcanizing expert with them and earn up to \$2000 a year. Twenty men with slicked back hair are studying a tractor with cast iron spoked wheels, and a hood like a Rolls-Royce. So \$2000 a year and a .5c cigar at any store.

How the west was given away

Under 'Opportunities' the C.P. Railway is looking for settlers for the Canadian West. Good land, schools, and a small cash deposit twenty years to pay off, all assistance given. Returning soldiers and sailors preferred. (that was the war to end all wars). So now fifty five years later the descendants of those settlers are rooted, and 'there's no place like home' thanks to the C.P. railroad.

Ontari-ari-ari-o was not forgotten. With rich soil land for sale at 50c an acre. So you work as a gas mechanic for a year or two and buy what is now Algonquin Park, or Thunder Bay.

But times were not all rosy. Reading between the lines it said "coal will be expensive again this year, convert your hardwood lot into winter fuel" or "a farm worker wanted, a yearly arrangement for the right man."

In the year 2032 someone will write a

column showing how easy we had it in 1977. So it's all relative. Back in "The Advocate" they were selling bulls at the asylum for the insane in Hamilton. Sounds like a load of bull to me. And will one of you gentle readers tell me what the bottle of pan-a-ce-a was sold for. "Cures all Lump-Jaw". What the heck was Lump-Jaw?

Calamity

A full page ad addressed to the people of Ontario strikes a sombre note. When it says "a terrible completeness of fire calamity devastated over 1200 square miles of Northern Ontario. Town after town nothing but bleak expanse of ruins. Hundreds of far swept bare, thousands of your fellow citizens cleaned out and thrown abruptly back to mans primeval struggle against nature and her grim forces. Fire, hunger, ice, and stark northern cold. They ask for funds to "supply standard shacks 16' x 20' to replace the tents, old street cars, packing boxes, and sheet iron." signed by the Northern Ontario fire relief committee, Royal Bank buildings Toronto.

So it wasn't all land at .50c and a 5c cigar in the 'Good Old Days' they sure as heck lived up to their motto of 'persevere and succeed'.

Thanks, Paul Rollinson for a glimpse of yesteryear.

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...