

Shirley Whittington



The mawkish fuss surrounding the sea gull beamed at a Bluejay game by a sharp-eyed Yankee has largely subsided, but around here folks are still talking about it. There are some who would like Yankee outfielder Dave Winfield to run for mayor.

This Georgian Bay town is sea-gull city. At the town dock or down at the park, gulls wheel and scream and whitewash everything in their flight path. We have a special name for them around here. It is composed of two words. The second is Hawk. The first rhymes with sit.

That fowl strike at the ball game resulted in the Yankee outfielder being charged with cruelty to animals. I am impressed with the diligence of the cop who laid the charge and I would invite him to come some night to our local race track to watch the wild-eyed terror in the eyes of the horses as they are whipped across the finish line. Or perhaps he could walk the beat in Quebec city, where tired nags pull well-fed tourists around in buggies.

Sea gulls, if they wished, could exert massive retribution on local baseball fans.

One flyover by the city's massed sea gull population would bring new meaning to the word "whiteout." Let them build a domed stadium if they need one, but it should have a steeply pitched roof.

There is a beachfront area of Toronto called Leslie Spit, where an ornithologist measured in 1973, a population of ten to twenty pair of ring-billed gulls. Less than ten years later in 1982 he counted them again and came up with a figure of 75,000 pair in the same spot. Talk about the revenge of the cradle!

A naturalist friend tells me that yes, we do have an extremely high gull population, partly because gulls are very adaptable. They'll happily nest in a garbage dump and although their natural diet is fish and worms, they have learned to love french fries and peanut butter sandwiches.

People feed gulls, sometimes unwittingly. More than one kid has put an ice cream bar down for one second while he unlocked his bike, to have it scooped up by a marauding gull.

Tern again!

Casual picnickers who feel sorry for a beady-eyed gull standing on one foot, and uttering piteous throaty 'orks' will compassionately toss a crust. Immediately screaming hordes descend and behave like kids at a Kiss concert.

Gulls have no serious predators aside from the occasional ball player. Peregrine falcons eat gulls, but how many of them do you see around?

(Actually, you might see a Peregrine at an airport. One large Canadian airport has a resident falconer who uses a trained bird to keep gulls away from the big jets.)

Around here, gulls serve as alarm clocks on garbage day. As soon as the sun rises, they are screaming up and down the street, ripping open green garbage bags and delving for snacks.

My casual observations of local gulls lead me to believe that they do not stand still for anything. If you heave a wadded-up piece of newspaper at them in an effort to drive them away from your picnic table, they shriek with glee and call their friends over. I find it hard

to believe that Toronto's celebrated ornithological casualty didn't hear or see the deadly baseball before it connected with his dumb little bird brain.

My theories are as follows: The bird was either dead or drunk or both before the ball hit him.

The bird was simply a decoy used to attract gull friends.

The bird was actually a plastic gull—a natural successor to the pink flamingo craze.

Anyway the wave of sentiment upon which the dead gull is riding may well make a hero of him. He may become immortal like Richard Bach's Johnathan Livingston Seagull.

Watch out for a gull called Ernest—on T-shirts, posters, cartoons and other commemorative junk.

How do I know the gull's name was Ernest? I tried to interview the pathologist who conducted the birdly autopsy. The girl who answered the phone said, "He can't talk to you right now. He's working. In dead Ernest."

Bill Smiley



Do you have a personal physical problem? Leukemia? Touch of cancer? Heart spasms? Crippling arthritis? Emphysema? Old age?

Don't give it another thought. Just contact a fly-in to the northern bush, and your problem will be solved. Permanently.

I warned that I'd write another column about my "fishing weekend." Here goes.

What kind of people belong to a "camp" on a lake that you can't get to except by plane or by walking 10 miles through the bush? Ten miles through the bush, by the way is like 40 miles on a highway.

This is one of the first great lies you'll be told by the old-timers, who sit around drinking tea and talking about the big bear someone shot 40 years ago.

