

SUGAR AND SPICE

by Bill Smiley



Spent a week in the old hometown recently, and, as usual, it was anything but a rest. The weather was perfect, but the hospitality was exhausting.

It's not really my hometown. I didn't grow up there, physically. But I spent a decade there in the newspaper business, and maybe I grew up there in other ways. Anyway, when you walk down the main street, and every second person stops to shake hands and ask about your family, and tell you what their kids are doing now, it's your hometown.

A smalltown changes and yet remains the same. A few businesses have changed hands. Some of the stores have new fronts. The paint on the hotel has been changed from passionate purple to ghastly green. The shady, tree-lined street on which you used to live has been raped: the stately trees cut to ugly stumps, as the street is to be widened.

But the biggest changes are in the people. The young men you used to work and play with are grizzled or as bald as eggs. The young women you used to look at with some interest because of their big eyes are sagging and dentured. The lovable kids that your kids used to play with are hulking adolescents, some of them delinquents with police records. And your old partner, once apparently indestructible, is taking eight different colors of pills.

Despite the changes, there is continuity as comfortable as an old fishing hat. The Chamber of Commerce is still fighting over store hours. The Industrial Commission is on the verge of announcing a huge new industry. The fire brigade races periodically to the town dump, where the incinerating process has got out of hand because the caretaker has bogged off for a beer.

Some of the local characters have gone to their reward, but many are still around. The local lawyer still plays his electric organ between clients. The local

millionaire still slugs bags of salt and feed into the back of his '66 model and lugs it out to feed his cattle. The barber, with whom you once shared a riotous Legion zone rally, still quips with his customers, though he went off to fight in a war over 50 years ago. The canny Scot chortles as he tells you his shore lots are now going over \$4,000. The same waiter insults the same customers, in the pub. The same beer barrel in human form sits in the same seat in the same pub.

The same people still come to the same cottages. Except that the pregnant young matron was a skinny kid in bare feet last time you saw her. And the handsome young chap who works at the summer store was a tyke called Johnny-Cake last time you saw him.

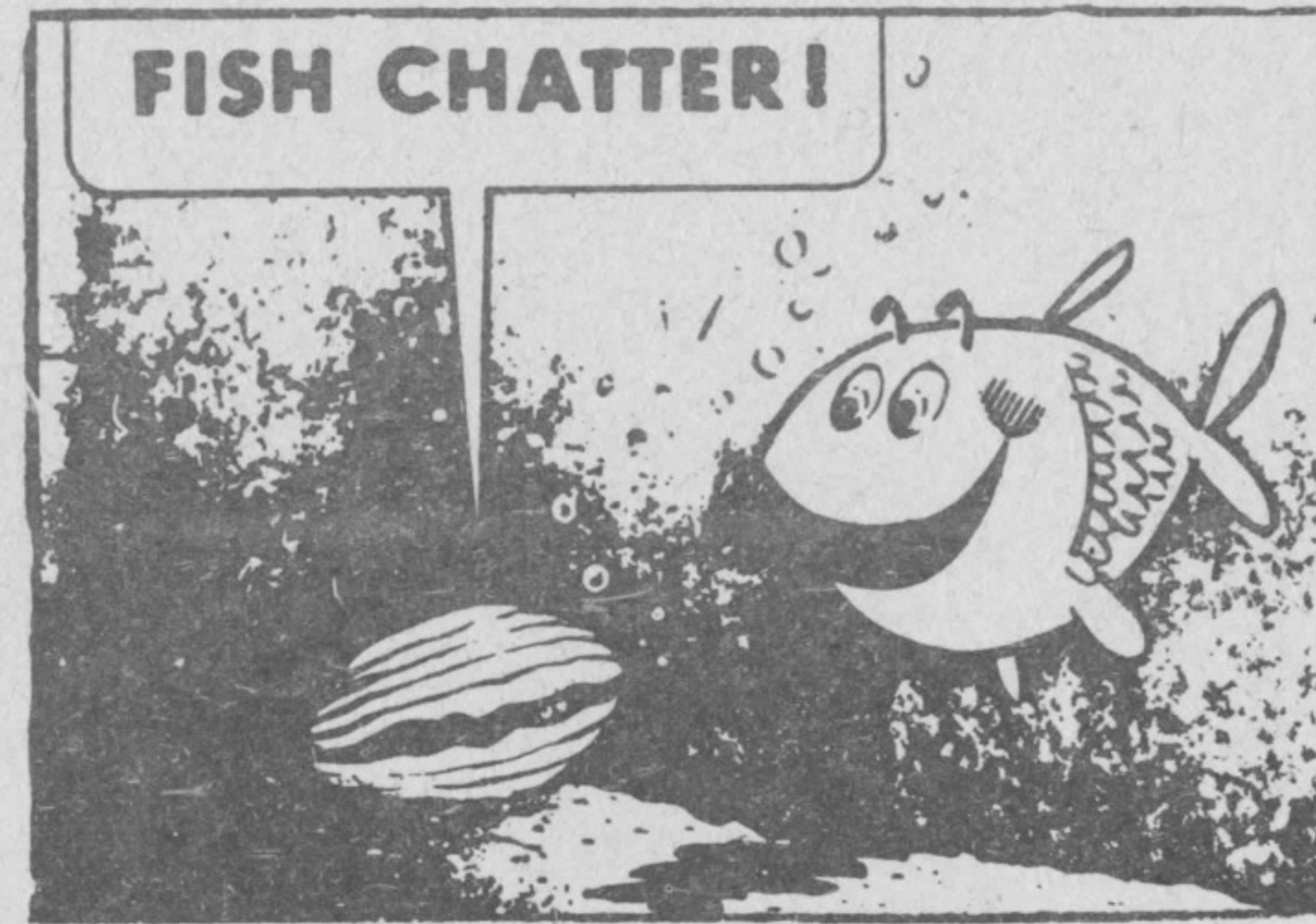
However, it's good to get back for a visit. And it's never uneventful.

