

Editorial Page

Tel.: 825-3747

The Terrace Bay-Schreiber News is published every Wednesday by Laurentian Publishing Limited, Box 579, Terrace Bay, Ont., P0T-2W0 Tel.: 807-825-3747. Second class mailing permit 0867. Member of the Ontario Community Newspaper Assn. and the Canadian Community Newspaper Assn.

General Manager.....Paul Marcon
Editor.....David Chmara
Admin. Asst.....Gayle Fournier
Production Asst...Carmen Dinner

Single copies 40 cents.
Subscription rates: \$15 per year / \$25 two years (local) and \$21 per year (out of town).

Northerners will pay for distance travelled annually

In mid-February, the Ontario Automobile Insurance Board announced its decision on new car insurance rates.

In general terms, the news wasn't as bad as it could have been, although some drivers, namely younger women and people with little driving experience, will likely face large increases.

The announcement of a 7.6 per cent increase (which can be 9 per cent higher or 20 per cent lower) is considerably lower than the original Mercer proposal calling for a 35 per cent increase.

I seriously doubt whether the driving public would have accepted such a large increase.

Insurance rates will now be determined by a driver's previous driving record, previous claims, territory lived in, vehicle use and the amount of kilometres driven annually.

It's this last characteristic of determining insurance rates that has me somewhat concerned.

Residents in Northern Ontario must drive considerably longer distances than their counterparts elsewhere in the province.

Whether it's for medical reasons, vacations or visiting family or friends, the kilometres add up fast. Drivers are being penalized for living in isolated communities.

Sure, as the number of kilometres driven increases, so does the risk of being involved in an accident.

But drivers in Northern Ontario have few options when it comes to distances travelled.

Granted, we don't have to drive for an hour or two to get to and from work as drivers down south do, but then again, we don't face the volume of traffic southerners have to deal with.

We may travel fewer kilometres to get to work, but take a trip to Thunder Bay, as many people regularly do to either shop or visit a doctor, and you're looking at a total of 550 km.

And God forbid anyone should make a return trip to Toronto or anywhere else in Southern Ontario. Such a trip would add a whopping 2,460 km onto your car. Even a trip to Sault Ste. Marie is roughly 1,000 km and to Sudbury is 1,580 km.



If I'm not mistaken, the distance categories for insurance rates are: under 10,000 km; 10,000 to 20,000 km; and over 20,000 km. I'm sure many, if not most people in Northern Ontario fall into the latter category.

Another problem with auto insurance in Northern Ontario is the very limited number of companies which provide auto insurance.

This reduces the amount of competition and therefore companies can get away with charging higher rates.

The N.D.P. is calling on the government of David Peterson to look into the matter, to try to increase the number of companies offering auto insurance in Northern Ontario.

Let's hope they are successful and that an increase in these companies, and subsequently lower insurance rates due to increased competition, will offset the penalty we're paying for driving vast distances.

Letters to the Editor are always welcome. Please address your letters to:

Editor
Terrace Bay/Schreiber News
Box 579
Terrace Bay, Ont.
P0T 2W0

In order that we may verify authorship, please include your name and phone number.

Feel free to use this forum to express comments, appreciation, inform or advise people on anything of public interest.

Arthur says: I'll never forget Ronnie and The Curser

When you move away from a place you've lived for a long time, interesting things happen to your head.

At first, it's kind of frightening. Your mind is crammed with knowledge that's not much good to you anymore. For the first few months most of your waking thoughts and all of your dormant ones are about the old place. You remember the quickest route across town, where to get the best perogies, which stores open on Sunday.

But gradually the memories fade. Your recall of the Old Home Town gets sort of blurry. One day you realize with a start that you can't remember some of the major streets, or the name of the town's hockey team.

It's been nearly five years now since I left Thunder Bay, and my once-crystal-clear recall is getting a little foggy around the edges.

Funny thing is, it's the memory of the big stuff that's fading. I can remember trivial

things as if I saw them this morning.

I may no longer recall my Thunder Bay phone number, the face of my North Ward alderman, or the name of that funny department store downtown, but I remember Ronnie and The Curser perfectly.

Those two guys probably knew the geography of the city as well as anybody. They knew it because they walked. And walked and walked and walked.

Summer and winter, blizzard and heat wave, you'd pass them trudging along the side of the road. It might be downtown, it might be in the suburbs -- could even be on the highway out of town. God knows where they were going or where they'd been.

The Curser was a short, stocky, swarthy guy who always wore a ski cap, a windbreaker and rubber boots. He marched along at an almost military pace, and if he thought no one was listening he let go with a skein of cusswords that would have

brought a blush to the cheeks of a drill sergeant.

And there was Ronnie, a tall, skinny native guy who wore a grubby black overcoat, no hat and a hopeful smile. Mostly, all



Arthur Black

Ronnie ever said was "Got a quarter, Jim?" To Ronnie, all white folks looked alike and answered to the name Jim.

I heard a story about him once. One of his regular

mooching stops was a shop that sold Indian art work. On this one day, the proprietor, a little exasperated with the frequency of his visits, said: "No dice, Ronnie. If you want any money, you have to work for it."

Ronnie looked around the shop, noticed prints by Benjamin Chee Chee and Norvai Morrisseau. "You like drawin's, eh?" he mused. Then he leaned across the counter, picked up a ballpoint, and, shabby sleeve of overcoat trailing over a sheet of blank wrapping paper, executed a gorgeous drawing of a galloping horse. He did it in a single, flowing line. In seconds.

Upside down.

There were other eccentrics who called Thunder Bay home and gave the rest of us something to think about from time to time. There was The Madame -- a strange little woman who patrolled the streets in plucked eyebrows, a Cabbage Patch wig and enough face powder to slalom in. There was

Christmas Mary, a rotund little ball in a raccoon fur coat and a traditional Finnish cap all covered with sequins. She looked for all the world like Mrs. Claus, waiting for Santa to finish his rounds. One Christmas, Christmas Mary wasn't around any more and it was a little like hearing the news that JFK had been shot.

Once I saw The Curser in trouble. A gang of kids on bikes were taunting him. Before I could even blink, an old Finlander who'd been sweeping his porch was chasing those kids down the road with his broom, calling them names even The Curser didn't have in his repertoire. When the kids had scattered the Finlander went back to sweeping his porch, The Curser marched off, arms swinging, mouth cursing.

I remember that about Thunder Bay: It always made room for its eccentrics. In fact, it's the one thing I'll probably never forget about the place.