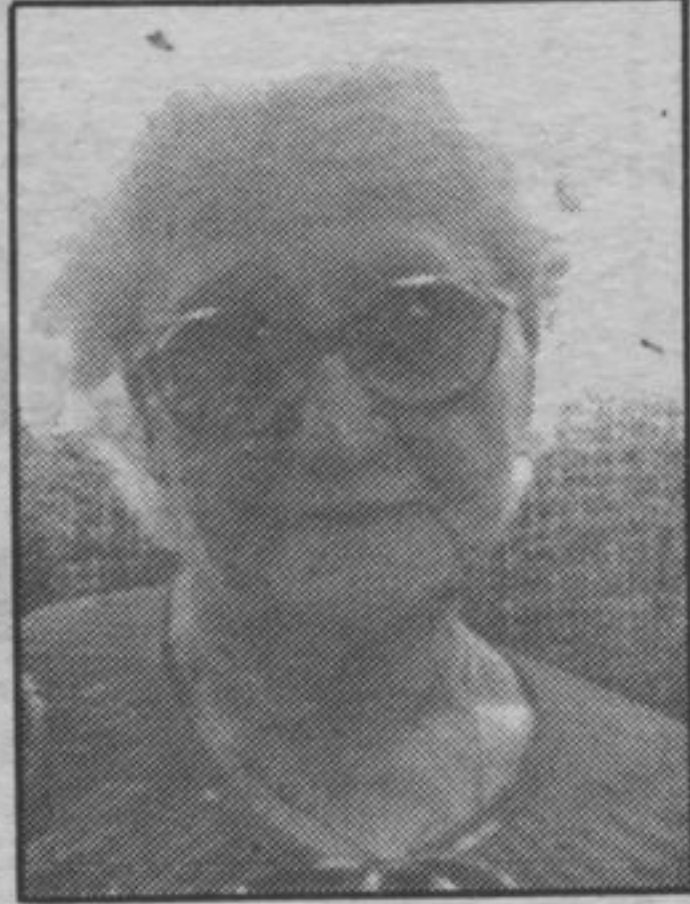


Bits and Bites

ATC's and Trees



by HELENE BALLARD

It seems I got off the track last week in my column, several people told me it was not "funny". Well you know I can be serious at times too, but if you prefer me the other way here goes.

I understand several gentlemen want to know how come I can give the "little old ladies" three men in their lives but no girls for them. I tried, but so far I have not been able to comply. After all, housemaid's knee and dish pan hands just don't cut it, because they sure are not "The skin you love to touch", but I'll keep trying.

It's been fairly quiet around Birchwood. We had the usual monthly birthday party on the 21st, along with a sing-a-long with Father Pottie. We did have a wee bit of excitement the night the Miss America Pageant was on T.V. Of course we did not sit up to watch the end of it. After the swim suit part of the program the "dear little old men" picked up their eye balls off the floor, took their canes and walkers and went off to put their "Tired Blood" to bed.

Sure looks like fall now with all the trees changing colour and the sound of the leaves underfoot when you go out for a walk. In spite of our long winters, this is a beautiful country to live in. When the ground is covered with snow this "Little Old Lady" plans on trying to get some of our residents outside for some fresh air and who knows even make a snow man and some snow balls. It's worth a try.

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Last Saturday one of our residents, Blanche Speck drove to Nipigon for a Progressive Conservative nomination convention, Mr. Jim Files won on the 3rd ballot. Seems it was a very interesting day.

Final plans are still being made for our "Open House" here at Birchwood for Sat. Oct. 20th from 1-5. Will keep you posted on progress.

I would like to thank the merchants who have made it possible for Senior Citizens to use their downstairs exit after shopping, when stairs present a real problem. This help is very welcome so a big "Thank you."

Last Tuesday some of our residents went to the big "Magic Show" and they all enjoyed it. To make the event complete, a collection was taken up to help towards the purchase of a new, much needed, bus for Birchwood. Thank you all for your generosity. Every dollar helps.

For my "Bite" this week, I guess I may step on some toes but several people have brought this to my attention so maybe I should stick my neck out. So here goes.

It seems that three-wheeled vehicles are the cause of a lot of small new trees being broken. The drivers do not stay on the beaten path, but ride just anywhere. Of course small trees will be broken, so fellas please do try to avoid this. We want our trees to grow up and be here for your great grandchildren. Thank you.

