

## Shirley Whittington



I'm sitting here looking at a pair of blue knitted booties. Each one is less than three inches long. My thumb fits nicely inside one of them.

They were the first footwear of our second son—the one who just careened around his first quarter century. Twenty-five years ago, when he came home from the hospital in those tiny tassled boots, he was a skinny little preemie with legs and arms like pipe-cleaners.

I have always known it was the love of two grandmothers that brought that brittle little bundle into robust babyhood. Their devotion (and their knitting needles) worked wonders. By the time the kid was a year old he was eating like a vacuum cleaner—a practice he continued until he grew into manhood and had to buy his own groceries.

Although he spent his youth in hand-me-downs, he (like all the junior Whittingtons)

came home from the hospital in a brand-new, custom fitted ensemble, knitted by his grandmother, the champion knitter of the world. For years, that lady churned out little boots, tiny mitts and sweaters, bonnets big enough for oranges, wooly pants, and cosy shawls. She kept our kids in stitches.

Now Granny's loving knitting has been recognized by medical science as something approaching a miracle drug. A news release from London, Ontario tells about a platoon of local grandmothers who knit tiny booties and doll-sized bonnets for the premature babies born in St. Joseph's Hospital. A hospital spokesman gives one of the reasons for dressing the frail little babes in hand-knit woolies as follows: "If a baby has to utilize a lot of his caloric intake for thermal regulation...he doesn't grow as fast...the knitted outfits will help to control the body temperature which will facilitate growth as

they pick up weight faster."

I think that means knitted things keep babies warm.

Grandmas have known that for years. "If you want to cure the colic," our Grandma used to say (as her knitting needles clicked furiously) "you have to keep those little feet warm."

The St. Joseph's Hospital staff also say that dressing premature infants in hand-knitted togs makes them look like full term babies—cuddly and less breakable. True. When I first saw the owner of those blue booties, as he lay shivering in the hospital greenhouse tastefully dressed in an unpinned diaper and some plastic tubing, I really wondered if I should take him back for a refund. It wasn't until he was all done up in Grandma's knit-one, purl-one that he seemed like a regular little person.

Now machines knit and grandmothers sell

real estate and little babies are usually encased in fuzzy, domed jump-suits. They look like little pastel sausages.

The sausage skins are blissfully easy to wash and dry. They stay done up and babies can't kick them off or wiggle out of them.

Still, when you're feeling poorly, there's nothing like a good huddle under a hand-knitted something or other. Even the nightly news on television seems less chilling when viewed from underneath a hand-wrought afghan.

I think St. Joseph's Hospital is on to something mighty fine here. I like to think of those volunteer knitters turning out cosy bonnets and sweaters for underdone preemies. I like to think of the babies themselves wriggling their toes around in booties made by somebody who thinks they're pretty special.

Keeping babies in stitches is a good thing. It makes them smile.

## Bill Smiley



Where do the summers go? I know where the winters go. They go on and on and on. But Canadian summers seem to pounce out of a frigid spring, flourish like an exotic plant, and wither and die two months later.

I was looking forward to this past summer. Lots of golf, swimming, loafing, reading, a good visit with my grandboys, and arriving back at school for the last four months before I quit—tanned, fit, keen. Planned to do some fishing, a lot of walking, and some traveling, probably to the Maritimes.

Well, as Casey Stengle of the old Brooklyn Dodgers used to say, "Wait till next year. We'll murder the bums."

I've played golf twice, despite the beautiful weather, because I haven't had a leg to stand on: my right one. Next year I'm going to have it sawed off at the ankle and a tin foot implanted, as the great Douglas Bader did, when he lost both legs in a flying accident, got some artificial ones, and went back into combat as a fighter pilot.

Next summer, I'm going to swim every day at one of the great beaches in Canada, even though I have two perforated ear-drums. I'm going to the Maritimes if I have to hitchhike. I'm going to catch a trout if I have to resort to a stocked pond.

I can't whine too much. I did have a good visit with the grandboys. I have a new one now. He used to be Balind, but the kids at

school teased him for having such a funny name, so he forthrightly changed it to Ben. And Ben he is now. Not many people change their name at seven.

