

# CITIZEN COMMENT

## Task Force to be commended for a job well done in short time

Now that the work of the Downtown Revitalization Task Force is done, it is fitting that the members of the group be commended for their effort.

Considering the fact that the group was formed in January, and completed their study in four months, John Gignac, Ross Spear, Gilles Ouellette and Gerry Light did a very good job.

It is unfortunate that the task force seems to be one of the only groups concerned about the problems of our downtown. Judging by the response of area merchants, they aren't concerned.

It seems many merchants don't understand the meaning of downtown revitalization. Some suggest that facelifts and flower-pots would remedy the problems of Main Street, but that is not revitalization, nor would it solve the problem.

There is something drastically wrong with a business section that gets a little retail business as this one. And all the flower-pots, benches and facelifts aren't going to help a drastic problem such as this.

There has been suspicion on the part of some merchants that the task force was trying to help out the owners of High Pointz Mall by suggesting a possible relocation to that area. The owners of the mall no doubt have enough money to hold out there for a long time, and sooner or later, that mall will

become successful, so it is foolish to think that the task force would try to help the owners of the mall.

Still on the subject of the mall, our merchants should ask themselves this question. When the mall does become successful, and it will at some point, what will happen to Main Street merchants? Can Penetanguishene support Main Street merchants and merchants in the mall as well?

Considering the sorry state of local retail business now, that answer should be obvious. One of the two areas will have to suffer, and judging by consumer trends that area will probably be Main Street.

One of major concerns of many merchants seems to be the expense involved in relocating, and that is quite understandable, but only to a point. Merchants in Penetanguishene's downtown area must come to the realization that their businesses cannot last indefinitely. As outlying malls continue to develop, shoppers will forego downtown shopping for the convenience and variety offered by a mall.

Penetanguishene's business district is not growing—in fact it is shrinking. There are two vacant shops on the hill itself right now. Unless local merchants join forces the situation isn't going to get any better.

## Hockey Association deserves support

Recent news from the Penetanguishene Minor Hockey Association is very disturbing. According to league organizers, there is a definite possibility officials won't be able to form an executive, and without an executive, a good portion of minor hockey activities in town might be curtailed.

This is disturbing for a number of reasons. First, the extensive minor hockey league in Penetanguishene is something town residents can be proud of, and seeing that destroyed would be most unfortunate. Penetanguishene is a hockey oriented town, and whether it be house league or all-star, hockey is a vital part of our town's winter lifestyle.

If an executive is not formed, house league teams may fold, and many young hockey players may have to find another place to play hockey. According to organizers, there

is a possibility that the town could take over operating the house league and the all-star teams. But with all the other things the recreation department of the town is responsible for, it is unlikely house league hockey could be undertaken as well. If it was taken over by the town, the quality of the league would no doubt suffer.

Surely, there must be people concerned about minor hockey in Penetanguishene who would be willing to sacrifice time to provide this valuable service to our town's young people.

We encourage anyone interested in minor hockey in Penetanguishene to attend an organizational meeting being held tonight.

According to officials from the Penetanguishene Minor Hockey Association, the meeting will be held at the arena, in the lounge, and will start at 7:30 p.m.

## Thanks to Coull for dancing arrangements

The Editor  
The Midland Times,  
Box 609,  
521 Bay St.,  
Midland, Ontario.

Dear Editor,  
On behalf of the three little girls who tap danced at the Ontario Place forum for "Midland Day", I would like to thank Mr. John Coull for his special arrangement of

their music, and the PSS and MSS students who played it.

Although their performance neglected to have enough "Pizzazz" for the Midland press, the producers and stage help at the forum noted that they were the first tap dancing act to appear at the forum.

Sincerely yours,  
Jean Stanway.

## 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 for legal reasons. Material may be of any length and if possible, typed or hand-written clearly so that no mistakes will be made.

We will not print any letter sent anonymously to this newspaper. We ask that writers include their name, address and

telephone number in the letter or contribution so that we may verify the authorship.

