

Shirley Whittington



There are days when the whole world seems unfair, nutty and upside down.

On such mornings, the newspapers are filled with reports of grants bestowed upon the already rich, of public money squandered on useless projects, of tax concessions granted to profiteers. There are stories of unfair legal judgements, unjust evictions and deep miseries visited on those who least deserve them.

Some days, the paper is so depressing it makes you wish you'd left it out on the porch roof, where the paper person flung it.

This morning, my newspaper carried the following item: "The National Capital Commission is considering banning skiers and others from caves in the Gatineau Hills because of the deadly threat they pose to bats."

I had to read that over several times before I fully understood it. I find it hard to imagine a cross country skier being a deadly threat to anyone, except maybe a snowmobiler. Yes -- I have seen skiers raise fists (and fingers) when the stink pots roar by -- but heck, that's

not deadly.

Bats, I discover, are hibernating in those Gatineau caves, and they are easily awakened by the slightest sound, touch or change in temperature or humidity. Dr. Brock Fenton, one of Canada's leading bat researchers, says "Once awakened, the bats need twenty minutes to warm up to their flying temperature and that can critically deplete their energy." The bat master says that once the stored energy is lost, there aren't enough insects -- the bats' main food source -- to replenish it, and the bats may die.

Think about that, bat molesters.

It has come to this. People are being asked not to disturb the slumber of bats.

There is a deep irony here. It reminds me of the story about the man who asked the lady in the crowded subway if his ribs were crushing her umbrella.

Next thing we know, seagulls will demand painted targets on car tops and peoples' hats so they will waste no movements.

Raccoons will refuse to touch your garbage unless you supply a fingerbowl.

Bill Smiley



DON'T you get a little tired of the touchiness of modern society in which, no matter where you step, it's on somebody's toes, no matter what you say or write, it's a slur on someone's background, color, creed or convictions?

About the only areas left in which one may chance a remark without fear of inflicting a wound are politics and sex.

It's extremely difficult to inflict even a bruise on a politician. He must have a fat ego in the first place, and he quickly acquires a brass hide to go with it. Add an ability to talk out of both sides of the mouth at once, and a certain skill in straddling fences, and you have cabinet material.

In the field of sex, there don't seem to be any limits any more to what can be said, presented or simulated. Movies, magazines and theatres, club us over the head with raw, unembellished sex, or seek to titillate the spook in each of us with highly-embellished, freaky sex until the whole once-exciting subject has become a crashing bore.

Aside from sex and politics then, there is scarcely an aspect of the human scene where even angels fear to tread, lest they step on someone's sensibilities.

Ethnic jokes are out, black is beautiful,

gefille fish is glorious, Rhodesia is rotten, poor people are more noble than rich people, gay is gorgeous, and the only real sin is to be old.

Lord forbid that we should ever go back to the days when a Catholic was a "mick" or a "dogan," a black person was a "nigger," and Italian was a "wop," a Chinese was a "chink," and so on.

But I do get heartily sick of a society in which you have to tippy-toe all the time for fear of offending some touchy minority, or trespassing inadvertently on someone's weird religious affiliations.

We are developing into a society with a snobbish sort of reverse prejudice in which everybody is leaning over backwards in order to appear not even to be breathing on anyone else.

As a result, we are losing much of that good old Canadian crustiness and turning into a nation of nice nannies in whose mouths margarine wouldn't melt.

Even our media reflect this trend in our society. With few exceptions, our newspapers are as bland as blanc mange. The letters to the editor have more bite, and are often better written, than the editorials.

Our magazines are either tiresomely

Ottawa goes to bat for crepusculars

Mice will turn up their whiskers unless traps are baited with Brie.

Groundhogs will sleepily suggest stoplights at half mile intervals so they can take their time crossing the highway.

Make no mistake. I am a nature lover. This very moment I am typing with frozen fingers, having spent ten minutes stuffing sunflower seeds through the tiny hole in the bird feeder.