I also did a lot of reading and loafing, preferably at the same time. But it's hard to do both at once when your wife is talking ceaselessly about how she has stopped biting her fingernails, how she is planning to lose weight (and sneaks down in the middle of the night and eats four butter tarts), what happened at her summer course in music, and how many big bills are coming in against a rapidly shrinking bank account.

I planned to do some work on The Jungle—the bushes around our property. Too hot. The Jungle is creeping closer every day, and I would not be surprised any day now to see an orangutan leap from one of the oaks onto the roof.

There have been diversions, of course. The street on which we live was invaded by a construction crew about mid-August, and they will finish about the end of this week.

That keeps one on one's toes. There's nothing like the growling of a bulldozer outside your bedroom window at 7 a.m.

It's a grand summer operation, though, for elderly gentlemen, kids, and housewives with nothing better to do, than stand around and supervise a construction job.

Parking your car is something else. The

## Well, that shoots summer

construction crew digs a chasm 10 feet deep on one side of the street, and then fills it in again. Don't ask me why. They cheerfully throw in some gravel so that you can get into your garage.

Next morning, you saunter out about 8 a.m. to go and buy some milk or something. Right behind your driveway is the Colorado Canyon, and you'd need wings to get your car out, and the crew is up at the other end of the street.

It takes a few days of hairy maneuvering before you give up, and stick your car in the driveway of a kindly neighbor, on another street.

The big machines are not like puppets, either. They can do a lot, but my front lawn looks as though a herd of elephants had spent the night there, having a square dance.

Late summer was saddened a bit by the death of Ted Reeve, the great old sports writer and athlete. He was 81, and some reporter friends said he had at least four terminal illnesses about 20 years ago.

A huge hunk of bone and gristle, with a great broken beak of a nose and hands like a couple of gnarled frying pans, Ted Reeve was a gentle man and a gentleman, except when he was clobbering somebody with a lacrosse stick, or pounding an opposing lineman into pulp.

First time I met him was in the Toronto Men's Press Club, where he was wont to hold court with a collection of cronies. I walked in,

a complete stranger, ordered a beer and sat alone. Within five minutes, Ted beckoned me over to join the group. He didn't know who I was, didn't care, but out of sheer gregariousness, didn't want anyone to be left out. So there I was, a hick columnist, sitting with a group of top newspapermen of the day.

Every time I met him thereafter, he'd wave me over. He didn't even know my name, but called me "Warton," because I knew a Stevie Stephenson from Warton, against whose father Ted had played lacrosse six decades ago. "Dirtiest lacrosse player I ever met, but one of the best."

And finally, I have a letter from Mrs. Frederick E. Bevan of Vaynesboro, Georgia. She and her husband spent 40 years on the prairies "working our gun dogs." She still takes the Weyburn Review. Her brother-in-law was a P.O.W. in WWII, and she'd like to know where she could buy for him a copy of **Boys, Bombs, and Brussel Sprouts**, which I'd mentioned in this column.

Frankly, I don't know, Mrs. B. But it's out in paperback now, and I'll see that you get a copy, even if I have to send you my own. And thanks for your warm and generous letter.

So much for a beautiful summer. I hope you had one. My ear-drum goes "click" about once an hour. Maybe I should get a tin ear along with the tin foot, and a tin nose, which a doctor has been trying to get me to have straightened for 10 years. Any donors?

## North Simcoe news briefs

### Of interest to stroke victims

The first meeting of a new local group, the Stroke Recovery Association, will be held in the service room of Penetanguishene General Hospital on Oct. 11 at 1:30 p.m.

Stroke victims and members of their families and friends are invited. The association has educational, social, and remedial aspects, says Judy Thomas. More information is available from her by telephoning her at PGH.

### Tag Day gearing up for hospital

All systems are go for this week's Penetanguishene General Hospital Tag Day. It will be held on Oct. 7 and 8. More details appear in an advertisement elsewhere in today's newspaper.

### Town trio on TV

Midland's Mayor Al Roach, Reeve Bev Day and Alderman Ian Ross appeared on Cable TV, Monday night, to discuss Midland's bid to annex 2,600 acres from Tiny Township.