From this point onward we will publish letters to the editor with names withheld—provided the authors of the letters make themselves known to this newspaper, and provided they have a valid reason for wishing their name withheld from publication.

We believe that there are citizens in this community who wish to communicate their opinions on important issues, but because of valid circumstances, may be compromising their position.

We feel those citizens have a right to make their opinions known.



It's Going To Be A Long Weekend!!!

## Tourism changes people cities

Tourists are people who travel around in distant places and try hard to look as if they aren't tourists.

These days, everybody wants to look like a serious traveller because only a serious traveller can discover the soul of a place in three days. Serious travellers don't walk around all slung up with cameras and Air Canada flight bags, nor do they sport plastic lapel badges, indicating affiliation with Good time Traveltours Inc.

The fact is that most of us, when we're travelling, like to pretend that we've been here before—possibly on a United Nations Assignment. We let on that we know where to find the little leather shop that makes custom sandals for a song, and that we understand the Underground.

But it isn't easy. Travel leaves its mark. When you're miles from home and your drippy underwear is still damp and you keep patting your pocket to make sure you still have your passport and your travellers' checks, and the stuff in your wallet looks like Canadian Tire money, and your feet hurt and you're wrestling with an accordion-pleated street map in a high wind—it's hard to carry off the illusion that you're just passing through to finalize some OPEC negotiations.

Tourism not only leaves its mark on people. It can change the flavour of a city.

Suddenly, the town where you grew up and went to school looks exotic and unfamiliar. It's a shock—something like discovering that an aunt who had been a charter member of the WCTU has suddenly gone in for two-martini lunches.

Toronto—when I knew it—was a good grey city of churches and parks which were posted with "Keep Off the Grass" signs. It was, in those days, a place where people didn't mow their lawns on Sunday and folks made jokes like "I spent a week in Toronto last Sunday"

by Shirley  
Whittington



and meant it. I hardly recognized the old girl the last time I was down. She has gotten giddy and gaudy, and the streets are thronged with tourists, even on Sunday.

Some of them ride in horsedrawn carts, a fairly recent innovation. You can tell the horse drawn carts are new because the horses are glossy and healthy looking. Another year of weaving in and out of dangerous downtown traffic, and breathing in all that carbon monoxide, and the poor creatures will look like the spavined old nags in the cities from which Toronto borrowed the idea.

There are red double-decker buses in Toronto too, but I didn't see any on my recent visit. It may be the fuel shortage or it may be that Meccano isn't making the parts any more.

Some of the downtown hotels have dressed their doormen in wash-and-wear approximations of Elisabethan livery. It's odd to see a chap who looks like the label on a Beebeater's Gin bottle wrestling with soft-sided luggage from the trunk of a Lincoln Continental.

Toronto has broken out in a rash of sidewalk cafes. This is a great stride forward, because for years Torontonians considered eating and drinking out of doors,

where everybody could see you, as sinful.

Many of these cafes are operated by newcomers from Europe where civilized curbside sipping has been elevated to an art form. Two ladies from Buffalo sat at the table next to mine on Sunday. They spoke to the waiter in loud clear tones, because his English was heavily accented. He was perhaps Portuguese.

After the waiter had vanished into the kitchen, one Buffalo matron leaned over to the other and hissed, "See? I told you we should have learned French before we came up here."

Toronto also has so many sidewalk vendors selling jewellery and popcorn and balloons and chestnuts, that you might think you were in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower rather than on the sidewalk in front of the Eaton Centre.

I bought some popcorn, and looked around at the glassy skyscrapers, and the tourists with their street maps and cameras. And I smiled a small secret smile because I knew a leather shop where they made custom sandals for a song and I understood the subway system.

The man who sold me the popcorn grinned at me.

"Nice city, eh?" he said. "What state are you from?"

## People are still good natured

Despite my fairly often encounters with snarly misanthropes who seem bent on convincing me that the human race is a nasty lot, I keep coming back to the good, warm feeling that, on the whole, people are a pretty good lot, as far as they go.

