

Shirley Whittington



If you can't sleep, you can't sleep and you might as well face up to it. But here is a great mystery, worthy of a Royal Commission.

How can a person who falls asleep in front of a dynamite duo like Barbara Frum and Yasser Arafat, become as wakeful as a cricket when it's time for beddy-byes? Night after night I settle down for my selected hour of television, and go unconscious as soon as my bottom hits the Lazy-Boy. (Occasionally I have forced myself to remain awake for something very important by standing up. I've gotten drowsy and swayed, but never actually fallen over.)

After my hour of fighting Morpheus, I stagger upstairs, clean my teeth put on my sleepers and lie in bed, where I worry about not being able to sleep and how awful I'm going to feel in the morning.

How do the experts fight insomnia? An old friend used to get up and bake cookies in the middle of the night.

I know a whole family who when simultaneously attacked by wakefulness,

arose, made a mess of pancakes and then ate them in bathrobed camaraderie.

Reading monotonous books usually courts the sandman. I've kept Scott's *Ivanhoe* on the bedside table for years in case of insomniac emergency. My great-grandmother claimed cousinship with the windy Sir Walter and I have always felt some familial duty to read his stuff. And you think your relatives are boring?

But lately, when the eyes refuse to close, I listen to the voices of America on my pillow speaker.

A pillow speaker is a round flattish little thing that connects to my bedside radio and joins me to the midnight weirdies of the USA. For when the sun goes down and Canadian radio wattage weakens, American broadcasts leak across the border and suddenly the night is dense with sincere, caring conversations.

Here's a typical interchange:

"Hello. Boston? You're on the air."

Hello? Larry? Am I on?"

"You're on the air. Turn your radio down."

"Oh. Hi Larry. This is Annette from Boston. Listen Larry. I love your show. Really. I listen to all the talk shows and you're the greatest."

"Thanks. What's on your mind tonight, Annette?"

"Well Larry I was wondering how many of your listeners had noticed that Nancy Reagan has changed her hair colour? It used to be sort of a beige peach, but lately it's more like a blond minky colour. Unless the colour on my set is off."

"Nancy dyes her hair?"

"Oh they both do, Larry. They both do. Didn't you know the Democrats call them the Disposable Dyed-pair? Isn't that cute Larry?"

"Yeah. Listen, Annette. I got another caller on the line, here..."

"Okay Larry. Can I just say hello to my grandmother in Wickshire, Maine? She loves your show too."

And on and on it goes—hour after hour of clotted anonymous voices, pontificating,

inquiring, mauling, telling jokes singing and getting their dogs to perform on air." ("Listen Larry. I taught him to bark hello, just for you.")

There are the shy talk-show virgins who confess softly, "I'm a first-time caller, Larry."

And there are the shameless unbelievers who say, "I've never told anybody this Larry (except the several thousand insomniacs who are listening to your show) but I'm tired of my wife's bad breath and I've started cheating on her. Is this a wrong thing, Larry?"

What a miracle. Imagine me, a sleepless aural voyeur, connected with a spaghetti-sized wire to dozens of lonely compulsive talkers in Florida, Maine, New Jersey and Washington state. All of them are talking, talking, talking, talking...

Oops. Almost dropped off to sleep there. See what I mean? There's nothing as soporific as the sound of a human voice.

Zzzzzzzzzzz.

I hear America yapping

Bill Smiley



A few years ago I swore I'd never write another column about Remembrance Day.

Not only was it hard on me, emotionally, but I felt that if I continued, I'd start falling into clichés, like throwing the torch to the next generation.

Well, we didn't throw them the torch to carry high, and Flanders fields are old bones now, but the torch is there—a different kind.

The torch, not of gallantry and defending certain ideals, and being prepared to die for them, but the torch of terrorism, vicious hatred of other colors, religions and political systems, and new wars and slaughter in the paper every day.

With another Remembrance Day, I must break my promise. An essay by Canadian Hugh MacLennan, called "Remembrance Day—2010 A.D.," reread after 10 years, brought home to me once again the utter folly of mankind, and his apparent obsession with destroying his own species.