"How far is it?" you ask in your innocence, as some maniac suggests you go over to the next lake, through the woods, carrying a motor for a boat that might be there, because it used to be.

"Oh, about a mile," they say nonchalantly. Well, even an old duffer can walk a mile.

They haven't lied. Except to omit the facts that the mile is a mile up-hill, a mile down-hill, a mile to the east, and a mile to the west.

Nor have they lied about the bugs. "Better spray on some repellent. Could be a few flies."

Did you ever wonder why men who escape from prison and head into the Canadian bush in summer aren't even pursued by the

authorities?

They come whimpering out the nearest road or settlement, pleading to be locked up or shot immediately.

Aside from breaking an ankle on the "trail" which is pure jungle interlaced with rocks, a mile trip through the bush would make a session with the Gestapo a Sunday School picnic.

Most of us can blow or wave away a mosquito, swat a fly, demolish a bumblebee with a newspaper.

How many of us can annihilate a so-called deer fly, the size of a sparrow, who fastens on one's neck, and proceeds to dine leisurely, regardless of swipes at him with tackle boxes, gas cans, and fishing rods?

Well, I can't. And only the lurching, blasphemous, old fighter pilot ahead of me kept every bone in my 63-year-old frame functioning. He was 65. Honor prevailed.

We made it. And both politely but firmly refused our old buddy's sprightly request next morning that we take "another little hike" to see "another great lake." By this time, the guests had agreed that one lake looked much like another.

What kind of people would do this to you? They weren't Gestapo or KGB or CIA. They were just a bunch of ordinary Canadians who had enough sense to know that bass don't bite in hot weather, and wanted to see what was left of some old fighter pilots whose daring-do

Roughing it: part two

the previous night had piqued their curiosity. Boy, we talked a good war, but they won it.

Monsters? No. Jack Ryan, a lawyer, was the instigator, and I think he loved every moment of our torture. He probably still hates me for nearly clipping off the tail off his Spitfire about 80 years ago.

His other victim was Ren Henderson, another old fighter pilot, an Australian who married and settled in Canada after the war, brought up in New Guinea, flew in the Aleutians, instructed flying at Camp Borden when I was frantically trying to get my wings, flew two tours of Ops in WWII, and is a raving naturalist who says things like, "What is that lovely little lizard on your neck?"

Ryan's accomplices were permanent members of the camp. Everybody seemed related. Harold and Ken Rogers were half-brothers, with almost three decades between them.

Bill Turner, a millionaire who quit school at 15, was a sort of uncle to Andy Simone, a civil servant who can hardly wait to get out.

Ryan and I are old buddies, based on a brief relationship in Britain about 40 years ago. He and Henderson were on the same Spitfire squadron. Henderson and I have a mutual old sidekick, Tony Frombola. And so it went.

Ryan is the complete Irishman. Life of the party. Never stops working or talking. Listens but doesn't seem to. If he isn't talking, he's singing. Fit as a fiddle. Trust him with

my wife or my life.

Harold? Old-timer, retired, 84 stories about hunting. Crafty poker player. Ken? Can do anything with motors, refrigerators, stoves, you name it. Friendly, open good-hearted, ends every sentence with, "eh?" A real Canadian.

Bill Turner? Hell of a good cook for a rich man. A little to the right of Attila the Hun socially. Caustic wit, but never wounding.

Andy? Looked like he'd wandered in from a Disney picture. Never stopped working. Didn't drink or smoke. Quiet, witty. Sweet-natured. Dumb like a fox at poker. "Whadda I do now?" and he's sitting there with four aces.

I could write a column about this weekend, but of course I won't.

Just a couple of general observations. The language was the worst since the last day in the teachers' lounge.

Yet everybody's wife was sacred. No suggestive remarks. Only bouquets. And Bill Turner's wife, Flo, makes the best ?&\$!! marmalade in Texas. She cuts every single strip of orange by hand, even though Bill tells her it's !\$\$\$? stupid.

She does. And maybe it is. But I wouldn't trade it.

