

If you read Sartre, you'll look smarter

If you live in a small community, your life is an open book.

This is why the Mafia seldom sets up in places like Overbite, Saskatchewan or Hospital Corners, N.B. Their most covert operations would, in tiny towns, be discussed to death at the Bon Beauté Beauty Salon before noon on any given Friday.

Around here we all know who was left at the altar, whose great-uncle used to shoot dice down behind the grain elevators, who is a Crook through the Bushes and who is simply a Crook.

"Yer folks away on a trip?" says the mailman as he hands us a postcard from Fort Lauderdale.

"Going on a cruise, are you?" says the saleslady as she wraps up the new bathing suit with its coy matching cover-up.

Once in my favourite small town a visitor came looking for our family and sought directions at the local gas station. "They live in the grey house over the bridge yonder," said the elderly gas jockey. "But you won't find anybody home because he's at a safety council meeting and she's gone to the W.I. and the girl, she's away to school in the city. But the missus'll be back at five because he likes his dinner on the table at six."

The butcher, the baker, the body-perm maker -- they know your darkest (and brightest) secrets.

And don't discount the local librarian, who could if pressed provide an accurate character assessment in less time than it takes to say "Your card, please." You are what you read, and they check out all your

Shirley Whittington



books, don't they?

I hold a layered and simplistic view of life and death. This literal-mindedness reveals itself in frequent daydreams which find me in the panelled waiting room of Eternity, surrounded by Thank You For Not Smoking signs. The reading lights are inadequate and the tables are stacked with old copies of Parents Magazine and Punch, with all the good cartoons ripped out. An aquarium accommodates some darting transparent fish and a noisy bubble machine. This is supposed to relax me but it doesn't. This is my interview for the after-life and I'm edgy.

The door opens and a snappy young woman in a Harry Rosen suit calls my name. "The Chief Executive Officer will see you now," she says. "Please come in."

The C.E.O. has a brass plate on his desk which reads, "Saint Peter D.D., L.L.D., M.B.A." (Alec Guinness usually plays this role.) He looks at me over half-moon glasses and says, "Thank you for applying to Heaven. We have your resume here, and we find it...interesting. Before we go into details like fringe benefits and pension plans, I have

asked my assistant Miss Sharpe to read her report. She has collected a great deal of data on you."

I ask, respectfully where she conducted her research.

"In the public library, of course," replies the C.E.O.

Miss Sharpe opens a fat file and begins to read in a flat voice: "These titles were borrowed by the applicant over a two-month period in 1983. French Cooking Made Easy, Creative Pastries, The Chocolate Lovers Cookbook and The Fondue Book. They are followed by Flatten Your Stomach in Thirty Days, The Complete Scarsdale Medical Diet, The Pritkin Diet, Calories Don't Count and Fitness for Everyone.

I can feel my face getting hot. The relentless Miss Sharpe continues.

"A later spate of borrowing included How to Write a Best Seller, So You Want to Write a Novel?, A Writer's Manual, Fiction Made Easy and How to Prepare Your Manuscript for the Publisher. After a brief hiatus, the applicant borrowed Dealing with Rejection, Fighting Depression, Optimism, I'm O.K;

You're O.K; and Teach Yourself to Play the Guitar.

By now I am wearing a silly, ingratiating smile and longing to tell them I have also read Jean Paul Sartre in the original, all of Robertson Davies, and the total output of William Shakespeare. But this is simply not true, so I blush and burn while Miss Sharpe drones on.

"The Jane Fonda Shape-up Book, The Art of Make-up, Henny Youngman's Joke Book, How to Write an Effective Resume, Sex for the..."

The C.E.O. interrupts the dreary recital with a wave of his hand. "Thank you Miss Sharpe."

He gives me back my resume and with a smile, indicates the waiting room door. "Would you be so kind...?"

And there I sit, with the tropical fish -- a woman unmasked and scorned.

I recently met with a group of professional librarians who with one voice condemned censorship in the public library system. And so they should.

But would a little lying and deception be so bad? What's wrong with fake covers? Who's going to know that An Outline of Renaissance Drama is covering up Come in and Take Your Clothes off? How to Find a Man and Keep Him might well lurk behind The Legal Status of Collective Agreements in the United States, Great Britain and Canada.

You can't judge a book by its cover. And you can't judge a kook by her book. I hope.

The wars mean almost nothing to them

I feel quite hurt this year. Nobody has asked me to speak at their Remembrance Day dinner.

I would have turned it down, of course, because I think you can flog the old poppy and talk about throwing the torch from our failing hands only so long, before it becomes irrelevant.

However, I've not been ignored entirely. A teacher asked me to send a copy of a Remembrance Day column I wrote either last year, or the year before, to be read by a Grade 8 student, to the whole school, I presume.

Some order. If I kept a decent file of columns, I could put my finger on it, run off a copy and shoot it to him. But my files are something like my mind: scattered all over the place, confused, mixed up.

My wife, in a fit of pique over some little thing, once stuffed about 200 of my columns into a large plastic bag. It's a little difficult to reach into that bag (it's really a garbage bag, as she implied when she did it) and pull out the right column.

And of course, I haven't been forgotten by the good old administration of our school, which has requested that I write a two-minute thing about Remembrance Day.

My, how that day has shrunk. When I was a kid, the whole school marched to the arena, bedecked with flags, heard speeches about our "fallen" and "our glorious dead." I think we got the afternoon off, to enjoy more immediate pleasures. But before we were dismissed, we heard some haunting hymns,

Bill Smiley



such as "Abide with me," and, Lord help us, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and saw some real tears fall from the eyes of people who had lost a husband or father.

