

# CITIZEN COMMENT

## Visit won't affect closing

The visit last week of five town representatives to the Commodore Hotel is bound to draw a few disparaging remarks. "They went there in their 'official capacity' did they," some will say, "I wonder if they took notes?"

The representatives left themselves open for criticism after coming down hard on the nude dancing show at the Commodore during a council meeting last week, and then turning around and visiting the very show they knocked.

They could just have easily continued condemning the show on circumstantial evidence and hearsay, as most or all of the citizens who voted in favour of closing down the show at the meeting did. But instead they risked a backlash of public criticism in deciding they must have the facts before

jumping to close the show.

According to Mayor Vince Moreau, what the five saw was substantially different from what enraged residents had indicated. The mayor had the courage to admit the act turned out not to be personally offensive, and that it contained none of the obscenities some residents had alluded to.

The unfortunate fact is council members and representatives of the police force and town legal advisors passed through the doors of the Commodore with a closed mind.

They had already decided even if the act turned out to be a valid form of entertainment, it had no place in Penetanguishene.

The visit will result in little more than a delay of the inevitable.

## Exemplary restraint

When wage and price controls were introduced in October of 1975, Canadians learned from their government that the nation's economy was in bad shape, and that it would require a restrained attitude among Canadians, coupled with a lowered expectation about standards of living to set the economy back on a healthy course.

The extent to which wage and price controls have succeeded is debatable.

More readily apparent are indications that Canadians in fact are starting to practice restraint, and are gearing their standard of living expectations to a level more realistically aligned to today's tenuous economic conditions.

A shining example of the emergence of this attitude - so fundamentally necessary to maintaining even our present standard of living - is the settlement reached last weekend to end the 19-day-old Decor strike.

Compared to Decor's 1974 settlement, the contract reached Saturday represents an obvious practicing of restraint. In 1974, the workers received a 55-cent an hour wage increase over three years. Under the terms of the new contract, workers will receive a 25-cent an hour increase over the duration of the next three years.

Cost of living allowances, a traditional factor in union contracts, will be adjusted proportionally to rises in the consumer price index - an aspect of the agreement which is only fair, since the cost of living is continually rising.

The net effect of these two most important parts of the contract is that Decor workers will have for the next three years, a standard of living which is not significantly different from the level at which they are presently situated.

It may be argued that Decor management's threats during the negotiations concerning Decor's survival in Midland subtly blackmailed the workers into an agreement. To a degree this may be true. But it was only in the context of a faltering economy that management issued the warning, and equally in the context of a weak economy that the union realized the warnings held weight.

Both sides are to be commended for adopting a stance in negotiations which accounted realistically for the state of the economy. They are also to be lauded for bringing to an end a strike which promised, from all perspectives, trouble which the Midland area simply does not need.

## Guidance is needed

Our reaction is mixed to the news that a provincially based group is determined, in their way, to clean up some of the literature that is being taught in Ontario's high schools.

Our first reaction is applause—we commend those who take a firm stand on an issue and fight for their convictions. And it goes without saying that there are works of literature on high school curricula that perhaps should be re-evaluated. Students in local high schools have enough to concern themselves with in the modern age than to be forced to bull their way through the depths of another angst-ridden novel, simply because some teacher or department head feels this book "really communicates" to the younger generation.

But there are other novels which are designed to introduce students to some of the more overwhelming questions of the age. These books are there to provoke young students to come out of themselves and realize that there is more to the world than their own peculiar insights. Some of the books on the course may indeed be harsh, may indeed be explicit in their examination

of the real world, but there are harsh realities in the world outside the classroom as well.

If a student can prepare to meet the 'outside' challenge with some kind of guidance, inside the classroom, the better he will be able to function once he has graduated from the school system. And as cliché ridden as that may sound—it still holds true.

No one ever met a strong and difficult challenge successfully by assuming the 'ostrich position'. Students should be allowed the freedom to meet that challenge head on—provided they are given the proper moral guidance during their study.

And that is probably the greater issue at stake. The Renaissance group should be inquiring how these books are taught—that's crucial, and that can make the difference between a 'good' book and a 'bad' book. It makes all the difference in what a book 'means' to a student.

We wouldn't be afraid to have our children read a literary work by Margaret Laurence for example—but we would like to know precisely how that work is being taught.

## Letters to the editor

## Exodus lamented

Dear Editor:  
Over the past year I have heard a great deal about medical doctors leaving Canada, particularly Ontario.

