

Let's save the Cachet

It is good news that the Thornhill Village Artists have taken the plunge and committed themselves to the restoration of the Arnold House on Yonge Street.

Thornhill Councillor Tom Gove is now looking for a community organization which will, with the help of the Town of Markham and the developer who wants the land on which it sits, take on the Burton House as a similar project.

That organization could well be the Boy Scouts of York Summit District who need a headquarters.

If it is, Richmond Hill residents and probably the council will be asked to contribute to the project.

Since the Thornhill Village Artists will be going to Vaughan and probably Markham, all three councils are likely to be committing public funds to the

restoration of large old houses in the near future.

It is surprising that the same councillors who are faced with a hue and cry every time an old mansion is threatened by the wreckers, think that it is in the municipal interest to create whole subdivisions of equally large houses in the country.

Markham, for example, is now committed to the extension of the Cachet Country Club residential area in almost every direction.

They certainly appear to be allowing their own headaches to be multiplied a hundred times for councils a century from now, just to pick up a few extra fast tax dollars.

Good planning is supposed to look out for these problems.

Chain letter frightening

Recently we received a letter from Linda Sagmeister, Trayborn Drive, Richmond Hill, which said, "I am enclosing a letter dropped at my door, and at other doors in this apartment building. It had no stamp or address on the envelope. Such a letter can frighten many people easily. Isn't that illegal?"

The letter, of course, was a chain letter, full of threats, promises, stories, and intimidations.

One of the stories: "While in the Philippines, General Weich (who?) lost his wife six days after he received the letter. He failed to circulate the prayer. However, before his death he received \$775,000."

That's a funny sort of good luck. Hit the jackpot, then croak.

Then there was Joe Elliott who received \$450,000 and lost it because he broke the chain. Now wait a minute. Don't you get pleasant news if you keep the chain intact. If he did that, then won the money, how could he, then, break the chain?

Ms. Sagmeister accomplishes two things by writing to us. First, she asks a very good question; and second, she unloads the letter, just like the instructions said . . . "it must leave your hands within 96 hours after you receive it."

The Liberal has had the letter more than 96 hours, but we're about to dispose of it, too.

And you know where . . .

McConaghy's teachers



The staff at McConaghy Public School posed for this picture and put on their best smiles because they are the final staff at the school. They are: front row left to right:

Leslie Lavery, Carol McLeod, June Jefford, Catherine Forsyth, Jean Gutzman, Marlene Campitelli. Back row: Earl Kahnert, Brian Swindlehurst, Margaret

Ivanidis, David Semple, Dorothy Riddell, Ildiko Hary, Myrtle Campbell and Al Elliott. (Photo by Canadian School Studios)

By BOB RICE

Turn back the hands of time

By BOB RICE

As we drove to the McConaghy reunion last week, I tried to imagine what would take place that evening. A lot of planning had gone into the night by Joan Connolly and her excellent crew and now the egg was about to hatch.

My family accompanied me on this time trip as I thought my Irish-born wife and my two daughters would like to see the building where I spent eight years of my life.

We arrived at the school 15 minutes after the doors opened and I was lucky to find a parking space almost right in front of the building. The walk from Yonge Street to the side door seemed much shorter than I remembered and within a minute I faced those doors that I had used so many times in the distant past.

To say the lower foyer was crowded would be a gross understatement. In joining the lineup for registration I was suddenly confronted with faces from the dawn of my education and, while the family entered the gym to view the memorabilia, my mind was already in high gear trying to match the proper names with right people.

As the line slowly snaked forward to the reception table I waved hello to Mike Burnie, nodded politely at Mr. Perkins and Dr. Langstaff and tried desperately to pin a name on the tall gentleman standing immediately ahead of me.

After procuring my name tag (I hate the darn things but on this occasion it would be a necessity) I checked on Dee and the girls and sought out Joan Connolly.

The former Miss Bettridge was busy behind a display in the far corner of the gym and after exchanging hectic hellos I picked up my copy of the "McConaghy's Last Students" book which was responsible for the whole evening.

And then it happened . . . "Hi Bob . . . remember me?"

The scene was to be repeated a hundred times throughout the open house and, with one or two exceptions, I was seldom stumped.

As the nostalgia wave grew higher and higher I became like a kid at my first rock n' roll concert, asking each person who I talked to to sign the autograph section at the back of the book. Charlene Smith (now Evans) who used to live next door to me on Richmond Street filled me in on the family and Anne Keith (Wilson) informed me that her brother Sandy would soon be moving back to the area after several years out west.

Dr. Allan Ripley and his charming wife Peggy were accompanied by their son Stephen and the entire Perkins clan was present although I only had a chance to chat with Lois who now is Mrs. Hemstad of Thornhill.

