



Ukelele serenade

Glennville Bray of Oxbow Park Public School, Wasaga Beach, right, leads some of the 45 members of the Wasaga Beach Ukelele Group in the Simcoe

County Board of Education boardroom last week through works ranging from rock and roll to

romantic songs. The group appeared to thank the board for its support.

East is east, but west is right in style

Shirley Whittington

About five miles from where I am sitting typing this, there is the only bar in Canada with a mechanical bull in it.

The bull is exactly like the one you may have seen in John Travolta's *Urban Cowboy*, and it cost the bar owners about \$11,000.

At two bucks a shot, they can consider the bull a good investment. Patrons, it seems, are keen to climb aboard the bucking contraption, set the adjust-a-buck to a level they can handle, and awa-y-y they go.

This may sound bizarre, but it's healthier than sitting in one spot all night and drinking yourself cross-eyed.

When you stop to think about it, riding a mechanical bull would have the same effect on the old buns as some of those fat smashing machines at Vic Tanny's.

How our national watering holes have survived these many years without mechanical bulls rearing and bucking under

the patrons is a mystery.

But how the bull got in the bar is not so much of a mystery. It is simply a reflection of our current infatuation with things western.

If you don't believe me, look around at all the cowboy hats. If I had a nickel for every white Stetson I saw last weekend, I'd have enough money for several flights on the mechanical bull.

Everybody is wearing Stetsons — from ladies of high fashion to drivers of fur lined vans.

With the white Stetsons go cowboy boots. These pointy-toed, high-heeled, hand-tooled numbers look strange on people with un-bowed legs, but you can get used to anything.

So far, I have not seen a pair with spurs, and I can understand why. However — a fortune awaits the entrepreneur who can come up with fake spurs that look good, sound good and won't scratch the coffee table.

Add a vest and neckerchief to the boots and Stetson, and you'll look exactly like Gene Autry or a Dallas cowgirl, depending on your age and superstructure.

Order a western omelette for lunch, and somebody will ask you to sit for the cover of *Toronto Life*.

Sociologists will give you all sorts of complicated reasons for the popularity of the Urban Cowboy look. For Canadians, the explanation is simple.

We are not fighting urban angst.

We are not pretending to be John Travolta. We are not reacting against a computerized world.

We just want to look like rich Albertans. Alberta is where it's at in Canada these days. The economy everywhere else is sagging, but you can look like a success if you dress western.

There's more to it than that. Those of us who don't live in Alberta, and who drive cars and heat our homes with oil really want Albertans to like us. And imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

But — what's this? There is also oil off-

shore from Newfoundland?

Then me b'y, you better be prepared to throw your cowboy gear into the kids' dressup box, because when that oil comes on stream there'll be a new fad abroad in the land — eastern. And that'll be some wonderful.

Even now I hear John Travolta is getting measured up for a suit of oilskins and some rubber boots for his role in *Urban Fisherboy*. It'll be his first cod piece and will start a national rage for fish and brewis, cods' tongues and screech.

If you close your eyes and concentrate I know you'll be able to visualize the big scene in *Urban Fisherboy* where Travolta rides the waves of the North Atlantic in a heaving fisherman's dory. This will be the signal for every bar in North America to get a mechanical bucking dory, set in a tank of salt water. For two bucks, you'll be able to get sloshed without drinking very much.

The Far East may be red, but the near east may soon be recherché. Don't spend too much money on those cowboy boots.

Trust me. Have I ever given you a bum steer?

Tough to live in city in the fall

Bill Smiley

This is a time of year when my heart goes out to city-dwellers.

It's a time when rural or small town living is immensely superior to that in the concrete canyons, the abominable apartments, the sad suburbs of metropolia.

In the city, day ends drearily in the fall. There's the long, weaving battle home through traffic, or the draughty, crushed, degrading scramble on public transportation.

The city man arrives home fit for nothing but slumping for the evening before the television set. And what greets him?

The old lady, wound up like a steel spring because she hasn't seen a soul she knows all day, there's nothing to look at but that stupid house next door, exactly like their own, and the kids have been giving her hell.

He's stuck with it. For the whole evening. That's why so many city chaps have

workshops in the basement.

It's much simpler to go down cellar and whack off a couple of fingers in the power saw than listen to Mabel.

Life is quite different for the small town male. He is home from work in minutes. He surveys the ranch, says, "Must get those storm windows on one of these days," and goes in, to the good fall smells of cold drinks and hot food.

His wife saw him at breakfast, again at lunch, has had a good natter with the dame next door, and has been out for two hours, raking leaves with the kids. She doesn't need him.

Instead of drifting off to the basement, the small town male announces that this is his bowling night, or he has to go to a meeting of the Conservation and Slaughter Club, and where's a clean shirt. And that's all there is to it.

While her city counterpart squats in front of TV, gnawing her nails and wondering why she didn't marry good old George, who has a big dairy farm now, the small town gal collects the kids and goes out to burn leaves.

There is nothing more romantic than the back streets of a small town in the dark of a fall evening. Piles of leaves spurt orange flames. White smoke eddies.

Neighbors call out, lean on rakes. Women, kerchiefed like gypsies, heap the dry leaves high on the fire. Kids avoid the subject of bedtime, dash about the fire like nimble gnomes.

Or perhaps the whole family goes to a fowl supper. What, in city living, can compare with this finest of rural functions? A crisp fall evening, a drive to the church hall through a Halloween landscape, an appetite like an alligator, and that first wild whiff of turkey and dressing that makes your knees buckle and the juices flow free in your cheeks.

But it's on weekends that my pity for the city-dweller runneth over. Not for him the shooting-match on a clear fall Saturday, with

its good humored competition, it's easy friendliness.

Not for him the quiet stroll down a sunny wood road, shotgun over arm, partridge and woodcock rising like clouds of mosquitoes.

It's not that he doesn't live right, or doesn't deserve these pleasures. It's just that it's physically impossible to get to them easily. If he wants to crouch in a duck-blind, at dawn, he has to drive half the night to get there.

Maybe on a Sunday or holiday, in the fall, the city family decides to head out and see some of that beautiful autumn foliage.

They see it, after driving two hours. And with 50,000 other cars, they crawl home in late afternoon, bumper to bumper, the old man cursing, the kids getting hungrier, the mother growing owlier.

Small town people can drive for 15 minutes and hit scenery, at least around here, that leaves them breathless.

Or they'll wheel out a few miles to see their relatives on the farm, eat a magnificent dinner, and sit around watching TV in a state of delicious torpor.

Yup. It's tough to live in the city, in the fall.