But I will not be bullied -- even in principle -- by bats. Nor will I stand idly by and allow cross-country skiers to be branded as rowdy revellers who stomp around in caves waking bats up. Have you ever tried to stomp around in cross country boots? You can't.

I wish I had a nickel for every time my delicate slumbers have been disturbed by a bunch of rowdy bats, swooping and gliding inches from my eyelashes.

Do bats care that their chattering and scratching within the walls of this old house distract me when I am working at night?

Is it of any interest to the bats of the world that last summer I was a prisoner in my own kitchen because a filthy great bat was hanging from my curtain rod, waiting to sink

its fangs into my soft white throat and drink my blood?

Bats! I still haven't forgotten the time I tenderly lifted a limp black form from behind the sofa in the sunroom, thinking it a misguided and maimed bird. And when I brought it to the window to release it, the thing transmogrified itself into a bat, and bared its teeth at me.

Everybody knows bats are squeaky, lousy, sneaky, blindly veering crepusculars that want to nest in your hair. They are rats with wings; birds with fur. Bats are loathsome and I don't care how many mosquitoes they eat per annum.

Everybody also knows that cross country skiers are upright (most of the time) quiet, moral, good, loveable and trustworthy.

Be honest. Who would you rather have at your next party? A bat? Or a cross country skier with a No-Pest strip?

It is no surprise to me to note that the story about protecting sleeping bats from rowdy skiers is datelined Ottawa.

A lot of weird and unjust stories originate in Ottawa.

Today's society has gone sour

"liberal" or narrowly nationalistic, or both. Tied in tight bundles, they make better firewood than they do reading matter.

Television and radio news reporting, most of it culled from the late editions of newspapers, is incredibly unimaginative and skeptical. TV programs, on the whole, are pure pap, offensive by being so inoffensive.

Public figures are so frightened of offending somebody or losing a few votes, that their public utterances come out as mush wrapped in marshmallow.

What this country, and this society, need is a good dash of cold water from somewhere, to wake us from our mind-numbing, paralyzing "niceness."

We need a Bob Edwards or a Grattan O'Leary to jolt us with some honest vituperation, some colorful name-calling, some hard facts, and some common sense.

We need some politicians with guts, who don't give a diddle for the popularity polls, and who would give us the facts of life without any sugar coating.

We need some educators with backbone to tell the people who claim that Huckleberry Finn is racist and The Merchant of Venice is anti-semitic and Catch-22 is dirty and The Diviners is disgusting, to go fly a kite.

We need about 10,000 fewer smart-ass commentators on what is wrong with this country, and a few hundred honest men or women to tell us what is right with it.

We need far fewer "reasonable" people and a heck of a lot more "unreasonable" people, who would refuse to accept something just because it's always been done that way, or someone might be upset if things were changed.

We need some thundering editorials, some pulpits pounded, some stiff jail sentences for racism, some honesty in high places.

We certainly don't need a "good war" or a "good depression" to make Canadians stop whining and bitching and mealy-mouthing, but we certainly need a "good" something to turn us back into the sturdy, individualistic people we used to be.

I haven't the answers, I'm no prophet, but I'm sick to the ears of a society that thinks: old people are a nuisance; young people are never a nuisance; supermarkets are sexy; social workers can make miracles; and everybody is as good as everybody else.

Perhaps if you agree with me to some extent, you would enjoy reading The Golden Age of B.S. by Fred C. Dobbs. It's rambling and it's coarse in spots, but it's right on.

Investor's Inquiry



by Charles Colling

This week I will explain the function of a stock exchange and the difference between different types of stock brokers.

The main stock exchanges in Canada at the present time are Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Alberta.

A stock exchange could be compared to a giant auction room, and after that, that is what the stock or bond market is all about.

If you wish to buy a stock or bond, you bid a certain price for a specific number of shares, or conversely, if you wish to sell a stock or bond you offer it at a certain price. The difference in the bid price and the offering price is known as the spread.

The main function of the exchange is to provide an orderly trading pattern at all times in all "listed" stocks and to provide and maintain a rigid set of Bylaws which all "Member Brokers" and their employees must adhere to.