They are kind and concerned, despite the evidence to the contrary. When I wrote something about my wife's insomnia and how she dreads our up-coming trip to Europe—trying to sleep on boats, buses and a strange bed every night—a lady reader sent me a long letter filled with ideas on how to cope with the situation.

One time, in a real cri de coeur, I mentioned that our daughter was very ill, and asked readers to say a prayer. We received dozens of letters and phone calls, from friends and strangers, assuring us that they would do just that.

An elderly lady from Alberta wrote me a long and involved letter offering a solution, when I once complained of arthritic agony in this space. I'm going to take her up on it one of these days. I've tried wearing a phony bracelet and carrying a potato around in my hip pocket, and they were slightly less than successful. Turned to write something on the blackboard a few weeks ago, my old friend Arthur nailed me in the hip, and I almost fell down in front of the class. Headline: English Department Head Drunk on Duty; Angry Parents Demand Dismissal.

Wrote a column recently asking for someone, somewhere, to give my daughter a job. It was written in jest. But any day now, I expect an old friend, or a complete stranger, to give me a call and offer her a job as a chicken plucker or a go-go dancer or a cosmetician in a mortuary, or something equally exotic.

Years ago, I had to go off to the San, with a shadow on my lung. I left behind a young, pregnant, bewildered, and scared wife. My friends, young and supposedly callous, spent their scanty money on visits to me, and supported and soled my bride, without ever trying to take a pass at her, to my

by Bill Smiley



astonishment and enlightenment, for they were a pretty unscrupulous crowd, and she was a raving beauty, and human nature being what it is...

Just recently, a colleague died of leukemia, after a comparatively short illness. He was in his prime, a nice guy, generally liked, full of life. And he died bravely, without any whimpering, still making plans for next year.

A couple of days later, one of his mates was around with a piece of paper, looking for signatures for work parties at Paul's place. He and his wife owned a summer resort, into which they'd poured a lot of money and energy, planning for his retirement. They had neglected the place, naturally, during his last illness. The weeds and grass had grown, and they had to open soon for the summer season. There was no lack of signatures, and we all piled in, even the old decrepits like me, who usually leave the meannal labor for the kid next door, to clean up the place.

During the war, I found the same kindness and concern among the enemy. A young German paratrooper who had watched coldly while some older German chaps kicked me about rather badly for something naughty I'd done, came into the boxcar in which I was tied up that evening, bloody and well-bowed, threw his camouflage cape over me—it was October—and talked to me in halting French. I sorely needed both the cape and the company.

A few weeks later, with other prisoners, I was sitting out an air raid (ours) in the

basement of a German railway station. We were half-frozen and hungry as hell. Some middle-aged German ladies came down with a huge basin of hot coffee (ersatz) and motherly looks (real) in the middle of that air raid. I blessed their good hearts, and hoped my mother would do the same, in the same situation.

Arrived at my first prison camp, I couldn't believe it when the inhabitants, Australians and New Zealanders, captured at Crete three years earlier, gave us a hot meal from their own meagre rations. We were cold, exhausted and half-starved. If anything gave me a faith in the innate decency of the human race, it was that.

Those are clear-cut examples, but there are hundreds of others, less easy to describe.

The neighbor who slips over with a jar of hot, homemade soup when your wife is away. The other neighbor who feeds your cat when you're off on a trip, or who fixes your shutters or your plumbing and forgets to send a bill. The doctor who calls, after an ungodly long day, to check on the state of your sick child. The quiet concern in the eyes of your students when they know you are really too ill to be up there teaching.

It's a cynical age, and it's an easy age to be a cynic, but don't let it get to you.

When the chips are down, when there's fire or flood or famine, blizzard or blast or bats in the attic, people will respond with a kindness that will blind you with tears.

by  
Dave Wilson



## Stationary blues

"April is the cruelest month," once penned an accountant who in later years enjoyed rather remarkable success as a poet.

To him April probably was a month he would rather have forgotten. With all his clients' income tax forms to be completed before the 30th, it was likely he was cruelly hauled away from his favourite pastime, which seemed to be writing explanatory notes for every line of verse he ever composed.