Written in the 1950s, the essay is an ironic warning that is just as valid today as when it was written.

With prophetic insight, he saw the arms race building until the human race is in the delicate egg-shell it is today: constant escalation of nuclear weapons, paranoid

suspicion of the "enemy", and teetering on the tightrope of oblivion.

He foresaw a space war, which is just over the horizon, if something worse doesn't happen first.

We hate to think of it. We go right on, grunting around in our little world, whining about taxes, beefing about "the government", and stuffing our guts while half the world or more is literally starving.

Most of us are not on hard drugs. But most of us are on the soft kind, symbolized by television, which tells us that we'd be happy if we drank this beer, or used that shampoo, or used ever-thinner sanitary napkins, or ate Krinkly-Krak for breakfast. All lies, of course. Subtle, but lies.

And often symbolized by our "leaders", who lie to us until the truth comes up, then lie some more. And do not lead, but follow—the latest poll. A vote is more important than a good citizen: self-reliant, independent, thinking.

Doesn't it turn your guts a bit? It does mine. But, like everyone else, I'm too preoccupied with my busted shoulder, my pension, the constant demands of family, and my own comfort, to face the facts.

My question is, why?

I remember the first few times I marched in the Legion parade on Remembrance Day. Most of us were in our twenties. We looked with affectionate condescension on the "old guys" veterans of W.W.I. They were in their late 40's and 50's.

Now, most of the "old guys" are gone, except for a corporal's guard, and we cocky young strutters are the "old guys".

It's depressing, but the word that constantly forms in my mind is WHY?

Why did millions of young men go through the gruesome, bloody, insane danse macabre of World War I? Correction: millions of them did not "go through" it. They left their bones and pus and blood in little foreign places with funny names. And they left nations of weeping women and children.

Of course, they died to save democracy. That's what it said. Or, perhaps, because they followed the leadership of senile and or stupid leaders, who thought little of killing 100,000 men to gain a few hundred yards of mud.

Why did millions of young men, only two decades later, do it all over again? Of course, they were fighting for freedom from dictatorship, for "our way of life." Same old crap.

What was accomplished in two world wars?

Tens of millions killed, and the second time around, many of them civilians.

It kept down the surplus population, of course. And the tremendous damage to property kept our Western factories humming after each war, replacing what had been destroyed. Is that what it was all about?

Have brutality, torture, bloodshed taught mankind any sort of lesson? Obviously not. Korea, Viet Nam, the Middle East, Africa, India, South and Central America, have spawned more killing, more torture, more bloodshed, more two-bit dictators.

I don't care how right-wing or red-necked you are. Don't laugh at the peace marches. They seem to be the only thing, however incoherent and ineffective, that suggest any sanity in the modern world.

I take nothing from the dead of those wars. In the first one, they were my uncles. In the second, they were my comrades. I have a lifelong admiration, even love for them. They really believed in what they were dying for. Let them rest in peace.

But from their grumbling graves, as they look down, or up, at the insanity of today's arms race, the blind violence, cruelty and viciousness of the world they were "saving", I can hear one question, loud and clear. WHY?

Travel news, views



BY CAROL MERKLEY

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: Canadians travelling to Jamaica do not require a visa. A valid passport is a good identification and it is advised to carry one when you travel out of the country. A birth certificate, driver license and government approved I.D. card with a picture is also accepted as of now.

A landing card must be filled out prior to arrival—these are handed out on board the aircraft, inspected by immigration officer, stamped and a copy given to the tourist to be returned at time of departure.

