

# Citizen comment

## Amiable solutions are the best

It's a little difficult to understand some of the apprehensions and rumours which seem to be rampant concerning the "problem" of French speaking students in Penetanguishene being able to get an education in the language of their choice.

The Simcoe County Board of Education and the French Language Advisory Committee, are working together at the present time to come up with a study into the "problem", and with any luck, a suitable and acceptable solution will be arrived at, without any of the dramatics and hard feelings experienced in Essex County, where they are in the throes of a similar difficulty. There is nothing to be gained by adversary

tactics, and at the moment, it looks like no-one is really worried about the situation reaching that state of affairs, with the possible exception of some of the media.

The Citizen hopes it has not been guilty of blowing the whole affair out of proportion in order to have a better story.

If everyone involved in the educational process is allowed to have input into the proposed study, and it looks like they will be, there is no reason why the situation at Penetanguishene Secondary School cannot be resolved with a minimum of fuss and bother, to the mutual benefit of everyone involved.

## Sugar and Spice

One of the great racketeers these days is the television series "spinoff." When a TV producer has a popular show, and one of the secondary characters is even mildly amusing, first thing you know that character has a show of his or her own.

This proliferates until you have spinoffs of spinoffs. It's like taking a bottle of fine whiskey, doubling the quantity by adding an equal amount of water, and selling it at the same price per shot as the original.

Then you take this mouthwash and further dilute it by adding more water, and you go on selling this at the original price. It works fine and makes a lot of money until the consumer finally realizes he could get more bang out of a glass of buttermilk, and he starts drinking buttermilk, and you are left with a large supply of gargle on your hands.

Norman Lear was the first TV producer to realize that people like watching bigotry and bathroom jokes even more than they like watching violence. Thus was born All in the Family, one of the great money-makers of all time in TV land.

From this was spun off Maude. The bigotry became phoney liberalism and the bathroom jokes became bedroom jokes, but it was the same slick formula, and it worked.

It was only a step from the slick to the sick, and brother Lear came up with Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman, which, while not quite a spinoff, is of the genre. Its favorite refrain

is "Oh, Gawd, Oh, my Gawd." Excellent fare for the morbid or diseased mind.

Another good original show, The Mary Tyler Moore Show, spun, or spawned Phyllis and Rhoda, each starring one of the most self-centred, unpleasant women a writer could dream up, and each laced with borderline bad taste.

There's nothing wrong with all this, I suppose, in a free enterprise system, and nobody forces you to watch the garbage.

But there is only so much that the stomach will take before it will spew. And there is only so much that the mind will take before you will experience an intellectual vomit, and switch to watching the wrestling matches, where at least nobody is trying to pretend it's anything but phony.

However, perhaps I'm rushing my fences a bit. I'm a realist. If everybody else is getting into the spinoff business, maybe I should jump on the bandwagon. There's money in it, and besides, it might be one way of putting an end to it. My record is perfect.

Just after the war, I met an old buddy who'd become a broker. He was investing in gold stocks and hauling in the loot. Gave me a hot tip. I plunged, with some of the back pay I'd built up while in prison camp. Met the guy six months later. He'd lost his home and his boat and was selling farm machinery. I owned 300 shares of muskig in Northern Ontario.

The spinoff racket

by Bill Smiley

After that I stayed away from the market until mutuals were the thing. They were showing tremendous growth and potential. Once bitten, I hesitated, but then dived in with my \$200 savings. It seems I arrived just after the mutuals had nibbled some of that buscuit Alice did so she could go through the rabbit hole, or whatever. They shrank almost overnight to \$85 worth.

Last November, in one last desperate effort to enjoy a luxurious old age, I bought two \$100 Canada Savings Bonds. Two weeks later there was an election in Quebec, and now we don't even know whether there'll always be a Canada.

In January of this year, I bought a second-hand Ford. A week later I read in the paper that the Ford Motor Company was making payments for extraordinary rust to owners of Fords in my vintage. Then I read the small print. The payments had ended on Dec. 30, 1976. My Ford has rust.

So, with a track record like that, maybe I can administer the kiss of death to the spinoff business. Thought I'd start by producing some spinoffs of my column.

There's no problem about talent. My family is loaded with writers. Both my son and daughter specialize in pathos. They can write letters so pathetic that you are weeping all over the page and writing a cheque at the same time.

My wife can knock out a grocery list as

long as your arm without even stopping to suck the pen. And she is not only talented as a writer. She's an outstanding and out-spoken critic, as well. She can rip up the punctuation and purpose, the style and substance of one of my columns with both hands tied behind her back. Which is the only way it is safe to read some of them to her.

And there'll be no difficulty about content. My daughter is expert on Women's Lib, music, and mooching.

My son is fluent in English, French, Spanish, the Inman dialect of the natives of Paraguay, and mooching.

And the old lady is an expert on everything and admits it. She has been bottling up this veritable fountain of knowledge for decades, except during breakfast, before and after dinner, and a weekend Giving her a column of her own would be like punching a 20-foot hole in Boulder Dam.

