

Rebuilding good news

Health Minister Murray Elston's announcement that Oak Ridge will be rebuilt can only come as good news to nursing assistants and other health care professionals at the Mental Health Centre.

The new facility will mean keeping much needed jobs in the Penetanguishene area. It also means better facilities for the patients at the maximum security, psychiatric hospital.

There is no doubt the existing facility has out-lived its usefulness. Built in 1933 to provide care for 150 male patients it can accommodate almost 300.

The present patient population is closer to 200.

The interior of the building is oppressive, the close confined cells were designed during the days when psychiatry could provide little help other than constraint for the severely disturbed patient.

With the advent of psychotropic drugs more than 30 years ago and more recent therapeutic methods this type of facility has become redundant.

It is a sad but true fact, the treatment of mental illness and its associated cost ranks low in the public perception of where the health-care dollar should go.

One need only look at the amount of money spent on cancer research or controlling heart disease. Physical illness is not seen as the fault of the patient.

But a person suffering from a major psychosis, schizophrenia or other severe psychiatric disorder continues to bear a stigma associated with his illness. Worse still if that person has committed a crime as a result.

The interior of the building that is Oak Ridge can do nothing but help maintain the perception of mental illness as somehow being the fault of the patient. And until Oak Ridge falls to the wrecker's ball it will continue play its part in maintaining that perception.

Watch your manners

Dear Editor:

Being a recent visitor to Midland from Stratford-upon-Avon, England, I agree wholeheartedly with your article "Ontario becoming friendlier", (May 22, 1987).

I have worked as both a hotel receptionist and now in a bank in England and it doesn't cost anyone to have a friendly smile, a polite manner and spare a minute or two to have a talk to customers.

In the majority, touring around Ontario I have found very friendly and helpful people. I was however appalled at the service my host and I got when we went to the Tourist Information Centre in Penetang to ask about the trip by the "Georgian Queen". And did the lady know information about it - the one-word answer was no - end of conversation.

We wanted to ask more questions but felt that we were being a nuisance. On the whole, gift shop assistants or owners have been most courteous but I am afraid to say that two gift shops in Midland town centre, could have been more friendly and polite - honestly it does not hurt!

I have enjoyed my stay here, enormously and hope to plan a longer stay in 1989. I am sure by then Ontario will be the friendliest province in Canada. I only hope Canadians visiting England will get a warm and friendly welcome.

I felt I had to write before I left Midland and hope my observations are noted.

Elizabeth Mountford
Stratford-upon-Avon, U.K.

Traffic lights needed

Dear Editor:

A new season of playing "chicken" on Highway 12 at the Martyrs' Shrine/Sainte-Marie/Wye Marsh entrance is now upon us. As anyone who drives that route regularly knows, it is extremely dangerous when cars, buses, cyclists or pedestrians try to enter the traffic flow or try to cross four lanes of traffic from one site to another. The fact that no one has yet been killed makes one wonder if it's because of luck or because of divine intervention. Certainly it is not because of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications. Traffic lights are obviously needed; however, the ministry believes that the traffic flow doesn't warrant the expense of installing lights. What would convince these people that a solution must be found - a school bus tragedy perhaps? How many deaths are needed to justify lights?

Nothing was done while the former government was in power, despite requests made by Huronia Historical Parks and by the Huronia Historical Advisory Council. Will the present government be able, or willing, to do something soon? (No doubt the same civil servants at MTC are still making the key decisions.)

Playing "chicken" on Highway 12 is dif-

ferent now. As one emerges from the construction zone going east one accelerates to 80 km - just before approaching the Martyrs' Shrine/Sainte-Marie/Wye Marsh entrance! And those travelling west don't need to slow down until after they've gone past the two entrances. I've been lucky so far, and so have you.

Sincerely,
Paul Delaney

Thanks to Times

Dear Editor:

On behalf of the organizing committee for Health Walk '87, we extend a personal "Thank You" for your continuing support of this event over the past several months.

Pledges now total \$22,500 - awfully close to our goal of \$25,000.