Anne White is now Mrs. Burt Winston and, although her husband and I had many laughs in high school, it was Anne who brightened up this particular evening by her presence at the gathering.

Brian Atkinson and his wife stopped for a few words outside our Grade 3 room and further down the hall I ran into Jean Cowe (Medland) and her mother. Jean and her husband now live in Keswick and she almost made me

cry when she told me that they had recently sold two Edsels that her hubby had been working back into shape.

In one of the classrooms put aside for teachers and students from the fifties I renewed acquaintance with David Tinker who is now a Professor at the University of Toronto.

Herbie Plewman and his parents were also scouring through the pictures and report cards at the front of the room as was Ron Cooper who was one of the ones whose name I stumbled over (next time, Ronnie, please wear a name tag).

Bruce Wilson arrived half way through the reunion and within a few minutes he was followed by a dapper looking fellow in a well cut blue suit. It took me a minute or so to recognize Wayne Koning in all his magnificence but then . . . I haven't seen him for almost 20 years.

The arrival of Dave and Ruth Patenden was something that I had been especially looking forward to. I first heard from Dave again about a year ago when he sent me a short note about this column and then only a week ago I received another note from him regarding the McConaghy yearbook.

Dave is now a very successful lawyer in Kingston and although he has changed slightly, the same cannot be said for his lovely wife.

I think every guy who went to Richmond Hill Public and Richmond Hill High had a crush on Ruth Percival. This petite girl seemed to be everywhere at once . . . a cheerleader, basketball and volleyball and one of the best track and field athletes that R.H.S. ever produced.

Ruth, on behalf of all of your distant admirers . . . you look as good now as you ever did . . . but what did you ever see in Dave???

And then there were the teachers . . . Dick Flynn retired this week and he looks even better than me . . . Gerry Orton still wears the grin that he had as he patiently tried to drum some of the three r's into our skulls . . . Margaret Fockler left me entirely speechless and Eleanor Huffman even remembered little Bobby.

When Dolores De La Barre (Pickering) was spotted by a group of us as we milled about the downstairs stairwell, one of the chaps said . . . "seeing Dolores here tonight adds a touch of exactly what she is . . . CLASS."

To put the record straight . . . the whole evening was class. As the time came for some of us to leave, I took a slow walk into the schoolyard. The cinders are gone and the hills at the back fence have been smoothed down over the years.

The backyards on Arnold Street seemed to have grown and the yard itself has shrunk . . . or is it only me? Come to think of it . . . the gymnasium, the halls, the classrooms . . . they all seem to be smaller than I remember. And yet . . . somehow the shrinking has made it feel more comfortable, more like home. And when you think of it . . . that sure is a nice way to remember McConaghy School.

I am sure that, earlier in the evening, I caught sight of the ol' Millpond Philosopher standing off to one corner . . . with a tear in his eye.

YESTERDAYS

By MARY DAWSON

Elgin Mills had active ratepayers

Back in February, 1928, Elgin Mills had an active one-year-old ratepayers' association under the chairmanship of W. H. Legge, who accepted re-appointment to this office on the unanimous demand of the members.

The prime concern of the association was the securing of a public school in Elgin Mills.

Although three letters to the department of education seeking information as to procedure had remained unanswered, the public school inspector had advised that petitions be circulated in both Markham and Vaughan Townships asking that a union school section be set up as the first step.

The safety of children using Yonge Street to get to school was the chief concern of the ratepayers.

Another was the considerable distance they were required to travel twice each school day.

In the February 23 issue of The Liberal which carried a report of the first annual meeting of the association, a letter signed by "Old Timer" was printed, which took strong exception to the creation of a new school

section which would lead to construction of an Elgin Mills School.

He argued that the claim that the new school section and building would not increase taxes was a fallacy.

He estimated the cost of two teachers at \$2,000 a year, plus another \$1,000 for maintenance costs over and above the costs of acquiring land and erecting a two-room schoolhouse.

He wondered how many children were injured on their way to and from school and how many as they played on the roadway, sauntered across the road defying the drivers of vehicles or tried to hitchhike.

He claimed that walking to school, as he had had to, was an excellent form of exercise.

He also contended that the claim that a school would increase the value of property in the area was invalid, since an increase in property taxes would discourage prospective buyers.

"What the area needs is a factory, then, indeed, would you see an increase of property value in the community."

"More Up-to-Date" replied the next week and described the writer of the first letter as "a somewhat old gentleman who owns a large amount of taxable property — and no children or grandchildren."

If he had any children of his own he could not have spoken in such a heartless way about the number of children who are hurt annually on Yonge St. between Elgin Mills and Richmond Hill."