The exchange also provides and maintains a detailed record of all transactions of each listed security each day, and a statistical record for an indefinite period of time.

In addition to this, the exchange conducts quarterly and annual audits of all Member-Brokers' client accounts and maintains a contingency fund paid into by all members for the protection of brokerage house clients in the event of a Members default.

All exchange services are financed by the annual listing fees of each company listed on the Exchange and by the annual membership fees paid by all Member-Brokers.

The exchanges in Canada, in conjunction with the Provincial Securities Commissions and The Investment Dealers' Association of Canada, set the commission rates to be charged by Member-Brokers.

There are two main classes of Stock Broker -- Member and Non Member Brokers. Member

This is how stock exchange functions

brokers are equipped to give a faster and broader service to their clients by wire connections to all international exchanges as well as money market and short term investment vehicles. They also maintain statistical and analytical departments for the use of their clients. In addition to this, most members provide a more comprehensive and complete bookkeeping system for their customers. Members are under constant surveillance by the Exchanges of which they are members, the provincial securities commissions and The Investment Dealers Association of Canada.

Non Member Brokers can, but rarely do, provide the same services as a Member-Broker because they do not have the direct facilities of a Member house. Non Members for the most part deal in unlisted securities and in some cases are mainly promoters of new speculative issues. All brokerage houses charge a set commission for their services of

buying and selling stocks and bonds except in the case of promoters which operate on a finders' fee included in the purchase price of the security.

Your broker is equipped to arrange and handle, as well as stocks, bonds and treasury bills, such investment vehicles as Guaranteed Investment Certificates, Term notes and Registered Retirement Savings Plans of all types.

Charles Colling is the resident manager of Yorkton Securities Inc. in Midland. In sending in questions to be answered, please remember Securities Commission Regulations will not permit giving opinions or recommendations on any specific securities through this column.

All other signed inquiries will be answered as soon as possible. In all answers only the inquirer's initials will be used. Address all questions to "Investor's Inquiry" c/o The Midland Times, Box 609, Midland, Ontario

Roger Bell

Death wish - it's a pseudo-psychological term that's tossed around by amateur shrinks at parties, as they drunkenly endeavour to explain bizarre and dangerous (for them) behaviour on the part of their acquaintances. "So and so drives too fast. Migawd, he's a maniac on wheels. . . jabber, jabber. . . even with his kids in the car. . . must have a (flourish of trumpets, roll of drums, pregnant pause) deathwish!"

The term rubs me the wrong way. I don't, to begin with, have a great deal of faith in the

psycho-centered arts; often, dead cats swung counter-clockwise under a full moon might do as much for the deranged as modern brain medicine does.

Who can totally trust a fledgeling science having a founding father who blames everything from thumbsucking to rape on sexual repression and/or regression?

Or one which has a group of proponents pushing the idea that there is no such thing as an accident. You dislocated your neck in that car crash to punish yourself for cheating on

your income tax.

Nonetheless, as would be a psychoanalyst, I am intrigued by the way many humans, myself included, knowingly imperil themselves.

There must be some rationale for riding the razor's edge.

On a recently aired television special about sharks, a woman (who, let me assert, appeared sane) dressed herself in a sickeningly thin steel mesh suit, covered herself with chopped fish, and made like dinner in a school of ravenously hungry (aren't they always?) sharks. I mean, she encouraged them to bite her.

It was tooth city, let me tell you. One

grabbed her neck, one clamped onto her thigh, and a third used her hand as an hors d'oeuvre, on the way to her arm, the entree (blood rare, please). All this to test the suit. She escaped with a slightly chewed thumb. Her reaction? "That was a bit tense." My reaction, sitting in the safety of my rec room? A near coronary.

What is there about the taste of fear that we find so seductive? Why do some skydive, with only a few pounds of silk between them and the marble orchard? What drives others to hunt rattlesnakes with forked sticks, to pay for the privilege of dizzying descents and

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