



# Back to School

by MARY HUBELIT

School opened again as it has in Canada for a number of years in September. The year was 1926, and September was the usual blend of warm, hazy days and cool evenings, the breezes teasing with varying scents of ripening berries, yellowing hay, smoke from potato tops and pea and bean plants burned in a heap in the middle of the garden to enrich the soil.

The children returning to class, in our small town at least, celebrated with complete new

outfits, from head to toe - I mean, those things you were wearing in June were almost in tatters, and besides, they didn't fit any more. Who knows what sacrifices the moms and dads made to ensure a parity showing for their little darlings? Who knows? Well, 1983 parents do - human nature doesn't change that much, you know.

Anyway, I was thinking of the appearance of one child in particular - me. My cheeks still burn with embarrassment remembering my back-

to-school outfit as I entered Grade IV. I didn't mind too much the white middie with the navy-blue square collar, not the pleated navy-blue scratchy serge skirt; these had been donated by my city cousin's mother because the cousin was going into HIGH SCHOOL! which was roughly equivalent to being asked to be lady-in-waiting to a queen. None of the other girls had a rich cousin. But - the other girls would have worn white stockings with that ensemble. My stockings were black. I had not out-

grown them nor worn them out; besides, white stockings were just not practical for the tom-boy type girl.

Got the picture? Okay. Then look down the black stockings to the little girl's feet. One might expect to see a black patent T-strap, or a navy-blue oxford, no? Well, on this child you would have seen white canvas boots - I mean over-the-ankle white canvas boots! The weak explanation to the weeping child was "weak ankles - you need the support." The real explanation of course was

that there was no money for anything better. I wonder how many 1983 parents, in these days of viciously high unemployment, have lied to their little girls and boys? It's not necessary, you know; children understand a lot more than you realize (I still think it's a face-saving move by the pa-

rents, and it's not fair!) However, teachers can only do so much, and I'm sure, in retrospect, that my Grade IV teacher, Elsie Ritchie, was well aware of the trauma under which some of her students started the year, well aware of the financial caste system which applied in that town. I

seem to remember only a few weeks of awkwardness, of disconcerting moments of inferiority, and then the wonder of learning, the thrill of opening the world's doors, took over, and school again became a stepping-stone to life itself.

Hang in there, teachers!

## The Canadian Paraplegic Association

The Canadian Paraplegic Association is a voluntary agency that speaks and acts on behalf of 20,000 paraplegic and quadriplegic Canadians. Having served the spinal cord injured for the past 38 years, it is regarded as the authority on their rehabilitation and return to the community.

Founded in 1945, CPA responded to the immediate needs of veterans who became paraplegic or quadriplegic during World War II. It assisted them in obtaining medical care, rehabilitation and financial benefits. It also pio-

neered the introduction to Canada of the folding metal wheelchair. Through its efforts, the Department of Veteran's Affairs established Lyndhurst Hospital - Canada's first independent rehabilitation centre for the spinal cord injured - which later opened its doors to non-military patients and made its facilities available for the training of specialized medical personnel.

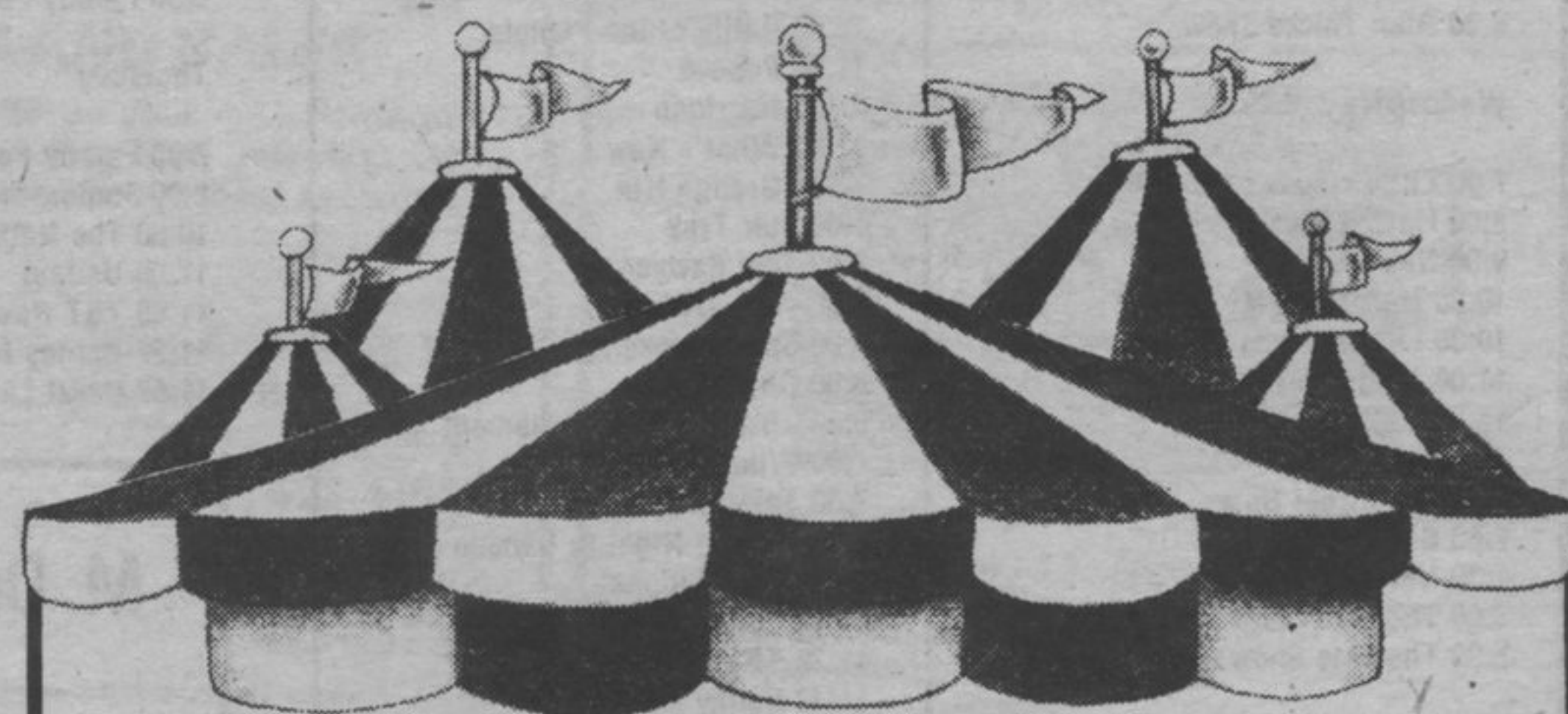
With a new generation of civilian spinal cord injured Canadians and advances in medical and rehabilitative

sciences, the Association's role has been re-defined in recent years. Through fraternal support and encouragement, it continues to cushion the transition from a vigorous, active life to one of a more restricted lifestyle. However, its activities now focus on those persons who are returning to the community to resume independent and productive lives.

Collaborating with twenty-five regional rehabilitation centres throughout Canada, CPA's community workers offer a wide range of support ser-

vices that include personal and family counselling, vocational rehabilitation, job placement, financial assistance and the provision of assistive devices. It also articulates its clients' concerns on political and quality of life issues, while actively encouraging research into treatment, prevention and a possible cure for spinal cord injury.

The Canadian Paraplegic Association is funded by private and public sector donations.



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