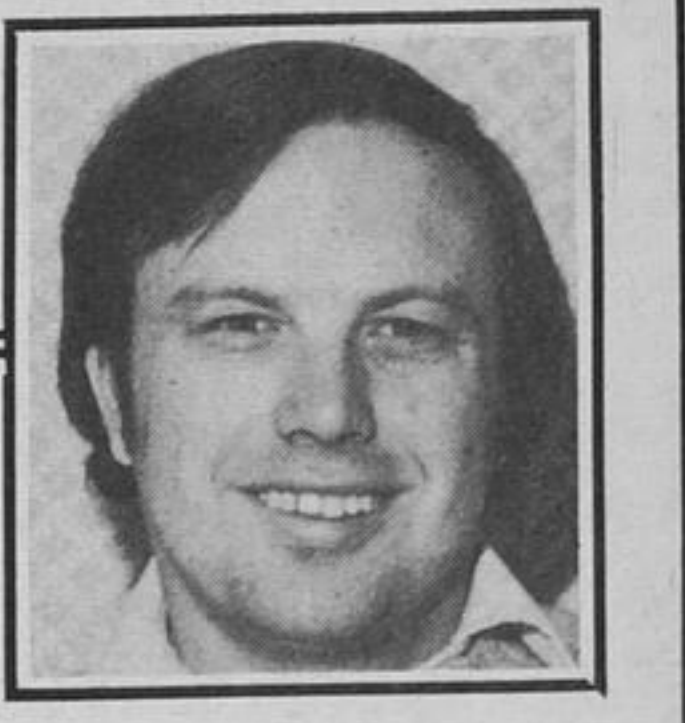
From this it would appear that the Elgin Mills children, estimated at 100, were attending what is now the M. L. McConaghy Public School.

A public meeting to discuss the proposal was called for the evening of February 23, but no report of that meeting was printed in The Liberal.

Since no school section was set up and no school building erected in Elgin Mills, and the children from that area continued to attend school in Richmond Hill, it would appear that public reaction was not favorable.

LIBERAL SPRINKLINGS

Emotions mixed on moving day



By LARRY JOHNSTON

Today is moving day in the Johnston family.

My mother has finally declared after 29 years of looking after a 14-room house, that she is throwing in the towel.

And yours truly, being the only single among her offsprings, is getting stuck with much of the packing.

This is one disadvantage of the single life Michelle Landsberg has not heard about yet. I can't claim a prior obligation to my own home or family because they don't exist.

So, by the time most of you are relaxing over this column this evening, I will be in a state of exhaustion. Physical exhaustion because I have been trying unsuccessfully to keep up with my mother's pace for the last week (but even she conked out once and fell asleep right in the middle of watching the Queen's Plate on television) and emotionally because I will be homeless for the first time in 29 years.

Not that I have not moved out before, I've done it several times, in fact, and I do maintain an apartment in the barrens of Downsview. But a high rise with pool and sauna is no substitute for Edwardian elegance on a wooded ravine lot, or for 29 years of well, let's not get sentimental.

There are many bad parts to moving; in fact it is all bad with one exception: cleaning out the attic.

You find some things that you can throw out right away like last year's Vote Andrew Meles button; and there are others that you can instantly find a place to send.

For example, unless I fall in love with a fan dancer in the next week, The Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill will get a purple ostrich feather, the kind that ladies used to wear in their hats.

Toronto Telegram with the headline, The King is Dead; Long Live the Queen?

The box also contained letters my late father wrote to relatives when he was stationed in England in World War I, and copies of the Tank Tattler, the magazine that he and some of his newspaper pals in the corps started, which would probably have kept them a safe distance from the action if they had been called to the front.

There was also a copy of his expose of Buffalo speakies which appeared in the Express and the 1928 series of articles he did on Canadian Marconi for The Financial Post which exposed the stock as grossly overvalued.

The box also contained the will of the rich uncle who was going to leave the family on easy street when he died back in 1908, but who turned out to be not so rich.

And there were also all the letters that my father ever received from my mother. She claims she is

throwing those out.

There was a magazine in the attic called Freedom of the American Road. Published in about 1955 as a public relations effort of the Ford Motor Company, its message of bigger and better highways as the key to progress, seems ironic now.

Take the article entitled "Freeways Shape the Modern City." The subhead is "first metropolis born in the automobile age, Los Angeles proved controlled access highways the only permanent answer to urban needs."

Two new elements shaped the modern city, the highway propagandists wrote, space and time. Distance no longer mattered. Energy was not even considered.

Well, some ideas have a short lifespan compared say, with the beaded pouch that Indians gave to my great-great grandmother.

I might muse on this some more, but I will have to cut this off. It is time to pack the typewriter.

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