

A small 'hotel' with just one person to staff it

JUST a few rather dour comments on a few things, as summer drags to, a close.

I now know what it is like to run a summer hotel, without benefit of staff.

I undertook to take my grandboys for two weeks. They were here for four. Their mother joined us "for a few days" and stayed two weeks. Their Uncle Hugh has been up from the city at least every other weekend, often with friends.

Trouble is that it's beautiful around here, with trees, swimming in fresh water, breathing in clean air, and eating fresh food: sweet corn picked today, green or yellow beans the same, real tomatoes instead of those hard, bitter little pellets from Florida or California, strawberries and raspberries just off the vine.

I don't blame them. The city can be pretty gruelling in a hot summer. But next summer I'm going to lock up the big brick house with the jungle in back and the massive oak in front, and take a motel room, with one bed, no swimming pool.

First two weeks with the boys were fine. Made their sandwiches every night, popped them in the freezer (the sandwiches, not the boys). Drove them away from the television at 11 p.m. (they have, at home, a tiny black and white with two channels). Turfed them out of a sleep like the dead at 7 a.m. Supervised breakfast (kids can drink a barrel of orange juice in a week). Checked to see they had sandwiches, an apple or banana or pear, wrapped their bottle of pop in their towels,

Bill Smiley

made sure they had their swim suits, and booted them out the door in the general direction of summer camp. Tried to keep them in clean clothes, no easy feat.

Speaking of feet, they have the happy faculty of playing football or baseball or basketball in the back yard in their bare feet, just after the lawn sprinkler has been on for two hours, then rushing inside, across the rug and going for a pee, then rushing back across it to resume activities. It didn't seem to bother the boys, but it played hell with the rug. I don't think I can get it cleaned. Might as well throw it out. Their Gran would have killed them. On the spot. But there are so many spots now, it doesn't seem worth it.

Dinner was fairly simple. I didn't fuss around like Gran, getting a wholesome meal, with chicken thighs, tatoes, salad and dessert. Small boys love hamburgers and chips. Needless to say, we dined out quite often.

Thanks to Ben, the younger of the two, the back lawn looks as though several goats had been grazing on it, and, after eating all the grass, had started eating dirt.

Ben, to the amusement of my neighbors, can play any game without equipment, or opponents. Baseball: he can take a called strike, scowl at the umpire, foul one into the stands, then hit a double and stretch it into a triple, sliding into third base. He can dribble

a basketball, flip it to a team-mate, get it back and drop an easy basket, walking away, dusting his hands. He's eight, and at seven decided his given name, Balind, was not for him, so re-named himself Ben. Quite a kid. Lives in his own world. And pretends to be deaf when you try to call him out of it.

As soon as their mother arrived, of course, the boys went ape. Every grandparent knows about this. Don't ask me why. I'm not a child psychologist.

Dear Kim has an over-abundance of talent. She composes music, writes like an angel, is an excellent teacher, and has been stone-cold poor ever since she got married. She's a bit sick of being poor. But she's an excellent mother.

Sick of being poor, she spent most of her time here writing new songs that were going to make a million, and pumping me to find out how to be a syndicated columnist within a month, at the outside.

And we fought. She is a bristly feminist, and I, as she thinks, a male chauvinist. But we love each other and when the fights got near the blood-letting stage, one of us would grin and declare truce. She took me for about one grand this summer, counting everything, but you can't take it with you, so why not?

Hugh is another fettle of fish. He lives in one room in the city, with cooking privileges,

but doesn't cook much. When he's home, he is either standing at the fridge, door open, as he used to do when he was 16, or standing over the stove, cooking some infernal but delicious concoction full of almonds, raisins, garlic and whatever, with a pasta base. He's not an old waiter for nothing.

This weekend he brought a friend, Elena. She's on a very strict diet, because of allergies, and brings her own food. Not wanting to be beholden, she brought some food. I came down to the kitchen yesterday, and she had out for dinner eight huge lamb-chops. I asked how many were coming to dinner. She said just the three of us. Two chops each and a couple to share. I turned green. But she and Hugh ate two each and Hugh had another couple for breakfast.

