

Shirley Whittington



Last week I walked into a bank and for a minute I thought I was in the YMCA gym. There, in front of me, were four line-ups of sweaty people—just like the bend and stretch squads organized by beautiful Marlene, our Y fitness instructor.

I was wrong. The line-ups were composed of people waiting to get at their money. Ever since money got tight, banks have stopped displaying sailboats and stereos and all the other good things a bank loan can buy. Instead they fill in the spaces between the faulty pens and the tellers with rows of people—a kind of human line of credit.

The banking industry has noted the increase in line-ups and has mounted an appealing radio commercial which tells us that banks don't like long line-ups any more than we do. They hint darkly that the line-ups are our fault anyway, for wanting to get at our money. (I'd like to hint darkly that the banks sell a skyscraper and hire an extra teller.)

I usually carry a book with me, so I was

able to finish a chapter while I stood in line. Then I dashed around the corner to the post office.

Here the line-up was so long it almost obscured the sign announcing the recent increase in postal rates. I fished out my book, and began a new chapter. The line inched along, at the speed of a glacier. We shuffled along, sheeplike and uncomplaining, in our parkas and John Deere baseball caps.

My next stop was the supermarket where line-ups stretched into aisles, bisected one another or died suddenly when a cashier announced, "I'm closing here." Dozens of people stood buggy to bum. Little kids whined through the National Enquirer. The canned music played on and somewhere up ahead the cash register guillotined money. I finished my chapter. I finished my book.

Once outside, I lined up again at the carry-out gate to pick up my groceries. Then after a

Stand up routine

relatively short line-up at the gas station, I was home.

The Squire was terribly worried. "What took you so long?" he said. "Is the car okay?" (This is what he always says when he is terribly worried.)

I explained that I'd been standing around downtown reading a book.

The fact is that line-ups have become part of Canadian life and we endure them with a stoic patience that reflects our overseas ancestry. The Brits are famous for orderly queuing and we have all seen pictures of sad middle Europeans with shopping bags lining up for bread and horsemeat.

Canadians may soon achieve the ultimate line-up rationale, which is where one lines up first and later asks what the line-up is for.

But lining-up isn't all bad. Line-ups give buskers employment.

A line-up is a good place to catch up on your reading, providing you remember to bring

your glasses.

And a line-up is a good place to think because you are not likely to be interrupted—certainly not by anyone saying "May I help you?" I wouldn't be surprised if some of the world's great thinkers like Harold Ballard and Margie Trudeau got some of their best inspirations while they were waiting in line somewhere. Just recently I have had the following thoughts while waiting in line:

When you lose ten pounds where does it go?

Is the PC theme song "There's no business like Joe business?"

Is it just coincidence that the humorous is close to the funny bone?

Why don't people talk to their plants any more?

You see how enriching and rewarding standing in line can be? Meanwhile, you have probably noticed that banks control crowds with velvet ropes.

That's just one more way to string a line.

Bill Smiley



Random thoughts on a dreary March day, with a terrible head-cold, about the fourth this winter.

About which many people have been most unhappy. For ski and snowmobile enthusiasts, ski resort operators, ice fishermen and snowplow owners, this winter has been the pits.

For people who get sick to death of shovelling snow, of driving in blizzards, of wading to the thighs through snow-banks to get to work, this winter has been a boon.

I'm in the second category, but I'm not raving about this particular open winter. I don't like bitter cold, and I detest battling snow.

However, it's been a dreary winter. Too much rain, mud, ice; too little sun. Dull day after dull day makes Jack a dull tool, and even the winter worry-wart would like to see a bit of sunshine.

It's also been a rotten winter for the health. I don't know whether the wild swings of temperature have anything to do with anything, but I've never seen so many people so lingeringly ill with 'flu and colds. Seems that a bright, cold crisp winter is better suited to the Canadian physique than the kind of hermaphrodite we've been through this year.

Besides the head, it's been a tough winter

on the other end, because of freezing rain. I wonder how many Canadians busted their bums this winter, slipping on ice.

Recently, I slithered out the back door, skidded down the back steps, and went on hands and knees to the car. Arrived at the school parking lot, which was like a skating rink, and almost wiped out a couple of cars when I tried to stop.

Crept from car to school like ancient Chinese coolie. Score for the day was: one teacher with badly broken wrist, one teacher with badly wrenched back, one teacher's wife with badly bent head.

Didn't mind the broken wrist. It was only a guidance teacher. But I was fed up with the rest. The wrenched back belonged to one of my English teachers, and I had two missing already.

He'd come down his (unsalted) front steps, taken a flier, and landed on his not inconsiderable back. Thought he'd shake off the pain and shock, drove his daughter to school, and by this time was ready to head for the hospital. Had just checked in to tell the great white sahibs of his intentions, when he got a phone call saying his wife had gone down their steps (still unsalted) in similar fashion, knocking her head hard on every step. They went off to the hospital hand in hand.

I can put up with teachers staying home

with minor things like heart attacks, but when they take a day off for a twisted back, just because they can't get out of their car, or up from a chair, that's a bit much, forcing me to soldier on with hangnails and a corn on the sole of my foot.

