

## Shirley Whittington



Yesterday I was dusting a high shelf in our bathroom -- an activity I perform perhaps once a year. Suddenly a small cardboard cylinder rolled down on my head. It was the empty core from a roll of toilet paper, and it bore the scribbled words, "Fully utilised", followed by a date and the initials of a local loveable who is known for practical jokes.

That's the kind of gentle joke I like and it brought a smile to my usually grouchy face. Most practical jokes are impractical and as funny as an operating Osterizer with the cover off.

Bathrooms seem to inspire practical jokes. I have a friend who, at parties, seeks out family lavs and ties knots in whatever she finds hanging on the back of the door. And who can forget the old Saran Wrap under the toilet seat trick?

Some of our neighbours are involved in a long running gag that involves a mysterious migration of pink flamingoes. A colony of the stiff-legged lawn ornaments travels from house to house, always under cover of darkness. You'd never believe how agile and flexible the little devils are!

We know a couple of guys who pulled the same stunt with a badly taxidermed duck which one of them had bought at a flea market. The moth-eaten carcass travelled back and forth from house to house in Christmas wrap, in lunch pails, in special delivery parcels and gun cases. The climax came when one family asked the other for Thanksgiving dinner. Guess what was on the covered serving platter?

My mother was a sensible, sometimes formidable Scot and one can scarcely imagine her serving tissue paper sandwiches to her bridge club or sewing up the legs of honeymooner's pyjamas.

She did both. She was repaid in kind the night somebody slipped two fat black cats into our house. We already had one fat black cat, brilliantly named Blackie. My mother put Blackie out three times that night, and went to bed feeling faint and disoriented.

I admire the finesse and skill that went into a practical joke allegedly perpetrated by an British actor who wasn't keen about attending rehearsal one May afternoon. Assuming the voice of a starchy British nursing matron, he

## Funny business

called the stage director and informed him that the actor in question had been overcome by a mysterious illness and was in isolation at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. When the director asked to speak to the doctor in charge, the "nurse" obligingly transferred the call, with suitable blips and clicks. The "doctor" assured the director that the actor was too ill to come to the phone, too ill to receive visitors and certainly too ill to attend rehearsal. When the actor strolled in to the Theatre much later in the afternoon, everybody was so happy to see him whole and healthy they forgave him instantly.

I was marginally involved once in an elaborate practical joke that involved a local professional, a portable telephone and a merry bunch of New Year's Eve celebrants. The chap upon whom the stunt was pulled vowed vengeance and I hear he's laying for me, even though I was but a tiny cog in the whole sill machinery. Anyway, he's got me good and scared and I've been looking over my shoulder ever since.

I thought he'd gotten me a few months ago when I got a phone call from an out-of-town bank manager who told me his staff had

discovered, in a flurry of fiscal housecleaning, a forgotten bank account in my name. The account had over one thousand dollars in it.

"Just like the Monopoly game?" I said. "Bank error in my favour? Collect \$1000?" "Apparently", he said.

Highly suspicious and prepared for a disappointing denouement, I travelled to the bank. It was all true. The money was there and I had it transferred to my account.

A few weeks ago, I got a rather huffy letter from a provincial bureaucrat. Through a clerical glitch, government funds had been automatically (but mistakenly) deposited in my account. The bank had indeed made an error, but not in my favour. The boys in the Ministry wanted their money back, ASOP.

What a punch line -- a punch-in-the head line.

I much prefer the gentle joke embodied in the empty toilet paper roll. E, who flung it knew full well I wouldn't dust up there for half a year.

"Fully utilised" eh? What a bummer. I'm still trying to figure out who the joke's on.

## Bill Smiley



Well, you can't say it hasn't been a hummer of a summer, with all those bright hot days beckoning everybody to the golf course and the beach.

Why is it then, that when I go into the local delicatessen to pick up a bit of grubbery, there are 44 women ahead of me, waving their numbered cards, punching, jostling, pointing at six kinds of cold meat, and shouting: "A little of that, cut real thin. Half a pound of that, in one pound chunks. Three-quarter pounds of the potato salad, no more, it makes me fat; two pounds of the pickled beans - well, no - well, OK, I'll have only a spoonful?"

