

Citizen comment

French programs should be uniform

The ministry of education's recently announced intentions to expand the breadth of French instruction for English students could make Ontario the bilingual model for the other provinces to follow.

Although the new incentive program may be late in coming, the very fact that new guidelines are being established indicates this province's awareness of the French factor in today's Canada. And that is a reassuring sign in times when the multi-lingual, multi-cultural fabric of the country is under scrutiny.

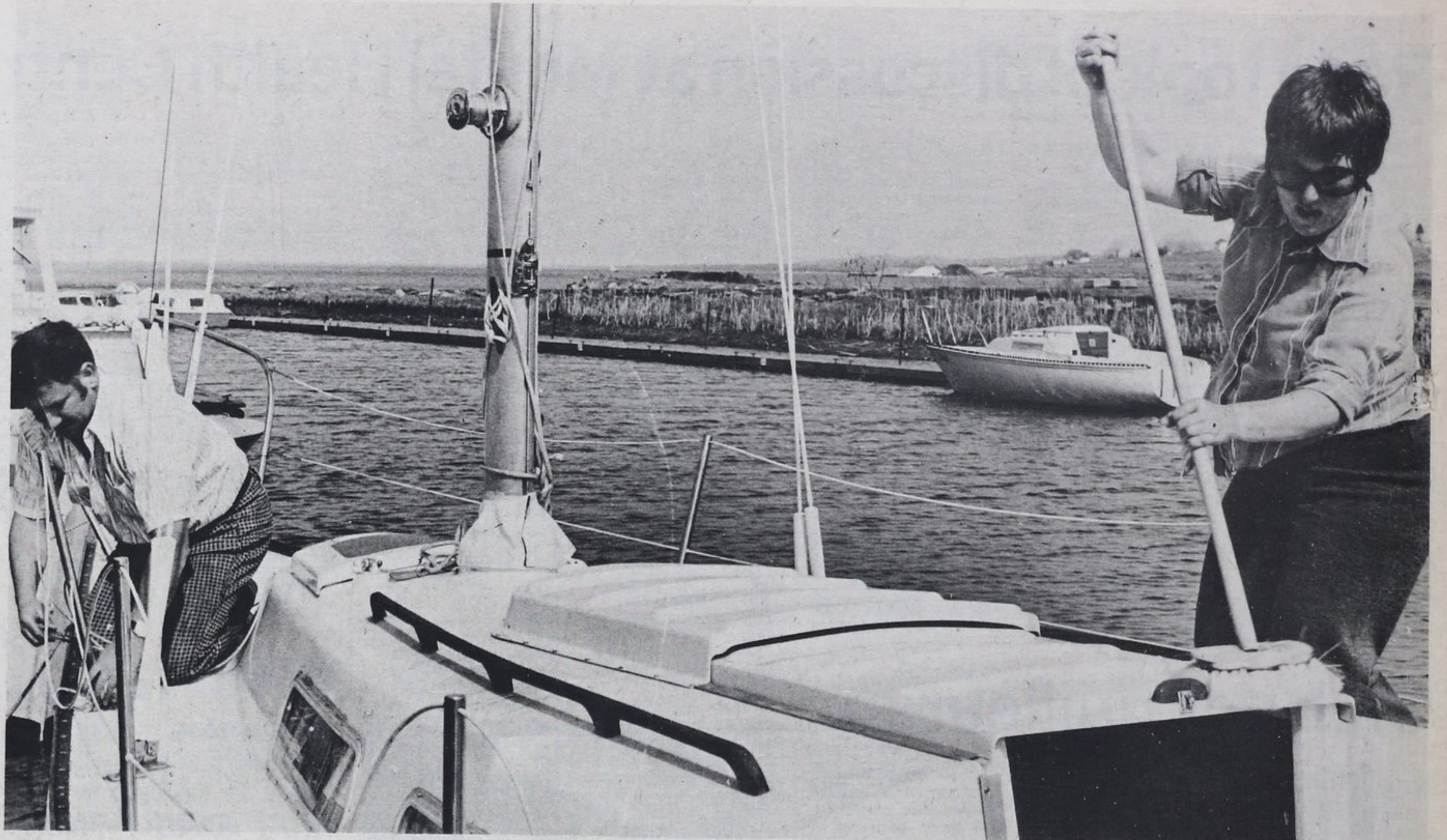
The ministry of education has established specific financial and teaching incentives which will make an expansion of French teaching a very appealing proposition to school boards across the province. Unfortunately there is no indication yet of the 'oomph' in the ministry's proposal: will school boards be able to opt out of the program entirely for example, or will all boards have to implement at least a core program which would provide 20-30 minutes of instruction in French daily?