However cruel April may have seemed to Mr. Eliot, it bears no comparison to the cold hearted way this June is treating Mr. Wilson.

Not that it's been physically discomforting. Far from it—I've already spent many hours lounging on our local beaches, riding around in my car with the windows rolled down, and sitting on the porch at nights smoking cigarettes and talking.

No, June is being cruel in a much subtler, more sinister way than that.

Due to work commitments, this June is the first time since I was old enough to fit into a tot's carseat that I haven't embarked somewhere on a long trip.

And its developing into a rather difficult pill to swallow. Like all great traditions, breaking the June journey habit has thrown my entire sense of propriety—and priority—into question. I have vacationed for so many years in June that not doing so this year is affronting deep-rooted values.

June wanderlust must be something that's genetically common in our family. As a young child, I can remember my father many times being more anxious for the school year to end than myself and my siblings. In fact, I can remember a few times when he was so hot to get away that our report cards didn't get read until we stopped at the first service centre along our route—which, to his dismay, was often no further away than the end of the street.

There was always something exciting about leaving on a trip. Arranging with neighbours to collect the mail, making sure the iron was unplugged, checking to see that credit cards were in order, making doubly sure that the iron was unplugged, digging road maps out of dusty attics, trying to remember if the iron was unplugged, emptying the refrigerator of spoilable foods, slipping the kid next door five bucks to cut the lawn, and checking one last time to make sure the iron was unplugged.

While our family was still quite young, our June trips were confined to the North American continent. Mind you, that's a rather large area to be confined to, and as the monstrous gasoline bills awaiting us on our return showed, we did a pretty good job of covering it. In fact, we used to be able to reconstruct entire odysseys across the continent solely in terms of the place names emblazoned on credit card receipts.

As we grew older, our collective June wanderlust started taking us farther afield. We discovered the airplane, and began taking hops across the Atlantic, first as an entire family, and later, as some of us started to go off to post-secondary institutions, in two's and three's. And even though I personally didn't participate in all these jaunts, I always managed somehow to go somewhere in June. If it meant telling little white lies to summer employers such as "I won a week's paid vacation in Vancouver at a Maple Leafs game last winter, and if I don't go now I'll have to forfeit it for a colour TV," I'd be more than willing to do so.

The most recent June trip—last year's—was in my books the best. I spent close to two glorious months walking, hitching, driving, boating, and railroading around Great Britain and France.

Last week marked the anniversary of the beginning of that trip, which prompted a kind of internal assessment of things present in terms of things past.

I sat down and compared the prospects for this to the actualities of the one a year ago.

I realized that this summer I will have to adhere to things like schedules and deadlines. Last summer I ate in French restaurants. This summer, I'll be continuing my experiments aimed at discovering new and exciting ways to cook frozen meat pies.

Last summer I slept in houses over 500 years old, and stared from my bed at ancient oak beams. This summer, I'll be sleeping in a lingly apartment, staring from my bed at the cracks in the ceiling that formed the night before.

Last summer I walked through hedgerow woven countryside. This summer, I'll be driving my age-withered car past fast food outlets, self-serve gas stations and shopping plazas.

Last summer I sipped local beers in cheery pubs and listened to conversations about such things as upcoming fox hunts. This summer I'll sit in hotel men's rooms, where the only thing that deadens the sound of breaking glass and swearing is the sawdust on the floor.

Last summer I took quiet evening walks over hills where shepherds can still be seen with their flocks. This summer I'll cut my feet on broken glass at the beach and sob embarrassing giggles from girls who see I'm in my cutoffs.

Last summer I stared in awe at some of the worlds great cathedrals. This summer I'll spend endless nights staring at the bug lamp outside my window.

The comparisons could go on forever. The point is, there really is no comparison between this and last summer. Nor, for that matter, this and any other summer. By not taking a June trip this year I feel I've denied myself what's almost a birthright. Not travelling this June will make me miserable, I'm sure, for the rest of the summer.

Although I can wrangle a week's holiday in August, there's a dandy little package deal at the travel agent's...

The  
Penetanguishene  
Citizen



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