In two or three years, I might even get the grandboys into it. At the moment, they are busily stuffing their memory banks. As soon as they can write, you may expect some sizzling stuff: Five Years as a Misunderstood Child; Daycare Centre Depression: the Inside Story on Sadistic Social Workers Who Make you Give Back a Toy You've Ripped Off from Some Other Kid.

If my column spinoffs don't put an end to the spinoff nonsense in about 30 days, I'll eat every paper in which this one appears, with or without ketchup.

### Letters to the Editor

## McCullough urges cooperation

Dear Sir:

I normally do not make it a practice to reply to letters to the Editor, however I feel it is incumbent upon me to reply to one which appeared in the Citizen last week, written by Mlle. Ursule Maurice, as head of the Francais Department of the Penetanguishene Secondary School. I believe the reply is necessary, since the letter contained misinformation, and innuendoes.

1. Mlle. Maurice questioned my ability to judge fluency or what she alludes to as "true" bilingualism. May I make it perfectly clear that I have never suggested that my 'knowledge of the French language is sufficient', as Mlle. Maurice puts it, so that I can judge fluency. Any references I made to ability in the French language, or what type of person is considered a Francophone, were direct quotes from a speech by the Deputy Minister of Education, George Waldrum. If Mlle. Maurice wishes to question his ability, so be it, but don't confuse my position with that of the Deputy Minister.

2. In the last paragraph of her letter, Mlle. Maurice says, "I am sorry that teachers have, seemingly, no right to speak out the TRUTH in this so called 'free, democratic society'". I believe teachers, or any other individuals have every right to speak out on any issue, at any time. I just wish she had stuck to the truth, and that she had spoken as an individual and not as Head of a school

department, unless she had the authority to speak in that capacity.

3. There has been a great deal of concern expressed in recent weeks about the status of French education in Penetanguishene. The Simcoe County Board of Education, at my urging, has embarked on an in-depth study of the situation to make certain that the needs of the students of the area are best served. I strongly believe that the Board should heed the results and recommendations of the survey, and make provision for the kinds of facilities that reflect the real needs of all of our students. I trust this comment will lay to rest any further rumours or innuendoes, and allow all concerned to 'get on with the job', and to work in harmony as we serve the needs of the young people under our care. The survey will require the cooperation of everyone concerned with education, including teachers, parents, students, administrators, Ministry officials, members of the French Language Advisory Committee and Trustees. Implementation of the programs will require the cooperation of those same groups of people.

I commit myself to that end, and trust that others will do likewise.

Sincerely,  
J.A. McCullough, Trustee,  
Simcoe County Board  
of Education.

## The town should practise bilingualism

Dear Sir:

I would like to congratulate the organizers of the Cafe Chantant held in Laboureaux Hall on the evening of March 6.

This was a most agreeable evening. The performers were very good and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves so much.

The program was fully bilingual, and this proved that activities such as these can be enjoyed by most of the people of Penetanguishene.

To say "Comment-ca va-ici and a good evening there," as you meet people is the very thing that many citizens in this town should be practising.

Vive le Bilinguisme et esperons que beaucoup d'autres activites bilingues pouront nous rapprocher ensemble dans une ambiance amicale.

Sincerement,  
Germain Gauthier

## 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 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.

## Purse-onal privacy



by Shirley Whittington

Whenever I embark on an out-of-town excursion, my mother and all my elderly relatives say the same thing. Not bon voyage: not have a good time: not send us a post card.

They flutter their hankies in farewell, and holler "Hang onto your purse."

Since Queen Elizabeth has a number of female relatives who are probably similarly disposed, it surprised me to read in the papers that HRH left her purse unattended on the floor at an official gathering in New Zealand. The country's aptly named, for there a security employee, full of new zeal spotted the abandoned handbag, and searched it.

Her Majesty was not amused.

Nor would I have been.

Having your purse searched is unsettling, like catching a heel in a sewer grating, or typing with someone watching over your shoulder.

A woman's purse is her filing cabinet, her brief case, her safe, her first-aid kit, her soul. What she carries in it is her business.

A leading Canadian magazine once carried an article about what prominent Canadianes carry in their handbags. The headline grabbed me. The story didn't.

Why? It turned out that the purses contents of the rich and famous are much like yours and mine.

I regularly carry a wallet, some kleenex, a pencil or two, a book of matches from a restaurant in which I've never dined, shopping lists, keys, a book, a loathsome little card with a pin on the back, that says "Hi there! I'm Shirley W." and a number of foil envelopes full of ketchup from the local drive-in restaurant.

It is not possible for me to get through the day without this collection, and I wonder how men manage with just pockets.

I bet if you checked your purse (or your wife's, but ask her first) right now, you'd find almost the same inventory, give or take a few bizarre items like a can opener or the dog's leash.

The first time I had my purse searched was at the door of the British Museum. Apprehensive, I turned to the Squire. "See that man with the white gloves on?" I said indignantly. "He wants to search my purse." (I wasn't nervous at all.)