The precedent has been to leave that decision to individual boards. It's time that precedent was broken, it's time that a basic, uniform program be introduced into all elementary schools throughout the province. This would not only ensure that all pupils are at least being exposed to the French language option but would make French language instruction an integral part of the school system. As such, any disputes on when to introduce French to students, how much exposure they should receive would be eliminated. And everyone would have the

option of becoming bilingual. The "we'll probably never use it" argument is irrelevant. No one knows where destiny will take him or her, no one can tell now how widespread the demand for a working knowledge of French will be in the future. Exposure to French should also foster some understanding of French literature, the French heritage in Canada and the cultural norms of a substantial segment of the Canadian population. The learning of another language is in no way detrimental. It's always an asset: it broadens the individuals' horizons - a whole new world is opened up for him. It provides an understanding of the people whose mother tongue is French, and more important, the ability to communicate with them.

For too long Ontarians, in fact Canadians, have adopted a tunnel-vision approach to the problems and aspirations of French speaking peoples in their midst. It's high time we recognize and appreciate the French element in our heritage. It may be difficult to 'teach an old dog new tricks,' so to speak, but the province has, with its new incentives program for French language instruction, opened the doors to starting early. If French instruction must be legislated, so be it. But start in kindergarten, when minds are open and quick to pick up a second language.

The precedent set in Ontario could (finally) get the rest of this country to officially recognize the need for French in all schools. But let's start before another generation grows up without an understanding of the French element in Canada.



Getting ready for summer

And now — a Sugar and Spice grab bag

by Bill Smiley

There are so many things demanding my attention this week that faithful readers (bless the eight of you) will have to be content with a grab-bag. Those who have no interest in sticking an eye into a grab-bag may turn over to the astrology column, or go out and buy a lottery ticket, or stick their finger in their ear, or whatever turns them on.

First let's get rid of the Quebec issue, which is fascinating the media and beginning to bore everybody else.

Then there crazies down in Quebec City have taken their first giant step toward a dictatorship of sorts, with the announcement that Quebec is to become a unilingual province (country?).

They were playing it pretty cool for a few months, but this one is a blunder of massive proportions. They can no more force unilingualism on Quebec than the federal government could force bilingualism on Canada.

When will these people, who begin as fervent idealists and turn into rigid commissars when they achieve power, ever learn that you can't force free people to do anything they don't want to do? You can shoot them or burn them, as state and church have done in the past. But you can't control

their minds or spirits by force or threats.

Rene Levesque and his crowd have made their first big boo-boo. The edict about "French only" will return to haunt them. They are interfering with the right of people to say "merde" in their own language, whether it be English or Greek or Italian, and mark my words, it will boomerang. The edict, that is, not the merde.

Even worse, the pronouncement will probably unite the rest of Canada, and all the non-French of Quebec, behind Pierre Trudeau, and we'll be stuck with another four or five years of insipid, inept and indifferent Liberal government. The only fate that could be more frightening would be the prospect of four or five years of Conservative government. Fortunately, there is no possibility of the NDP, that optimistic gnat straining to produce a giant, forming a federal government.

Well, that settles the political situation for this week. Except for one squalid little item. As I write, there are rumours that Jack Horner, and ambitious Tory M.P. from Alberta, may bolt his party, stick his thumb in the big, fat Liberal pie, and emerge with a cabinet post on the end of it.