Who's at the beach? Who's at the golf course? Well, I know who's at the beach. The cops. I took the boys out for a swim one blazing afternoon, found what I thought was a fairly legal spot, even though it said "No Parking," and it cost me 10 bucks. Why aren't our boys in blue out chasing motorcycle gangs, instead of hanging tickets on dotting (doty?) grandfathers! I guess it's fairly simple. They're not going to be beaten up by the odd grandfather.

Who's at the golf course? I don't know. I'm not going to thump around on my tin foot checking what idiots are hitting or missing a

little white sphere when the temperature and humidity are up around 100 degrees. F that is.

Just to add to my summer fun is a busted eardrum that isn't healing. But even that has advantages. If I push my finger into my good ear, I can't hear a word my wife is saying. It drives her woolly, because I've been pretending for years that I was getting deaf when she went into a tirade.

"Why haven't you trimmed the hedge?" Eh? swept the ledge? "Why don't you get the grass cut?" "Watch your language, lady." "Why aren't you useful about the house like other husbands?" "Eh, I wouldn't be seen dead in a Mother Hubbard?"

Just to add to my summer fun, my English staff has disintegrated, in almost one swell foop. One lady, an outstanding teacher, has become sick of the system, pulled out and started her own business. Another has gone on half-time, so he can write poetry. Two others are knocked out for some time with heart trouble. Another has been having a baby, with six months leave. Her kid will be ready for Day-Care by the time she gets back.

I'll probably wind up with a couple of jocks who don't know the difference between, "I seen the both of them," and "The whole team

## Those summer 'daze'

wore gloves on its right hand," or "Shakespeare wrote in longhand because the typewriter was not yet invented."

However, as summer wanes, don't think we haven't had a swell time.

My wife took a music course, driving 60 miles a day to do it. I had some nice trips, too To the beach - \$10. Eight miles.

We talk vaguely about going to Stratford or the Shaw Festival, and wind up watching a re-run of "Dallas."

I sit in the backyard trying to get inspiration from the trees and all I can see is dust, and all I can hear is bulldozers.

Speaking of dust, that's all you'll be able to see of me even if it's only snow-dust, come Dec. 31.

And I'm sure you had a lovely summer, too, with all those relatives dropping in, just at meal-time.

You're having two slices of ham and a tomato, and a big bowl of canned soup, and a whole carload of friends whom you invited to drop in, six years ago, arrive at the door, friendly as all get out and hungry as hell.

No, no, they wouldn't think of staying for lunch. It would be an imposition, which it is. Half an hour later, they've drunk all your beer, commented on you "lovely" house, and owned the canned ham you were saving for an

emergency, gobbled the fresh corn you were saving for supper, and cleaned up your fresh green beans.

You don't even know whether the guy's name is Rob or Rod, or whether the women's name is Myrtle or Marg. You just sit there in the debris, not caring, and hating their kids for breaking a branch off your lilac tree.

Summers, on the whole, though, are therapeutic. They make you realize how horrible winter is in this country. They make you realize you are too fat and blowsy, and that, next winter, you're going to ski and walk in the snow, and not be such slob, eating pig food and lying around like a eunuch or a harem member.

And, of course, when winter comes, you realize that you must keep up your strength by eating lots of carbohydrates to beat the cold, and watching TV "to keep up with things," and that next summer you're going to exercise and get fit and brown by running down in the car to the supermarket, and jogging all the way from the car to the house with the groceries, and striding angrily across to the boy who cuts your lawn and demanding why he hasn't cut it.

And all the time, millions of kids are starving in Asia and Africa. Serves them right. They should have been born in Canada.

## Travel news, views



by CAROL MERKLEY

Red Seal Tours of Toronto will offer a new winter program to the Florida Keys with weekly departures from Toronto commencing Oct. 1, 83. Passengers will fly via Eastern Airlines to Miami and they will have a choice of three itineraries. All programmes will include an Avis car rental.