"Good thing he's wearing gloves," said the Squire. "I wouldn't touch it myself without a surgical mask."

"But," I hissed, "it's got that thing in it." That thing was a massive ashtray from an elegant restaurant where we'd lunched. We'd bought it from our waiter, but how would the man in the white gloves know that? How would you like to be the reason British restaurateurs lock up their ashtrays when they see Canadians coming?

"Stop fussing," said the Squire. "You're holding things up." And he grabbed my purse and passed it over for inspection.

The guard slung his white gloved hands around in the junk, hefted the ashtray and didn't turn a hair. (The national image abroad is safe, except that there's a guard at the British Museum who thinks that burly Canadian men carry big brown purses.)

Anyway, I know how the Queen felt when she discovered those unauthorized fingers pawing around in her purse. Of course she wasn't amused. Neither was I.

Apparently that over-zealous security guard was instantly sworn to secrecy because we have not yet heard what we are all dying to know.

What in the world does the Queen of England carry in her purse?

Not a wallet, surely, for she has no need to carry money or a driver's license. Matches? She doesn't smoke. Shopping lists, combs and keys must certainly be somebody else's responsibility.

I can't think of any reason why she'd have a little card with a pin on the back and "Hi there! I'm Elizabeth R." on the front, and I'm sure she doesn't patronize restaurants where the ketchup arrives in little foil envelopes.

Her handbag must be very nearly empty except for a lacy hanky and some aspirin for those days when she's suspected of being a mad bomber and her purse is searched by a total stranger.

My newspaper said the young woman who had carried out the unscheduled search was dealt with sternly. There's no mention of her punishment, but I bet she's been issued with a pair of white gloves, and posted at the entrance to the British Museum.

After a couple of months of digging through other people's handbags, she'll never want to touch one again, unless it's hers.



Spring scene in North Tiny

## Bits and pieces in the mail

to nanoe, to boat, and post office, then air mail.

It enclosed a photograph of smiling people against a jungle backdrop. The caption said "That's me second left top row". I knew it was, she was the only white girl in the picture even though she is browner than when I saw her last year in Midland. If you remember she had just been kicked out of Vietnam and had come to kit-out, recharge her (spiritual) batteries and away again, into the jungles. Her letter is a masterpiece of understatement.

### No place like home

She stresses the meetings and social occasions. There are no references to yellow fever or malaria. She looks forward with hope and smiles for the camera, the excessive heat and energy sapping humidity is not mentioned, the baby classes and converts are written about. There is no talk of the primitive conditions and the stoneage superstition.

So this dedicated young woman having taken up the challenge writes back with a staunch heart and a smile from conditions that would (and did) kill the average man. I take my hat off to you Lois and your fellow workers, and hope that this column reaches you some day, if only to say that irrespective of religious convictions there are a lot of people in the Midland area who think about you. There is one thing for sure...it's no place like home out there.

Another input for my bits and pieces column is a letter from England. My childhood hero was a western star called Johnny Mack Brown (who) an overwhelming response from you gentle readers last time around led to 'J.M.B. rides again and again. So this one is 'J.M.B. Returns (Again and again).

My European agent, Ms. Hardman, of Hastings England was browsing through "Rides Again and Again" when it triggered off a response (you note the western phrase triggered) she sent by air return a photograph of J.M.B. as he appeared in "Billie The Kid" for M.G. M. Circa 1937. With a possible update of his activities to follow. As an added bonus the rear of the photo cut from 'Life from the Talkies' shows part of an ear. I am assured that this is a genuine photo of Cecil B. De-Milles left ear. Collectors please note.

There must be more literary freedom in England nowadays, discussing a mutual friend (now out of touch) she sends me a list of her latest books, which she turns out faster than my column, but adds "she is tied up with something on the Arts Council. And with writers against Government, or Wag for short".

### Wig wag

There must be writers in the government too so they must be wig. Now we have Wig-Wag. So if writers in government combine with women's lib 'Writers Against Men' then

we have Wig-Wag. How about green fingered Authors. The Writers Horticultural Society. Who. Writers for harassment against Trudeau. What.

Novelists United Theosophical Society. Nuts. The list is endless. So you Gentle Readers think hard before you join anything unless you join a club with no letters. Like the 'Gentle Readers only without letters' no that's growl.

So back to the serious things in life. License plates, or rather the tiny bits of red, self adhesive paper you get for up to \$40. In the old days the prisoners in the Penitentiaries used to extract gunpowder from the red pigment, although what a prisoner would do with gunpowder I can't imagine. Anyway that's the real reason they stopped making plates there. Another bonus is that instead of standing in line for hours like statistics told us we did at the last minute, we can now go in and spend \$40. in a matter of seconds, that must be progress. The next logical move is to send in the money and get nothing back. That would be quicker yet.

Final thought, bumper sticker seen recently, "You toucha my car and I breaka you face".

And how was your week?

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....

# The Penetanguishene Citizen

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