Kept my hand in by writing a few news stories for the paper. Took the family to the Indian reserve; same beautiful view and easy-going inhabitants. Dropped in on old friends and got all the latest dope on who was going crazy, and who was running around with whom.

Had a beer at The Cedar Rail, most unique bar in the country, and with the best prices. It's a shed on a farm, full of tools and baled hay. A cedar rail extends across the front. You stand there with your farmer friend, lean on the rail and look at the lake down below. We've seen deer and bear from there, and covered local politics and talked cattle.

Got stuck in the sand at the beach, to the rage of my wife. She went flying off to find a tow truck, in a friend's car. While she was away, I was pulled out easily by a man with no arms, who had a chain in his trunk, a wife to drive his car, and a gaggle of kids to help push. Sounds like fiction, but it's fact.

It could only happen in or around the old hometown.



Greetings Waldo! Where were you last week? Out looking for the two O.K. boys Leroy and I found 'em. Yes, Wilson McLean & Alf Coombs, O'Keefe Brewing Co., will be sponsoring next week's

Rosspport Derby with three nice awards. Time sure is slipping Leroy, just a short time to go and Paul Larsen of Chippewa Falls still leads the pack on the Bermuda prize with his 12 lb. 1 oz. 'er and Master Kenneth Grann is leading for the Ozzie Baits prize going to the youngster catching the largest fish.

Last week's winners:- Dan Kenney, Terrace Bay 3 lbs. 14 oz - Ron Forsberg, Marathon 3 lb. 0 oz. and Carl Killer of Port Arthur 2 lb. 1 oz.

Mr. and Mrs. D. Berry of Lindsay, Ontario, visited Mr. and Mrs. Felix Legault this week.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Hawse and friends of St. Thomas, Ontario, visited Mr. and Mrs. T. Yandon this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Legault were Lakehead visitors last Wednesday.

Patrick Auger spent the weekend with his family. He lives in LongLac.

For five years the Tymko store has stood empty but undamaged. Within the past two weeks the large windows have been broken and the building entered. Pleasure boats too have been vandalized and gasoline taken from cars and boats. Other acts of vandalism have occurred and steps are being taken to apprehend the culprits.

Miss Robin Howard of St. Catherines is visiting Mr. and Mrs. Albert Rouble.

The Forestry personnel at Pays Plat recently held a farewell party for Mr. and Mrs. Edward Marych who leave shortly for Sioux Lookout where Mr. Marych will be the pilot at the Forestry base there.

Harry Charles was called to Fort William on the death of his mother.

Miss Patricia Gerow entertained at a family dinner recently in honour of her mother's birthday. Present were Mr. and Mrs. Walter Gerow, Darwin Gerow, Mrs. Josephine Gerow, Patricia Gerow and Doug. Hunt.