Herewith some advice for Joe Clark. If Horner wants to go, wave goodbye and forget about him. One Paul Hellyer, once a power in the Liberal cabinet, the one who

singlehandedly destroyed the morale of Canada's armed forces, crossed the floor in a huff when he didn't get his own way, joined the Tories, and has been Paul Who? ever since. Churchill got away with it and went on to lead his country. But Jack Horner is no Churchill. Enough. Politics are sick-making.

Another Westerner, Ole Missus Trudeau, is still keeping the gossips speculating, as I write. Nobody seems to know where she is or what the hell is going on. Maybe by the time this appears in print, Jack Horner will have married Pierre Trudeau, and Margaret will pop up from New York, first-class Air Canada, to take the wedding pictures.

I know Margaret has said no more of those dull, official functions for her, like cutting the ribbon on the brand new outdoor privies installed by Turkey Township in its fine new park. But I can't help wondering if she's going to pass up all those smashing glamour events to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee, which are undoubtedly being planned right now in Ottawa, local matrons in fighting for invitations.

It's not fair, I know, but the comparison between Margaret and Queen Elizabeth thrusts itself at one. The Queen was crowned when she was younger than Mrs. T. She had about as many babies about as fast. But she did not then declare that she must fulfill herself, and allow herself to be pawed and

pestered by smutty reporters avid to learn what was going on between her and Philip.

Nope, she hung in there, through all the dreariness and calumny of what must be one of the most arduous jobs in the world. When there was a tough decision to be made, she made it and stuck to it. She did a pretty good job of raising her kids, it seems. She endured the sniping and the criticism. And she did it all with a grace and dignity that proclaimed the word "lady" at every step.

It's a hard act to follow, and nobody can blame the Sinclair girl if she couldn't match it. But, while Pierre is an arrogant mandarin, I'll bet the Duke of Edinburgh is no bargain either. She shoulda hung in there, the way the rest of us do.

It's not easy, living for years with a complete stranger. But it goes with the territory.

It doesn't get any easier, as the years go by, either. This morning I came down for breakfast at eight o'clock. At a quarter to nine I went out the door to work. During that forty-five minutes, I spoke four times, each time saying either, "Yes" or "You're right." That took two seconds. The rest of the time my wife talked, and her voice followed me right out the door like a swarm of bees following a florist.

That's not news, but that, too, is reality.

Conservation projects are appreciated

It's certainly gratifying to see people in and around Penetanguishene taking an active role in conservation.

The town and the Penetanguishene Horticultural Society are planting the 2,000th tree in their tree planting program tomorrow night, and in Tiny Township near Cedar Point last Saturday, Cubs, Scouts and Venturers from Midland and Port McNicoll spent the day planting trees under the supervision of officials of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Here in Penetanguishene on Saturday, the Cubs and Scouts spent the day collecting bottles to raise money. Bottle collecting can be seen as a help in the province's fight to promote returnable containers for soft

drinks. Bottles which are collected by the Cubs and Scouts, or by anyone else, are bottles which will not end up littering our countryside or filling our dumps.

These enterprises are all a part of a growing concern which is helping to reverse the trends which have led society to the point it is at now — trends which have led to the ravaging of our natural resources and to the wide-spread use of a host of throw-away products.

Society cannot afford these luxuries, and groups or individuals who are taking an active part in the conservation and replenishing of what we have left deserve a strong vote of congratulations and of thanks.

Letters to the editor

We're not gagged: students

Dear Editor:

We aren't gagged; we're just ignored. For months the controversy over the destiny of Penetanguishene Secondary School has bounced like a rubber ball between the Simcoe County Board of Education and the French Language Advisory Committee. The Students' Legislative Council was told to keep things quiet, keep things calm: but, the students of P.S.S. will no longer passively accept this game of monkey in the middle.

Several months ago, the Board took action on the complaints of a few P.S.S. students and teachers. The Students' Legislative Council would like to know why a democratically elected Board would dismiss democracy as easily as they have done in this instance. Our council represents every student at P.S.S., but, were we consulted? No! The Board would rather listen to the isolated protestors and neglect the elected student government.

