



A gala occasion in Midland way back then...in 1933

On Friday, Jan. 6, 1933 a gala occasion took place in Midland. That was the day the artificial ice plant at Midland Arena Gardens

was switched on in the 104 by 231 foot arena, called back then the finest building of its kind in Canada. The arena was destroyed by fire

several years ago. Turned out Midland was the only town between Toronto and Winnipeg at that time to have such a set-up. For your

information it cost \$26,000 to put in the new floor and plant complete with 13 miles of pipe.

Good connections a writer's joy

Shirley Whittington

I remember still the rush of delight I used to feel when a teacher ask us to write a composition. In those days, creativity was nrodded with a list of possible list of possible first sentences on the blackboard. Like:

1. "The time in my life when I was most frightened was ..."
2. "The possession of money does not guarantee happiness."
3. "If I could redecorate my bedroom, I would ..."
4. Topic of your choice.

What delight it was to seize on number four, and gallop full speed ahead on a made-up story of my own!

Sometimes, after the compositions were marked and handed back, our teachers would ask that some of them be read aloud. Now - that's the acid test for any writer.

To be greeted with faint groans as I began *My Horse Zephyr*, (I'd never been on a horse, or a farm); to be faced with yawns from my best friend Doris; to noted the glazed eyes of Ronnie Fisk.

It was the kind of woe that found relief only in an after-school overdose of chocolate marshmallow cookies with jam in the middle.

But to be attended to, to see the admired Ronnie reluctantly smiling, and to hear Doris giggle out loud during my reading of *Forgotten Music* - a true account of what happened when I sat down to play at a piano recital - that was sweet triumph.

Writers have been compared to babies, screaming for attention. The attention, if it comes, is fun, but it does not satisfy. The true reward of writing comes when a piece strikes a chord in the reader - of recognition, rage, shared sorrow, remembrance or simple pleasure.

Certainly the rewards of writing are not monetary. Canadian writers, on average, earn incomes below the poverty line.

Eric Nicol, the Vancouver columnist/playwright/author said once "The tested formula for becoming rich as an author is to write regularly to an uncle who is dying from a surfiet of oil wells."

Another writer counselled Canadians who wanted to get right through writing to buy lottery tickets instead because the odds were better.

The reward that comes when a writer makes connection with a reader is what keeps writers writing.

This seems to me to be what writing is about -- to make someone laugh or cry or reconsider or call a huff and get into it -- all because of one's careful recording of a feeling, event or impression.

As far as this column's concerned, sure-fire catalysts for reaction have been the Royals, and religion. Mention of either provokes response.

This month, two columns sparked unusual interest, and not from born-again royalists.

That tale of the stolen coat and the hotel keeper who wouldn't take cash without credit card ID prompted phone calls and letters.

My friend Earl down at the Cedarview Restaurant has a big sign by his gas pumps which says, "All credit cards accepted: PS - We also accept real money."

The Boor War column prompted response. Almost everyone agreed that the shouting and placards on Parliament Hill while President Reagan was chatting up the PM was kind of

rude.

Lou Cramton a former House of Representatives member from Michigan said "It takes neither courage or intelligence to protest, to boo and shout down a speaker you disagree with ... the trend is a deterrent to those who might otherwise get involved in public service or be supportive of those so engaged."

Arthur Carr of Palmerston Ontario shared my disgust of the US flag burning incident. "I was horrified .. I knew the true meaning of Post Haste as I wrote an apology to my friends in the USA. I assured them that few Canadians .. very few, I hoped .. would be so imperceptive and so sadly ignorant."

On the other hand, a Thunder Bay reader wrote a lengthy and well reasoned response which questions that any "civilized, decent, thinking person could support the Reagan administration or feel obligated to be polite to him .. even if we just took the instance of El Salvador (it is difficult to understand."

Well, as Sam Slick (a.k.a. Thomas Halliburton) once said, "Writing only aggravates your opponents, and never convinces em." Mebbe so.

But dialogue communicating and connecting are the true rewards of writing.

I don't preach, I'm sure I don't!

Bill Smiley

I SPENT the entire weekend talking to these people, feeding them, and driving them to a ferry, half an hour away, where they could embark and spread the faith on an Indian reservation.