Near the end of the broadcast Mayor Roach suggested the local television station invite Township of Tiny law-makers to appear on TV to discuss why they are opposed to Midland annexing the lands in question along Highway 93 just west of Midland and south of Penetanguishene.

### And then the rains came...

A major downpour late Monday afternoon followed by another one yesterday morning soaked local lawns and fields.

It appears North Simcoe has endured more rain during the past week or so than it did throughout the entire summer of '83.

### We'll be eating turkey too, Mon.

This newspaper's office will be closed on Monday, Thanksgiving.

We will however publish newspapers next week as usual.

The management and staff of this newspaper extend warm Thanksgiving greetings to you all.

### Applicants' interviews today

Five applicants for the job of chief of police of Penetanguishene, chosen from among the group of applicants, are to be interviewed this afternoon.

Chief of Police Dennis Player left the town police force at the end of last July to take up a teaching position with Georgian College. Staff-Sergeant Don Westcott is the acting Chief of Police.

### Bird feeder building day at Wildlife Centre

Bring a child, a hammer and have fun building a bird feeder at the Wye Marsh Wildlife Interpretation Centre, Hwy. 12, Midland.

On Saturday, Oct. 8, the Friends of Wye Marsh are sponsoring a Bird Feeder Building Day between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. A limited number of kits may be purchased at \$3 each and assembled at the Centre.

A donation from the Georgian Bay Hunters and Anglers' Club has enabled the Friends to

produce simple yet attractive feeders that should give you and your child a great outdoor activity for Thanksgiving Saturday.

Other events taking place this day will be bird hikes, waterfowl identification films, a display of selected bird feed mixes and their recipes, a contest to guess the number of seeds in a jar and free handouts on the use and care of bird feeders.

Admission to these and all activities is free. Plan now to attend this family event. (526-7809).

### Chez News features Pension Huronie

Chez News, a monthly newsletter written for employees of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, associated crown agencies, housing authorities and their members, are being told to come to Penetanguishene.

"Looking for total immersion in French? "Here is good news for all you keen students of French who can't afford to travel to such exotic places as Tahiti or Saint Pierre and Miquelon," begins the newsletter for the month of September.

Described is Pension Huronie, through which a visitor can get a night's accommodation and breakfast with a French speaking family for \$25.

### There was no fire at Mitsubishi, Sun.

Midland firefighters answered a call to Mitsubishi on Sunday at 9:19 a.m. A malfunction in the direct alarm system to the fire hall triggered the general alarm.

### Fire Prevention Week church service planned

Firefighters associated with Simcoe County Mutual Fire Aid Association will be attending a church service this Sunday at 10 a.m. at Midland St. Paul's United Church.

The occasion will officially begin Fire Prevention Week.

### Costly barn fire quelled in Tiny Twp.

Firefighters from three Tiny Township volunteer brigades responded Saturday afternoon to a three-alarm on Con. 18, Tiny.

Lafontaine, Northwest Basin and Wyevale smoke-eaters were counted on to quell a stubborn barn fire on the farm of Cyril Robitaille.

Damage was extensive, reports Fire Chief Guy Maurice. Cause has been listed as "undetermined" at this time.

### Important seminar set for Alliston

Ontario Horticultural Association, District 16, will present a seminar on "Gardening under lights" on Saturday, Oct. 22 at St. John's United Church, Alliston. Guest speaker in the morning will be Mr. Fred Prescod, from the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton. In the afternoon, workshops will be held on a variety of topics, including civic beautification, flower shows, society budget and reports, nomination, directors and new members and youth.

### Local artist will be featured at museum

Paintings of Rolf Eckhardt, a local artist who lives in Midhurst, will be featured during October at the Cultural Wing of the Simcoe County Museum. His childhood interest in painting was revived when Eckhardt took a night course at Georgian College in the 1960's.

He has previously exhibited his landscapes and portraits in Barrie Art Club Gallery.

### Today's Quotes

"Can you imagine anyone as unhappy as a woman with a secret and a dead telephone?"