And now -- if someone tells you they have an "Open Mind" maybe it should be "Closed for Repairs". Till next week ... Be Good.

Anchor

The Lighter Side of Religion

by SHARYL MARRIOTT LOWRY

Saint Homunculus, martyr,
a common fellow of little account,
went to his death in the colosseum,
terrified.
No faith triumphant lifting, lighting his eyes;
no radiance of hope.
Numbly, blindly holding
to one strong single certainty -
for the honour of Christ there was no way
out,
nothing else to be done.
But by God's grace
his common habit of charity clung to him.

And at his last moment
he saw with quick compassion,
the lion, his executioner, starved, tormented,
degraded.
And with a sight of pity yielded his heart.
The lion, loving Homunculus,
bolting the feast too rapidly,
choked on a gobbet of saint -
And presently, licking his whiskers,
ambled nimbly into Paradise.
There in the presence of Him they had
trusted,
man and beast;
a joyous astonishment cracked their celestial

funny-bones.
And over the starry grasses they moved
together -
Homunculus striding, shouting with laughter
that echoed in alleluias,
And capering close at his side,
the golden clown
purring like thunder ...

F.E.R.

In this age of serious prose I thought I might share with you something of the lighter side of Religion - man's imperfect invention.
Ah, well, God can always work good from even our most atrocious actions!

Arthur Black

No room for pseudo-skis



Passed a fellow on skis on my way to work this morning.

You realize how unremarkable a sight that would be on most mornings? We live in the Great White North after all. We get our share of snow (and Mexico's too). And of course, we never tire of bragging to tourists from Toronto and other tropical spots: "Why we have ski trails right outside our back door, practically!"

Nope, it's really not that unusual to encounter a cross-country skier on your way to work in these parts ... most mornings.

But hardly ever in September, when the leaves are still on the trees, the ducks and geese haven't even packed, much less left, and snow is nothing more than a nasty, unconfirmed four-letter rumour.

And another thing -- this anonymous athlete shuffling and stabbing his way along the highway wasn't exactly decked out like Jackrabbit Johannssen. All he had on was a pair of jogging shorts, a tank top and a glistening body-stocking of perspiration.

Later in the day, I checked the apparation out with my pal, Al. He works in a sporting goods store and keeps me filled in on all the latest fitness trends -- who's hyperventilating at what, activity-wise.

Al explained that what I'd seen was merely the latest exercise fad to hit this neck of the woods: dryland skiing. What you do, says Al, is you buy these funny little skis with wheels on them that look sort of like frontier roller skates. Then you buy two specially

adapted ski poles, put one in each hand and ... go skiing.

Down the Trans-Canada, through the schoolyard, across the McDonalds parking lot, wherever. You can "dryland ski" just about anywhere, just about any time of year -- providing there's little or no snow on the ground, of course.

Am I the only one who finds the whole concept of dryland skiing a little ... well, funny?

I don't mean for serious athletes. If you're eyeballing a slot on the 1988 Canadian Olympic Team, well maybe you need a set of dryland skis. Buy them. More power to you. I hope you take advantage of every physiotherapeutic training aid this side of anabolic steroids. But you and I both know that's not the market

dryland skis are aimed at. If it was, they'd only sell about 136 pairs world-wide -- and 80 per cent of those would be snapped up by hulking, hairy-chested East German brutes with names like Ingrid and Svetlana.

Nope, the folks who manufacture dryland skis have another, more lucrative herd of consumers in their sights: you and me. They want to sell us our very own dryland skis so we can get out there in our monogrammed, colour-coordinated, designer sweat suits and ski our buns off, all year round.

Well, I can't speak for you, but I can assure the dryland ski boys that I won't be biting on this one. Nosirree. It'll take more than a

slick PR campaign and toothy endorsements from Wayne Gretzky to get me jumping on any Participatory Get Fit bandwagon.

Particularly when it's a fad masquerading as something else. Dryland skiing is like asking Kurt Harnett to sprint on a unicycle -- or Alex Baumann to swim a few lengths in a pool filled with Rice Krispies!

Dryland skiing isn't skiing. It's pseudo-skiing. Ersatz cross-country. Fake.

Besides ... where would I store the damn things? There's no more room in the basement.

Not unless I sell my rowing machine, my rebounder and my exercise bike.