All decisions the Simcoe County Board and the French Language Advisory Committee have made are imposed upon P.S.S. students without prior consultation, even without prior warning. Who does P.S.S. really serve, the men in Barrie and Penetanguishene who like to play politics, or the students? Surely the future of the student is paramount and you must realize that future pivots on a high-school education. We protest the atmosphere of tension that the press, the Board and the Advisory Committee have injected into our school. Unnecessary friction, as a result of this political ball game, is seriously hampering the students' right to a good education. Maybe you don't understand, we,

the students, are human beings, to be considered as individuals, not as statistics or test animals in a cage!

Besides this unnecessary disregard for the students' point of view and the democratically elected student government, the Students' Legislative Council must also protest the proposed methods of the Cooperative Evaluation Committee. We feel that a sampling or a cross-section of parents will not reflect the true feelings of the majority of parents. As tax payers and subsequent supporters of the educational system, every single parent must be consulted about the future of Penetanguishene Secondary School.

Finally we call for the fair treatment of all students and teachers, anglophone or francophone, Canadians as we prefer to call them. We feel that bilingualism is a healthy sign of cooperation, but, bilingualism must be humane, humane to the student and humane to the excellent but unfortunate teachers that cannot speak French. Can we afford to lose teachers that have loyally served Penetanguishene for four or five or even ten years.

We won't be at P.S.S. forever, but, as devoted students, wrapped up in this conflict, our opinions must be voiced.

Elizabeth Copeland,
President, S.L.C.
Richard Robillard
Vice-president, S.L.C.
Colette Genier
Secretary, S.L.C.
Bonita Desroches
Treasurer, S.L.C.

by Shirley Whittington

When Philadelphia's Annie Jarvis invented Mother's Day in 1906, she created a monster. Most of the young people I know are as cynical about Mother's Day as they are about motherhood itself.

When I was a kid, Mother's Day was a sentimental, hallowed occasion. We all wore fresh flowers to church—a coloured one for a mother still living, a white one for one who'd gone before, as we used to say.

On that Sunday, there was always a batch of fuzzy-headed babies lined up at the baptismal font, and we sang lustily about those pushy mothers of Salem.

Then we went home to a good dinner cooked by Mum, and showed her how much we loved her by insisting that she leave the dishes and take us all out on a picnic or something.

"Every day is Mother's Day," she'd sigh enigmatically.

Now I'm an unfashionably multiple mother myself, and the Squire is being urged on every hand to remember May 9 with the gift of an automatic dishwasher or a

microwave oven, as if he hadn't already given me four lively reasons to commemorate Mother's Day.

One of the reasons surprises me each year with breakfast in bed. "Surprise" imperfectly describes what might arrive on that tray. The juice was, one year, a cloudy green. ("I couldn't open the orange juice, but I knew you liked pickles.")

The toast arrives as brittle as a shingle. ("I made it first and I forgot to butter it and it got all hard.")

The memory lingers of something lukewarm and mud-coloured ("I made tea but I couldn't get it brown enough so I put some Postum in.")

To be awakened by a small person staggering unsteadily under a tray bearing any or all of the above is a stern test of maternal love. To breakfast on the juice, the toast, the tea-cum-Postum, surrounded by a bouncing circle of admiring offspring, is a Cornelian challenge, especially when one thinks of the mess the little caterers have blissfully left behind in the kitchen.

I find it particularly hard to appear grateful when I haven't had time to clean my

teeth yet.

Other offerings, made of pipe cleaners, paper and peppermint-smelling glue, arrive on that second Sunday in May. These are the fruits of the Mother's Day art theme in the primary grades, and I have a drawer full of such tributes.

Many of them are in verse which scans or rhymes, but seldom both. The poems are peripherally adorned with line drawings of me ironing, baking, smiling—things which I do rarely, but it's nice to be remembered for them.

Those beyond the scope of primary art and creative English can honour their mothers with pre-packaged sentiments from the greeting card rack. Mother's Day cards come for Mother, Grandmother, Mother-in-law, Godmother and One-Who-Has-Been-Like-A-Mother-To-Me.

I looked them over last week, and they haven't changed much over the years in spite of Philip Wylie's vitriolic essays on Momism, and the emergence of mothering as an adjective of contempt.