The Key Explorer is a one-week fly-drive holiday featuring Key Largo, Isla Morada, Marathon and Key West. The Hemingway is a one-week vacation

at Key West with a choice of three properties. Howard Johnson's, Ramada Inn and the Best Western Ambassador. The Bal Harbour combo is a one-week stay at Key West followed by one week at the Sheraton Bal Harbour. Prices commence at \$599, each of two.

**COSTA FROM MIAMI**  
Costa Cruises is offering three-night sailings from Miami to the Bahamas aboard the SS Amerikanis. Passengers sail from Dodge Island, in

Miami's core, Friday afternoon. Arrival in Nassau is Saturday morning.

Optional shore excursions take travellers on a city tour, scuba diving, diving, snorkelling, or on a glass-bottom boat ride. The ship's lounges remain open Saturday evening, although the casino is closed. Nassau offers the Paradise Island Hotel and Casino or the Playboy Casino on Cable Beach. The cruise terminates Monday morning in Miami.

Rates start at \$290 U.S. per person double during "value" season and \$310 per person double during "peak" season. This is a good way to sample cruising.

**DO YOU WANT A SLOT MACHINE?**

Hit the Jackpot at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, and you get to take the machine home with you. Free pulls on the "Ming Machine" may win an

## New program to Florida Keys

antique auto. **FALL IS A GREAT TIME TO GO**

The busiest travelling times for Canadians are July, August, December, February and March. Travelling in the Fall, Spring and January can mean substantial savings, less crowds and ideal weather in some destinations. Fall is the best time to visit the Orient, when it's not as hot, humid or rainy.

There are more rainy days during the winter in Hawaii than in the Fall.

The South Pacific is in their warm spring and early summer. The weather in Florida and the Bahamas can be cool in December, January and February. Bermuda is still pleasant, ideal for golf or tennis. Portugal, Spain and the Riviera are still hot. Fall is also

traditionally a favourite cruising time, and many ships offer special sailings as a transition from summer to winter schedules.

Closer to home, there are some delightful Fall Coach Tour itineraries to capture the beauty unique to this time of the year. If Fall vacation sounds ideal for you, pick up some brochures and plan your Fall vacation.

## Queen's Park Report

GEORGE W. TAYLOR QC, MPP  
Simcoe Centre, Solicitor General

Recently there has been a decrease in the number of deaths and injuries on Ontario roads. The reduction is due to a large degree to the province's safety programs. In addition, stricter enforcement of the seat belt law, emphasis on driver education and stricter control on drinking drivers have all played an important part.

Road accidents are the responsibility of the people using Ontario's highways and streets: pedestrians, passengers and drivers alike. A series of reports from the Premier's Inter-

ministry Task Force on Drinking and Driving will emphasize the responsibility we all undertake together.

It is important both to educate the public about the distressing problem of drinking and driving and to look towards a means of alleviating it. The staff committee of the Task Force has gathered information extensively in an effort to arrive at a strategy to deal with this problem. The involvement of community organizations, local governments, law enforcement agencies and various individuals is considered vital to the resolution of the problem.

## Road accidents everyone's responsibility

The dimensions of the tragedy incurred by drinking and driving cannot be over-emphasized. In Ontario, we cannot tolerate a situation where alcohol is involved every day in the deaths of two people and 81 motor vehicle crashes. More than half the drivers killed each year had been drinking. On Ontario roads, late at night, one of every eight drivers has been drinking. In 1981, 45,910 drivers were convicted of drinking and driving offences.

Until the people of Ontario decide that it is no longer acceptable, drinking and driving will continue to be the number one killer of

people under the age of 30 despite increased law enforcement, better public education, stiffer penalties from the courts or changes in the laws.

The combination of alcohol abuse and driving is a threat to the safety of our friends and families. The threat can be minimized and the present campaign can truly be a success when the attitude of the public is altered to acknowledge the tragedy of drinking and driving.

By starting today, the people of Ontario working together can ensure that the present campaign will not be necessary in the future.