I bought some home-made bread and Elena has six slices. Hugh ate the rest of the loaf, at the same sitting, except for one slice, which I surreptitiously snagged while they were sitting around belching. Tough diet, eh?

Threw them onto a bus to the city this morning, laden down with plastic bags full of corn, beans, blueberries, tomatoes and green onions. All fresh, local stuff.

They left me with a refrigerator full of Elena's diet soup (ugh!), Hugh's dried corn, and a lot of other delicacies from the health food store that are going straight into the garbage.

It's a lot of fun, running a summer hotel. With no staff. Next summer, there's going to be no manager, either.

A subject that refuses to die: the junk drawer

I don't know where the thing went to. I know it's still in the house. We'll have to mount an intensive room-by-room search. Until then I'm stuck. I even emptied out the legendary junk drawer looking for it, but all to no avail. But I did spend a happy hour looking in the junk drawer.

Speaking of junk drawers I definitely touched a raw nerve on that. My recent two part column on junk drawers drew some response. I found myself discussing in depth the various drawers of various people and the consensus of opinion seems to be that, whilst certain common elements appear to run like a thread through most drawers, the basic warp and weft in the loom of history is the occupation and life style of the owner.

From the sublime, where entire drawers are transported to the attic and you start over with a clean slate (I mean drawer), to the ridiculous, when only one small drawer is allocated for this purpose which is then periodically cleaned out (which itself is sacrilegious) and which is also self defeating.

Anyway, one lady was good enough to ask me to examine the contents of her junk drawer, having first apologised for having it

on the right of the sink instead of the left. This was acceptable and was easily explained as the left side was noticeably smaller in size and would not, therefore, be as useful, having lost 30 percent carrying capacity for starters.

First impressions were excellent. The bottom of the drawer could not be seen for junk. To confirm my first impression, she had forgotten a couple of things that had been put in there "for safe keeping" and to put the seal of approval on it there was one item, a precision engineered handle in steel and plastic, that she could not identify at all. This is a key factor in the content of junk drawers as all you "junkies" out there will instinctively know.

The crowning glory in this particular case was the bottom right corner. Concealed under a genuine curtain fitting "which my husband is definitely going to fit" or "Maybe it's a spare curtain fitting, I can't be sure,"

but anyway, there was the treasure, a 50-year-old glass mason jar top, not the metal screwed lid, and not the rubber seal that fits it in the lid. Not even the outer rubber ring that seals the metal lid to the glass jar.

Just the glass piece, circular, shining and ready for use, or ready to sit there quietly for another 50 years or until (Heaven forbid) her children's children throw it out, or put it up for sale in a garage sale, so that it, in turn, could wend its way to somebody else's junk drawer.

The relationship between the frequency and attendance at garage sales, and the turnover of contents of your junk drawer, of the drawer as a key factor in garage or lawn sales, is worthy of further study. A treatise on this will be prepared and presented to you in due course, courtesy of the Markle Community newspaper chain. Perhaps some prizes in the form of junk can be presented to the most

worthy or biggest junk drawers.

But I digress. Having sifted through the lady's junk drawer I was most impressed with the ease (the air of aplomb) with which she swept the entire contents back into the drawer willy-nilly. The true sign of an accomplished and contented junk drawer owner. My heart swelled with pride. I had no hesitation, after witnessing this final gesture, of awarding her a Triple A rating.

Not so the man in the newspaper office who admitted under pressure that he possessed not only a junk drawer, but a tool box and not one but two fishing tackle boxes, thereby, disqualifying himself by reason of diversity.

What was I searching for to start with? Oh, the tv instruction book, but that will have to be the subject of another column. I've run out of space again.

This week's quote: "Hyperbolic logarithms may be obtained from logarithms to base 10 by using the relation of Log e N equals Log 10 N x 1 N"

C. Attwood, Principal
Ford Trade School, 1945

Ray Baker and his family are confirmed junkies in Penetanguishene. He also writes.