They are abloom with flowers and kittens and countless rhymed permutations of

Mom - you're a helluva good broad!!!

by Shirley Whittington

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Variety is the spice of Baker's life

by Ray Baker

In last week's exciting episode we dealt with one family's wine making attempts. The fruit preparation, the squeezing and the mixing. The putting into water containers and the basement smelling like a well run Brewery.

The goal was a 15 per cent alcohol content by volume, which is around three times that of the average beer and tastes like fifteen times as much. Also a medium dry variety had been aimed at as we had read in no less than three different books that "A sweet wine is alright for beginners but is basically the mark of an amateur". Well we didn't want that did we? We were also absorbing (my wife and I) the subtle snobbish descriptive phrases that seemed to creep into most of the books. We learned for example that this particular wine was "rather aggressive, but travelled well" another one was "impertinent, but joyful nonetheless" well how about that then. At the risk of being thought insensitive, our only concern was that the wine would travel up from the basement to the ground floor. As for being impertinent and aggressive, well one of these fine days when we hold a wine and cheese party without the cheese, we will see who gets aggressive and impertinent won't we?

Variety's the Spice of life

Seriously though. Having put 10 gallons to bed for the fall we began to ask around for more books and favorite combinations from other people. The results were interesting. One man brewed so much of his own beer and enjoyed it so much that he developed kidney stones as a direct result. Ah well, back to the drawing board.

Another lady had this fixation on pumpkin brandy or whatever the final result of pumpkin, sugar L.C.B.O. alcohol and citric acid is. No problem, no kidney stones, just pleasant enjoyment with friends after supper and so to bed...with recurrent nightmares. One particular recipe was offered to us with the instructions that it could be "drunk after fourteen days." As we only had the one earthly body each which we kind of value, we ran this one through our "resident expert" who assured us that working strictly to the formula we would be blessed with a case of 'instant blindness'. A chemist friend confirmed that the amount of raisins, combined with the amounts of other fruits, could produce an acid which was known to affect the optics.

So all in all we decided to stick to the old faithfuls, tried and true. Our own "Mission Impossible" a kilderkin...eighteen gallons.

As we already had ten gallons of wild grape and elderberry down below, what should we do? As Shakespeare might have said "that was the question".

Mead. Mans oldest drink. From an acquaintance living on the old Fort Road near Midland we got the honey. One evening's work later and one hell of a sticky kitchen floor we had two gallons. Now to clean up the mess.

My wife's old Grandmother (Grandma Ratcliffe) always had a crock of ginger wine at Christmas time (to ward off the colds and flu you understand). We crushed the root of the ginger, from wine-art in Barrie, and like the witches in MacBeth, prepared the brew. It then joined its brothers, gleaming green, in the basement.

The proof of the pudding. Last but not least, taking advantage of nature's bounty around Thanksgiving time, not to mention the rapid transit service from California, we embarked on our final project of the year. A lemon wine.

As the yeast eats its little heart out converting the raw materials and the sugar into alcohol, the wine loses its initial sweetness and becomes more dry every time you 'rack' it. That is every time you transfer it from its container to another one, in order to leave the dregs behind.

These contain the dead yeast cells, and if allowed to remain in there too long will adversely flavour the wine.

Well anyway, each time we rack, I start it off with a syphon. This means I get to taste it, and even though it's still fermenting you can tell how its going. I will only say on the lemon wine that my face tightens up like a prune and my teeth grate together...it will be a dry wine O.K.

So we're lucky. At racking time we get to taste all the batches, the dreaded wine. It has been kept at bay with the sterilized equipment and air locks. With constant trial and error the one gallon jars and the five (imp) gallon water carriers have been lined up in sequence.

The rate of bubbles from the air locks, lined up from left to right accordingly, have been computed with the noise level and frequency.

So, any winter evening now if I have nothing to do and need cheering up a little, I can go down to the winery and think about the time when they will be ready to drink...and listen to the chorus of bubbles playing the opening bars of 'O Canada'.

I'll drink to that. 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...



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