Quite recently, a feature article in your publication dealt at some length with the impending departure of a local physician, Dr. J.C. Eden, who apparently is bound for the U.S.A.

This is still a free country and the good doctor is perfectly at liberty to leave. On the basis of your correspondent's interview, the doctor seems agitated and irate at our form of social medicare. The question may well be asked: is he aware of the medical situation that existed before the present O.H.I.P. system of medical coverage? Is he aware of the financial impoverishment of thousands of patients in the 'good-old-days'; the lack of funds for adequate medical research and hospitals?

Before our present system of social medicine, there were many brilliant doctors. Some of those doctors cashed in on their brilliance, others devoted their medical genius and skills for the betterment of mankind without regard for fees or the pursuit of 'the good life'. Two self-sacrificing

medical giants in the latter category were the renown physician and surgeon, Dr. Norman Bethune, who was a native of Gravenhurst, Ontario; and Sir Frederick Banting, physician and co-discoverer of insulin for which he received the Nobel prize in medicine in 1923. Dr. Banting hailed from the Town of Alliston in the County of Simcoe.

The Town of Midland itself was noted for medical excellence long before O.H.I.P. or medicare was heard of. One of the distinguished physicians of that era was a gold-medalist. All Midland doctors of this period had a keen sense of public service and worked under relatively greater difficulty.

I view with some concern, the loss of medical personnel in this community. However, from my observations, there are still those very dedicated physicians in our midst, who symbolize the medical spirit that formerly prevailed and I am sure this same spirit and dedication will prevail in the future.

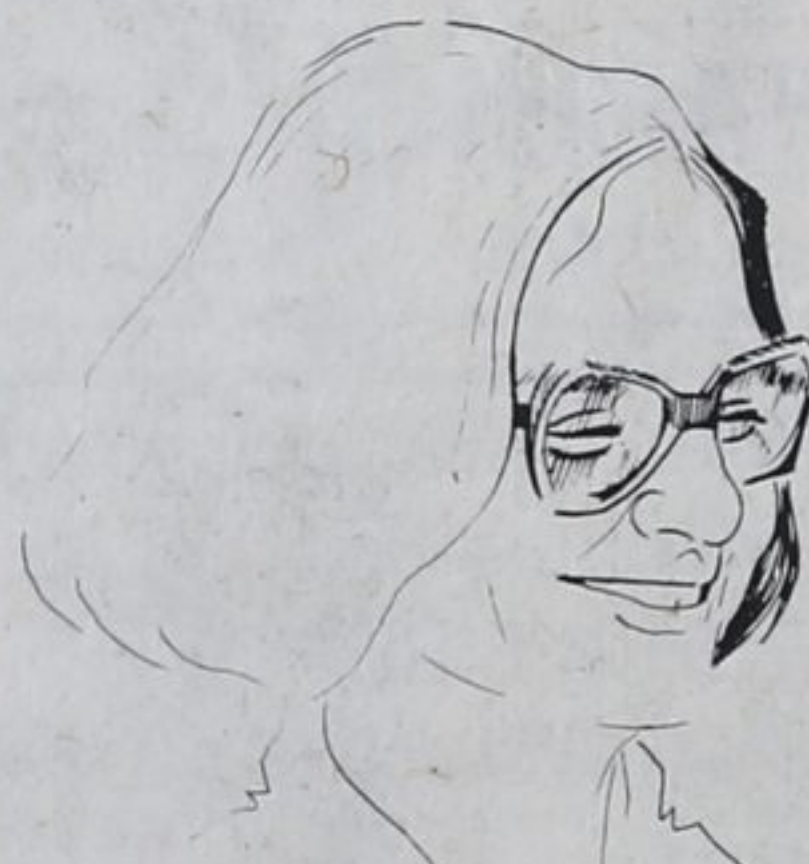
Sincerely yours,  
William J. Ogilvie  
Deputy Reeve of  
the Town of Midland.



A heavy load

## Christmas traditions --they're odd but ours

by Shirley Whittington



I told him it was common practice this time of year. "We call them Christmas trees. Millions of homes have them."

He touched the tree, and a shower of spruce needles fell to the floor. "I'm afraid it isn't going to live," he said. "You should have put it in a larger pot."

I explained that I didn't expect it to live. "When Christmas is over, we'll throw it out. The garbage men will take it away."

"How curious," he said thoughtfully. "You go out and cut down a living tree, drag it home, prop it up in your overheated livingroom, and a week later, you throw it away. There must be some symbolism here that I don't understand."