Ryan, I'll get you for this. Turn over the legal affairs of my entire family to you. That'll flip your flaps.

Travel news, views



by Carol Merkley

Cruising today is basically a casual, comfortable affair without the stringent dress requirements once part of a cruise vacation. People who like to travel "light" can do so but there's also ample opportunity for giving in to the urge to dress to the hilt—in a different outfit—every night.

You'll need three categories of dress: shipboard day wear, evening wear and clothes to wear sightseeing at the ports of call. A good rule of thumb for port dress in the tropics as well as in foreign capitals is to wear what you would for summer sightseeing in a major Canadian or U.S. city.

The halter tops and shorts that are perfect on board are generally inappropriate on land. Another generalization applicable to cruising is to wear what you'd find suitable at a country club or resort keeping the mood sporty by day and softly romantic in the evenings.

Women who enjoy dressing formally, should bring a long gown or long skirt or perhaps a pants outfit, in addition to a few short dressy dresses. For those who prefer less formal clothing, skirts or pants and tops are suitable. Good walking shoes for shore excursions, sandals for poolside, a sweater or shawl for after dinner strolls, rainwear just-

in-case, and a sun hat or visor are among the less obvious, but necessary items to include.

Men should include the following items in addition to the usual sports and dresswear appropriate for any vacation: a dark suit and or dinner jacket; a sport jacket and dress slacks; casual slacks or jeans; shorts; a sweater or light parka; sandals and comfortable walking shoes; and a golf hat or visor for sun protection. Men and women should bring tennis and or golf wear, if they plan to play.

It's a good idea to bring along a large size tote bag to carry ashore at the various ports call. You'll find it handy at the beach, in town, or as a convenient way to carry gifts and your

camera equipment.

During a one week cruise in the Caribbean, you might also keep in mind that the best masquerade costume win prizes!

Tipping is a personal matter. It's entirely voluntary but usually customary. If you feel you've had good service and you would like to tip, we suggest \$5 to \$6 per person per day, depending on the quality of service received. Further details are available from the Cruise Director.

These tips are usually given on the last evening of the cruise. Tips to service personnel such as wine stewards are generally given at the time the service is rendered.

McLean's report from Queen's Park 'people on welfare have problems making ends meet'

by Allan K. McLean, M.P.P.
Simcoe East

Since the summer recess of the Ontario Legislature, I have had the pleasure of spending more time in my Orillia constituency office, helping the people of our riding with their questions and concerns.

Although there are many indications that we are moving into a period of increased economic growth, welfare is still an issue that is on the minds of most people who contact me.

In Simcoe County, welfare assistance is administered through the county level of government. The Ontario government shares

in the cost of providing County-wide welfare, and larger centres, such as Orillia, help out by supplying services and administration.

The county hires field workers to help and advise those on welfare throughout Simcoe County. There are at least two field workers in Orillia; one to cover the Townships of Orillia, Mara and Rama; one for Oro and Medonte; one in Midland; and one to look after the needs of Victoria Harbour, Port McNicoll and Tay.

The number of field workers in any part of Simcoe East gives an indication of the number of people on welfare in that area.

At times, people on welfare have problems

making ends meet. Many are desperate and near the end of their financial rope. In addition, they are disillusioned after so many weeks without work, and no success in finding a new job.

Current unemployment has made the job of county fieldworkers especially difficult. These fieldworkers are assigned the responsibility of helping people on welfare better themselves as well as co-operate with the county inspectors who ensure that all who are receiving welfare are completely eligible. It seems incredible, but even in these tough times there are those who still try to "rip-off" the system and receive welfare benefits even

though they do not deserve them.

From time to time people have contacted my constituency office to complain that they are being unjustly treated by County welfare officers.

As your provincial representative, there is little I can do to help personally. I do not know the details of every welfare case in Simcoe East and can only advise the county welfare department that I have received a complaint.

I frequently meet with officials of Simcoe welfare and the local fieldworkers. They are a dedicated, hard-working group doing a good job under very difficult circumstances.