CURRENCY REGULATIONS: Jamaica has strict currency controls, imposed out of economic necessity. The island imports a wide range of goods from corn flakes to automobiles which have to be paid for in hard currency. So every effort is made to keep any

foreign currency in legal channels. The breaking of currency regulations is frowned upon. It is illegal to take Jamaican currency both into and out of the country. Moneys may be exchanged at Airport Bank Exchange Counters, at any Commercial Bank and by the cashier at any hotel. Official banks and airport exchange counters now pay the "parallel rate" which is higher than the "official" rate and is equivalent to what is offered on the street. Slight fluctuations may occur, the current rate is U.S. \$1. to \$2.91 Jamaican on the parallel rate, while the official one is U.S. \$1. to \$1.76 Jamaican. Tourists are advised to carry U.S. dollars.

CREDIT CARDS: Most credit cards are accepted throughout the island by hotels, shops, boutiques, restaurants, and duty free shops. Establishments where payment must

be made in foreign currency accept credit cards.

ELECTRIC CURRENT: The usual is 110 volts; there is some 220 volts; 50 cycles single and three phase. Hotels offer converters when on a different current.

MEDICAL AID: Consult the hotel's front desk staff who have a list of recommended doctors. Hospitals are located in major centres and as always, we emphasize that you should purchase additional hospital medical coverage.

DEPARTURE TAX: Must be paid in Jamaican dollars (10). If the tax has not been collected by your travel agent, have this amount handy when you are about to leave the country.

DRINKING WATER: The water in Jamaica is safe to drink. They have modern filtration plants which chlorinate, etc., the

water.

MEET THE PEOPLE PROGRAM: This program has been very popular with the tourist ever since its introduction in the '60's. The Jamaica Tourist Board can arrange for you to meet with Jamaicans with similar interests. Jamaicans are hospitable people and often will invite the visitor to their home for a get-together, a sociable drink or a friendly cup of coffee (Jamaica grows some of the world's best coffee up in the Blue Mountains).

WARNING: The sun in Jamaica shines brightly, however, caution should be taken to overexposure to its violent rays and even the most tanned should use a sun screen and limit time of exposure. Special precautions are advised when out sailing, snorkelling, out on the golf course or just rafting.

McLean's report from Queen's Pk.

BY ALLAN K. MCLEAN,
M.P.P. SIMCOE EAST

Late last month, I had the privilege of being at the dinner for the Orillia Chapter of the Quarter Century Club, an organization that honours civil servants who have worked for twenty-five years, or more, for the Province of Ontario.

In this news column are some of the remarks that I had intended to speak about but due to the shortage of time, I did not have the opportunity to relate to the Ontario Restraint Program.

First, I want to praise the work of the Ontario civil service during the current period of restraint. Despite the steadily increasing demand for provincial services, the Ontario civil service has done its job cheer-

fully, effectively and with determination.

No where is this record more appreciated than at Queen's Park. All who become involved in public life realize the debt we all owe to dedicated civil servants who administer our laws, run our commissions and see to the operation of services that are now described as "basic" by the general public.

Why then is the Ontario Government embarking on another year of public sector restraint? Is the province trying to punish its civil servants?

These are valid questions. But before I answer them, let's look at the record of last restraint program.

There is no question that this restraint program has given Queen's Park the room it needs to best take advantage of current

economic recovery, and the pressing need for job creation and skill training.

In the fall of 1982, when this program was introduced, Canada was in the midst of the worst recession since the end of the Second World War.

Layoffs and bankruptcies were everyday news. High interest rates was grinding commerce and agriculture to a halt.

In the private sector, pay freezes—and in some cases cuts—had become the norm for those who had jobs. Those who had no work were on unemployment insurance, or had been forced onto welfare.

Faced with the alternative of having more people out of work because school boards, hospitals or governments themselves could not afford high wage settlements for all, the

province felt it was better to keep its civil servants employed, but have them share a moderate pay increase.

While recovery is slowly brightening the economic picture throughout the province, now is not the time for the Ontario Government to let up on restraint. We still need funds to find work for the young, to create and maintain effective skill training programs and to meet the demands of healthcare and welfare.

Flexibility and fairness are the earmarks of Ontario's new restraint program. I think the program will do a lot of good in keeping the province's finances supple enough to meet the challenge of keeping recovery on the move and fostering new opportunities for the young and the jobless.