ROM exhibit on loan to Wye Marsh

"Amphibians of Ontario", a bilingual exhibit on loan from the Royal Ontario Museum, will be hosted at the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, Midland from Oct. 1 to Nov. 15. With regular admission to the Centre, visitors may view (daily between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.) this large diorama containing 40 amphibian models, photographs and drawings. School classes may reserve program times by calling 526-7809.

Some fascinating information is included. Did you know in Ontario there are two major groups of amphibians, frogs-toads (the Anura which are tailless) and salamanders (the Caudata, which have tails)? (You cannot get warts from handling a toad.) Most amphibians cannot drink water but must absorb it through their skin. To learn more: visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre on Hwy. 12, Midland.

SCBE trustees have two meetings on their agenda

A public session of the Simcoe County Board of Education is planned for the Education Centre in Barrie tomorrow evening at 8 p.m.

Trustees are to meet in private session at 7 p.m.

Bandage One makes quick trip to HDH

Bandage One, Ministry of Health's helicopter ambulance, landed at Huronia District Hospital late Thursday night to transport a nine-month-old baby and its mother to Sick Kids in Toronto.

Fall arrived right on time

Yesterday, according to the calendar and not the weather, was the first official day of autumn.

MOT gives landing pad a clean bill of health

It took a year, but the landing pad at Huronia District Hospital has finally been inspected by officials from the Ministry of Transport.

An MOT helicopter with government inspectors aboard arrived Friday at HDH for the routine inspection.

The pad was put into operation just over a year ago prior to the visit to Huronia of Pope John Paul II.

Salvation Army to benefit from bikers' toy ride

Saturday, Sept. 28 is the date for the Second Annual Toy Ride sponsored by The Concerned Motorcycle Riders of Huronia.

Those taking part in the event will depart Zellers on Highway 93 at 1 p.m., arriving back between 4

p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Motorcycles must be street legal and a child's toy should accompany each motorcycle. The toys will be donated to the Salvation Army.

Local ambulance company kept busy this month

As of yesterday Midland District Ambulance Service had responded to a total of 204 calls so far this month.

During the entire 30 days of September last year, attendants responded to a total of 186 calls, Steve Laurin, owner-operator of the ambulance company confirmed.

North Simcoe news briefs

161,424 pilgrims visited Shrine since early May

Martyrs' Shrine officially closes on the evening of Oct. 14 for another season to re-open again on May 17 of next year.

It is interesting to note that as of the end of August, a total of 161,424 pilgrims had visited the historic Shrine dedicated to eight martyrs who died during the mid-1600s.

Business Directory lets you in on the inside track

Are you thinking of opening a new business in Midland and wanting to check out the competition first?

Have a new product for sale and want to know where the retailers are? Looking for a job?

If you need to know who's in business in

Midland, the Chamber of Commerce has the information you're seeking. The Chamber has recently published a Business Directory which lists nearly 700 businesses in over 70 categories, from accountants to yardgoods.

This 62-page booklet is for sale at the Chamber office at 544 Hugel Avenue. Cost is \$4 a copy, to cover the cost of printing.

List of SCBE goals doesn't include Junior Kindergarten

The list of long-term objectives prepared by the Simcoe County Board of Education for the next three years fails to include any mention of establishing Junior Kindergarten programs for pre-schoolers in county schools.

Elementary principals from the county met last week with SCBE director of education Dick Boswell, in Barrie. According to one participant, Boswell said Junior Kindergarten would not be a priority unless there was pressure for the program from parents. It is, therefore, not likely that parents' association members are going to sit down to discuss proposals for getting programs in place in elementary schools.

Members of the parents' association at Penetanguishene's St. Joseph's School have tried twice to get a Junior Kindergarten pilot project off the ground after studying ways in which the pilot project could be carried out economically at the Penetang school.

The pilot project failed to get support from SCBE.

OPP: 103 general occurrences probed

During the week ending Sept. 23, Midland OPP investigated a total of 103 general occurrences as well as probed a total of 13 motor-vehicle accidents, reports OPP Const. Roy Tyo, the local detachment's community-services officer.