Your press coverage before the event gave us much needed impetus and publicity, and your coverage of the day itself added greatly to everyone's enjoyment.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,
George Desroches
Penetang Richelieu Club
Fred Harpell
Elmvale Lions Club

Viewpoint

by Carey Nieuwhof

In pursuit of the American dream

Watching events in America transpire lately has been like watching all the trash on late night TV come to life at once. There has been sex, corruption, vice, shady business deals, spying, political manipulating etc. etc. Most of the front-page stories also find their way into the gossip columns. The stuff of which real news is made these days is jam-packed with filth, scandal and sleaze. Moreover, Americans are gobbling it up.

Why is this? What has become of the American of 1984? What happened to baseball, apple pie, Ronald Reagan and beer-commercial patriotism? The America of 1984 has been replaced by Gary Hart, the Bakkers, marine spying, a president in trouble and bad deals on Wall Street. Surprisingly enough, we should have seen this coming. We should have known that Reagan's America, which resembled a fairy tale more than it did a real nation of over 200 million people, was bound to come crashing down sometime.

Americans are a strange breed. They tend to ride emotional roller coasters. They tend to accept things at face value, analyse them rather superficially, and draw conclusions based on that. That characterization is not as harsh as it may sound. Actually, it is not the

fault of the Americans that they turned out this way. Their character came out of the founding of their nation.

America, was founded on the principle that things could be better than they were elsewhere, and that, in America, life could be a glorious and wonderful affair. Accordingly, they have expected their political and social leaders and figures to conform to that goal. Some have, predictable, some haven't.

Americans have historically ridden waves of unrestrained patriotism followed by a time of quiet self-reflection. The post Second World War era of cute families and white picket fences was extended into the 1960s with the arrival of a president who was young, dynamic and good-looking. The joy of finding America a new place in the world as a superpower and the excitement over discovering that sense of purpose personified in John Kennedy caused Americans to overlook some of the responsibilities that accompanied that power. Those responsibilities hit home with the reality of Vietnam and later with Watergate.

The youthful naivete of the 1950s and the belief that the American dream could be

realized was deadened by the 1960s. Is that, in essence, what we see today?

It should have been clear that the Ronald Reagan who inspired America was little more than a two-dimensional apparition that would have to be blown over by a gust of reality at some point. But Americans swallowed Reagan's vision wholeheartedly. One wonders if they are feeling guilty about it now.

The first clue that there was something wrong with Reagan's America came when the president himself was connected to the Iran-Contra scandal last fall. Shortly after that, Reagan's America fell apart at the seam.

Ivan Boesky showed the flip side of the self-made man. The marine spy scandal violated national honour. The Bakker's collapsed before millions of followers. Gary Hart showed America that he too was human and fell short of the mythical ideals Reagan and Americans had established.

As I've said before in this space, Americans have been following these scandals with an almost disgustingly keen interest. Newspapers have been digging beyond the bounds of good taste just to find yet another headline.

This may be America's way of telling itself, ironically, that its dream of a better and perfect America is attainable. The recent 'quest for filth' may just be a search for scapegoats.

By convicting Gary Hart, the Bakkers and Ivan Boesky, Americans may conclude that it is just a few individuals, and not an entire nation, that falls short of standards which have been long established.

So what we have seen unfold before us in the past few months has been the unfolding of Ronald Reagan's America. What Americans are scared to admit is that Reagan's America is really a myth, and that scurrying after a few scapegoats is not going to solve their problems.

It is fascinating to live next door to America. It is fascinating to watch a nation that sets standards for itself which, while admirable, are unrealistic. It will also be fascinating to see if America can ever come to grips with the fact that it, like every other nation, is human too. Until that time, we'll likely see America swing through a lot more patriotic highs, and lot more Vietnam-like lows.

Letters

The Penetanguishene Citizen welcomes Letters to the Editor. They must be legible, signed (by hand), and carry the writer's address and telephone number for verification. Pen names are not allowed and anonymous letters will not be published. Letters published by this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this newspaper, its publisher or editor.

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