Hoping to cheer myself up, I took a look at the fashion page in the newspaper, featuring the new spring models by Chanel of Paris.

Thank the Lord I'm not a woman. That peek at the paper would have plunged me into a deep depression. Here are some of the items: "The deceptively demure dinner dress in navy silk with a wide waistline defined by stitching, \$1,150; the revised Chanel suit has a cropped jacket over a slender skirt, \$1,950, worn over a tucked silk blouse, \$500. Separates are a \$795 knit cardigan and a wrap skirt, \$475.

How would you like to read that if your old man had just been laid off, indefinitely? For a miserable \$4,800 you get a dinner dress, a suit, and a casual outfit. None of which you could wear more than once, twice at the outside.

Some idiot once remarked that the poor are always with us. They are indeed, but that's obvious. Not so obvious is the fact that the rich are always with us, come hell, high water, shaky economy, unemployment, downright depression.

Something else that failed to cheer me up this winter was The Night of the Long Knives, when the Tory party once more made a national ass of itself by indulging in its favorite game: cutting its leader into large chunks and throwing them to the wolves. Hear those Liberals laughing?

Oh, the winter hasn't been all dark and gloomy. My tailpipe has not fallen off. Yet. My rubber boots haven't sprung a leak. My wife has wracked up neither the car nor the garage, as is her wont.

One more cheery note. My old lady finally bought a stereo outfit, and she plays it so loud she can't talk to me, though she tries, oh, she tries, mouthing words while I just put my hand to my ear. Sometimes I even get the paper read.

And there's a bonus. The kids gave us a ragtime and a couple of jazz records for Christmas. After forcing the classics on longsuffering me for years, the old girl has discovered she loves jazz.

Unfortunately, she has insomnia, and gets up about 4.30 a.m. About 5 a.m., I am awakened by the booming of ragtime, dixieland, or far-out modern jazz shaking the very foundations. I like it, but there is a time and a place.

Yes, it's been an odd sort of winter. How about yours?

Personal care, staff praised Survey gives HDH excellent rating

by Ron Johnson

Results of a survey administered to patients about to be discharged from Huronia District Hospital, reveal that the public holds a very high opinion of the services at HDH.

The poll was taken from a group of approximately 120 people, although only 27 have responded to date.

The survey was entitled the "We care what you think survey", and dealt with the peoples' reactions to the patients' comfort, care received, admission, meals, and general ratings.

Respondees were asked to answer several questions on each topic, and answer yes, no, or no comment.

All agreed that the hospital rooms were well-decorated, clean, well supplied with linens etc., and privacy was respected.

Two people thought that smoking wasn't adequately controlled, and one person thought there was too much noise.

Some comments regarding patient comfort were:

"There weren't any ashtrays in the lounge

areas."

"The staff was exceptionally good and courteous."

All the respondees thought the personal care and staff co-operation were excellent. Nursing staff were rated as prompt, efficient, and considerate by all who answered. Here is a typical comment on patient care from the survey.

"I was in the maternity section of hospital. All the nurses were great, supportive, helpful, making my stay as pleasant as possible."

Those detractors of the hospital's services dealt with the food and feeding of patients. Two people thought that the variety of food was insufficient. Two others thought that the food was not served appetizingly enough, while yet another two thought that the food was not served at the proper temperature.

Questions relating to meals were to be answered considering that the patients' diet may have been restricted by the menu.

Here are some comments on the dietary services at Huronia District Hospital.

"No consideration for children's appetite or

taste. Parent did not see menu."

"The spaghetti sauce could have meat much firmer with smooth tomato sauce served over spaghetti. Would look more pleasing to people who are not too well."

"The meals were excellent. The meats and vegetables were cooked to perfection."

Overall, 24 patients rated HDH as excellent,

with three giving it a "good" rating.

This tends to shed some light on HDH as a first rate facility. Perhaps in summation, the best analysis of HDH comes from another quote from the survey.

"So much nicer than a big hospital. You are treated like a human being."

Janitor winner of \$100,000.

Edward Yon of William Street, Midland, was a big winner in a recent Wintario draw, winning \$100,000. Yon plans to return to school.

Another Wintario draw winner, in the March 3 draw, is Evelyn Grange, 66, of Waubaushene. She is married and has four children.

And on Feb. 19, Ann Adamson, 65, of Elizabeth Street, Midland, won \$13,177.50 in a Lottario. She is married and has one son and one daughter.

Healthy shot in the arm: MPP

County of Simcoe, according to Simcoe East MPP (and former county warden) Al McLean has received a healthy shot in the arm thanks to a federal-provincial grant of \$161,800.

The money is part of \$194,500 the county has earmarked to refurbish and landscape county properties as well as repair and classify library books under the county's care.

Best of luck Brian— show the world!

BRIAN ORSER, Penetanguishene's figure skating sensation, who skates out of the Midland Figure Skating Club, competes this week in the World's Figure Skating Competitions in Helsinki.

Orser, Canada's three-time senior men's champion, hopes to find himself in the top three when the event wraps up.

He's got the moves to do so. We'll all be pulling for him back here in Huronia.

Best of luck, Brian.