They can talk like gurus, sleep like a bomb, and eat like horses.

My son arrived on a Thursday night, and had me so befuddled by astrology and the words of the prophet, that I slunk off to bed about mid-night got up early so I wouldn't have to face him again.

That afternoon, a friend, Margaret, arrived from the city, at 80 miles an hour, on her motor-bike. They left for the island.

At 7:30 that night, Lise arrived, 22, bright as a whip, endearing, giving up a weekend with exams approaching, to take part in the teaching mission.

Fed and slept her at our place, delivered her to the ferry next day.

Saturday, son Hugh and Margaret arrived back and took off for the city, back to work.

Sunday morning I went to pick up Lise at the ferry and saw her off on the bus, ready to resume her studies for a M.A. in Statistics, of all things.

O.K. An old Jewish guy can stand that. But Monday, I got a letter, courtesy of the Collingwood weekly, that reinforced my

decision to fight back.

It was from William J. McCormick Esq., Chetwynd, Chetwynd Drive, Rosemont, Pennsylvania.

It was the damndest thing (pardon the expression in a religious column) that I have ever seen.

On the outside of the envelope was his address, and mine, thus: Honorable Bill Smiley, (Teacher & Columnist). Down in the righthand corner was a fat green label stating: Preferential: Do Not Delay, Label 110, 19-72. On the back of the envelope was this:

Dear letter, go upon your way
Over mountain, plain or sea.
God bless all who speed your flight
To where I wish you to be.
And bless all those beneath the roof
Where I would bid you rest;
But bless even more the one to whom
This letter is addressed.

Inside were the following: a letter from the Speaker's Office, House of Commons, London England, thanking Mr. McCormick for his copy of an address given at Haverford, Penn.; a letter from Buckingham Palace thanking him for the copy of the "Holy Name" and an accompanying letter (the Palace letter had a grammar error); a one-

inch by six-inch card, in green, blue and red, announcing 'God Bless You'; and a twelve-thousand word copy of the address by Wm. J. McCormick to the Holy Name Society of Rosemont, Penn.

It was all a bit too much. Somewhere in his speech, Wm. J. had a number of aphorisms about brevity being the soul of wit. As you may have noticed, I don't preach much in this space. That is, I don't preach religion.

In the first place, I am not learned enough in the scriptures, whatever scriptures happen to turn you on. By the way, excuse the use of a capital "S" for scriptures. It merely means writings.

It's not that I don't have a friendly chat with God once in a while. I do, and I'm sure he enjoys it, though he never talks back. In that respect, he is about two hundred percent more amiable to talk to than my wife.

In the second place (see above), I am not pure enough or good enough to preach to others, though, by George, there are quite a few of you sinners out there who need a little touch of hellfire to frighten you.

And in the third place, it's none of my business. If you want to bang your head on the ground in the general direction of the East, do a Holy Roll on the floor, speak in tongues, lie on a bed of nails, or slurp wine and eat dry biscuits at Christmas and Easter, that's your problem. I am basically a Jew at heart.

If you believe that you are going to join the Great Spirit or some other form of It, Her, Him, after you conk out, and meet all your

loved ones again, and float around on that big Sugar Candy mountain in the sky, and not ever work again, bless you, and good luck.

(Who, in his right, or even celestial mind, would want to see all his/her loved ones again?)

There'd be some right hair-pulling if some of my old girl-friends and my wife got together for a Sunday brunch at one of those fly-ins in the sky; and I sure as heaven don't want to meet my children, nor my brothers and sisters, after I croak.

Wouldn't mind seeing the grandboys for about seven minutes.)

So. Generally I mind my own business about other people's beliefs. But this past week has made me strike back, in desperation.

First of all, I got caught in a welter of Ba-ha-i's. My wife, son and daughter are adherents of this comparatively new faith.

Its beliefs you can't fight with.

They're the best of the older religions. Their purpose is to spread unity, the one-ness of man, in our world.

To battle that would be like condemning Motherhood.

They have no wild or bizarre ceremonies. They have simple meetings, variously called Feasts, Fasts, Deepenings.

They harm nobody, except old guys like me who are dragooned into driving people to such events.

Then he took off for another ten thousand words. Enough religion. I'm going to look up a rabbi tomorrow.