After World War II, but not for several years, I joined the Canadian Legion. Not because I wanted to, particularly, but because I was a weekly editor, and you had to join everything to get the news.

Each year we swaggered, with a certain amount of the old flair, down the main street to the cenotaph, followed by a rag-tag of Scouts and Guides and Brownies, to make up a parade, and led by the town band. The names of the local boys were read, a prayer, a hymn, the Last Post, some snuffles in the meagre audience, and some wet eyes and lumps in throats among the Legionnaires, who really did remember.

Then back to the Legion Hall for beer and b.s. There was a good feeling between the old-timers of W.W.I., and us young veterans who had never gone over the top, deloused ourselves, coped with a gas attack, or been under heavy bombardment of artillery, as the old vets frequently reminded us.

wars were ancient history.

They degenerated into folk songs like "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" juvenile diatribes against war, and maudlin sentiments about peace, far worse than the Legion, which always had a certain dignity, could perpetrate.

Eventually, the assemblies were cut entirely, and yours truly became the goat. His task: to write a two-minute commercial reminding the students that Remembrance Day is not just a school holiday. Try doing that in 200 words that will stir the students' emotions, uplift their souls, and make them want to rush out and defend their country against something or other.

The wars mean almost nothing to them, and the only things they'd fight to the death for are their transistors, motorcycles, hi-fi's, and high allowances. Most of them have only the vaguest idea of the tensions in the world, and small reason. They're sick to death of politicians and are inured to violence by seeing it daily on TV. They don't really care much about abstracts like patriotism, loyalty, sacrifice.

But I get my quiet revenge. There's no teaching, in the usual sense, in my classes on the day before the "holiday."

I show them souvenirs, pictures of "your hero" standing beside his Typhoon, and tell them funny stories about stupid senior officers, and make them realize that if it were 40 years ago, most of them would be in the process of being shot at, or losing a sweetheart. It works.

These assemblies went on for a few more years, steadily disintegrating as the remembrance ceremony was turned over more and more to the students, to whom both

Teenagers facing charges

Phillip Bradford Whan, 19, of Glen Eagles Cres., Midland, has been charged by Midland OPP with careless driving and failing to wear a seatbelt following a single-vehicle roll-over, Sunday afternoon, 9 km north of Con. 11-12, Tiny Township.

The vehicle in question sustained an estimated \$3,000 damage.

Both Whan and a passenger in his car, Peter Haats, 19, of Woodland Drive, Midland, suffered minor injuries.

Neither were treated at hospital.

Haats was also charged with failing to wear a seatbelt.

Enrolment summary tells the story: SCBE

Enrolment figures at county public schools were released at a recent meeting of Simcoe County School Board.

Gross enrolment at elementary schools is 24,369, down 461 from last year at this time.

Gross enrolment for 1984 at secondary schools is 15,369, down 55 from '83.

And the winners are...

Two Midland residents have won \$10,000 instantly in Match 3 Sweeps. Edwina and Fred Smith of Eighth Street claimed one of the 124, \$10,000 instant prizes offered in the game.

Match 3 Sweeps offers more than three million instant prizes ranging from free tickets to \$10,000. Players scratch the play area on their tickets. If they find three like prize amounts, they win that prize.

Warm days for Oct. 27-28 recorded in our Ontario

A number of local records were set both Saturday and Sunday in various parts of the province after the mercury edged its way up to the 21C and 22C marks (lower 70F on the old scale.)

Strikers expected to ratify contract

About 36,000 General Motors of Canada auto workers were expected to ratify a new three-year contract hammered out over the weekend during a 31-hour marathon bargaining session in Toronto. The tentative agreement worked out between

company and union top brass ended a 12-day shut down at 13 GM plants in Ontario and Quebec.

A frosty reminder winter not far away

Early-risers got a bit of a taste of winter yesterday morning.

A layer of frost covered lawns and automobiles reminding residents, colder weather is heading our way.

North Simcoe Newsbriefs

11 motor-vehicle mishaps

During the week ending Oct. 29, 11 motor-vehicle accidents on area highways were investigated by Midland OPP.

Three of the mishaps left people injured.

Davis sets date for provincial by-elections

Five provincial by-elections are to be held Dec. 13 in Ontario, Premier William Davis announced Monday.

None will be staged in this area though. By-elections will be conducted in Hamilton Centre,

Wentworth North, Ottawa East, Prescott and Russell and Ottawa Centre.

It was a busy week for Midland detachment

A total of 102 general occurrences were probed by OPP personnel during the week ending, Oct. 29.

Twelve thefts, six break-ins, three assaults and four other criminal code investigations were included in the occurrences.

New contract narrowly accepted by carriers

It was a close vote but letter carriers in the country have accepted a new 15-month contract with Canada Post.

Fears had been expressed last week, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers would reject the new pact but by a margin of 55.1 percent for and 44.9 percent against the new letter carriers contract was approved.

The old contract expired Sept. 30. The new one runs through until Dec. 31, 1985.

Record warm temperatures highlighted the weekend

Now that was a weekend! Record warm temperatures were the order of the day both Saturday and Sunday.

As a matter of fact here in our very own banana belt, the mercury hovered the 23.5C (74.3F) mark for most of Sunday afternoon.

Winter-like weather was to sweep in from the north this week putting an end to our Indian summer.