I told him that Christmas was the annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ - a leading religious figure. "He was very poor - born in a stable in fact. And when he grew up, he preached unselfish love and eternal life. And a living tree represents that life."

"I see," he said, thoughtfully. "And that's why you've covered the living green tree with all that tinsel and plastic snow. Very interesting."

There were parcels under the tree, and my visitor appeared interested in them. "There are a lot more in the closet upstairs," I said. "We just didn't have room for all of

them in here, without moving out some furniture."

The green person was impressed. "Such beautiful wrappings!" he exclaimed. "And what will you use them for after you've taken them off?"

"We don't use them for anything," I told him. "We just throw them away. We can buy some more paper and ribbons next year."

Greenie picked up one of our Christmas cards, and examined it curiously.

I explained that this was the traditional way to extend greetings of the season. "People used to go and visit each other a lot, but that's so time consuming. I wish you could see the card we got last year from the Bloodstone Finance Company. It was stunning, but of course we've thrown it away. People buy new cards every Christmas."

"That religious figure whose birthday you are celebrating," said the green person, pointing to one of the cards. "Is this his picture? The fat fellow in the red suit?"

I laughed indulgently, and explained that the fat man was Santa Claus. "Every year, children write to him and tell him what they want and he comes down the chimney and fills their stockings with candies and toys."

"But didn't you say that this Jesus whose birthday you're celebrating was poor, and

preached unselfishness?"

I sighed. This guy was plainly an uninformed turkey. I pointed out the differences between Jesus and Santa Claus. "And the Jesus part is quite important," I said. "Quite a few people make a point of going to church on Christmas. I don't know about this year, though. Christmas falls on a Sunday, and most families are pretty busy on Christmas morning, opening their presents. And then there's the big Christmas feast to get ready - the turkey and cranberries and mince pie and plum pudding..."

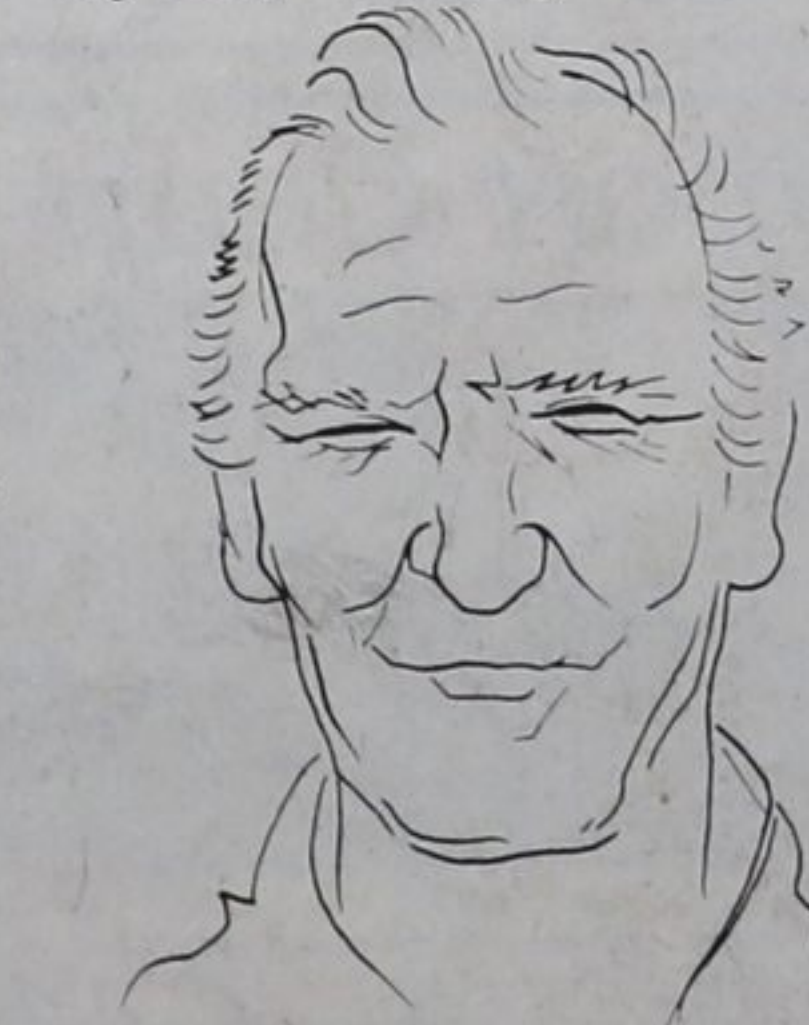
My visitor smiled. "A Christmas feast? What a lovely idea. You share that, I suppose, with the poor and the lonely?"

This nosey green intruder was getting to me. "Listen," I said rather sharply. "Christmas is strictly a family affair. The Salvation Army looks after the outsiders. Look - I'm pretty busy. I have a dress to shorten and some canapes to make for a Christmas party tomorrow night, so if you have no more questions..."

The green person obligingly vanished. I was glad to see the last of him. A North American Christmas is very hard to explain to somebody who doesn't know anything about the season of good will and good cheer.

## Remembrance Day memories are still alive

by Bill Smiley



I've written about Old Sweats chortling as they went back to Vimy and Mons and the days when they were young and gay and scared stiff. I've described middle-aged vets sucking in their guts in the parade, hoping they could hold in the pots until they finished the march and got back to the Legion Hall for a coldie.

I've described the little old Silver Star mothers, wiping away one dry tear as they awkwardly placed a wreath, not quite knowing whether to salute or bow or just shuffle around until someone steered them away.

It's become too much. I've dried up. It's a bit like being the Poet Laureate of England, and having to produce a sonnet to celebrate the birth of Princess Anne's first born.

It's like being an editor and groaning when you're told that you will have to produce, for the 28th time, an editorial lauding the virtues of Labor Day.

With any luck, the Legion will die away, because there will be no such thing as a veteran, all veterans of all wars being dead, and Remembrance Day will be something vaguely recalled as a pagan holiday back in the 20th century, when people thought they could solve their differences by killing each other.

But don't think I ignore Remembrance Day. No sir. I take it out on my students. On the day before the Day, I lug to school an armful of souvenirs, and rub their noses in them. I think this is much more effective than writing a column or making a speech to a group of veterans.

For one thing, I can lie and lie without fear of contradiction. Those kids are left with the clear understanding that had it not been for Bill Smiley, we'd have lost World War II and they'd now be subject to the whim of some Gestapo Gauleiter.

Mind you, my souvenirs are nothing like the real stuff my uncles brought home from World War I: belts with "Gott Mit uns," gas masks, shell cases.

But on the other hand, they know as much about World War II as they do about the Boer War, or the War of the Roses, so it doesn't take much to impress them.

I bring my flying log book, which shows clearly the number of bombs I dropped on the enemy. I don't have to mention that "the enemy" in most cases consisted of a plowed field, or a river with a bridge which I'd missed.

I bring an eight by 10 picture of "your hero," dashing, mustachioed, standing beside his trusty Typhoon. They say: "Was that your own airplane, 'D for Dirty Dick'?" I reply casually, "We were like husband and wife."

I don't have to mention that D for Desmond was borrowed for the occasion and that I flew any old, clapped out Typhoon the riggers could put together for another mission. Nor do I have to elaborate that Dirty Dick was indeed like a wife—she yawed violently to the left on takeoff.

Another feature of my souvenirs is a half dozen blown-up cartoons of prison camp life. I just sort of drop this in. Then comes the inevitable question: "Sir, did you try to

escape?"

I slide into my British accent. "Well, eekshwully, cheps, the Old Hun took a veddy dim view of escape attempts, but...yes," chuckling reminiscently and nostalgically. "What happened?"

"Well, nothing much, really. Tried to nip off with the Obergruppenfuhrer's Volkswagen jeep and steal a plane. But they caught me. Demmit."

You see, I don't have to explain that I made what must have been the dumbest escape attempt in WWII, after stealing the Feldwebel's lunch out of his coat pocket, and had the boots put to me, severely and accurately, by several old guys who had been badly scared recently by Typhoon pilots, and had no desire to be sent to the Russian front for letting a prisoner escape.

"And what happened then?"

"Well, I was sent to a special camp for prisoners whose spirits could not be tamed, even by the dread Gestapo." I don't have to tell these young turkeys that there were 10,000 other "untamed spirits" in the camp, most of whom would have sold their ancient mother to Kubla Khan for a packet of fags.

And I wind up with a rather vivid description of the final escape, fighting my way through Russian and German hordes as the war drew toward its climax. And falling into the arms of a Canadian corporal and trading him a POW chocolate bar for a bottle of beer.

You see, Remembrance Day will never be dead while I'm alive.

The  
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Citizen

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BETTER NEWSPAPERS COMPETITION

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