

Timing really is everything

I'm just back from the nation's capital - Ottawa - the place where great ideas go to get debated and die.

I was there to speak to a group of mining executives who were meeting at the charming and timeless Chateau Laurier. "Procurement Services" was the precise name of the particular corporate structuring. Right. My father was a miner from Schumacher, Ontario and drank at the Maple Leaf Hotel in Timmins and I don't know the real meaning of "procurement services"? No matter what the name tags said, these people weren't fooling anybody.

I don't know if you have ever been asked to be the guest speaker at a formal dinner but it's a thrill and an honor particularly

William J. Thomas

All The World's A Circus

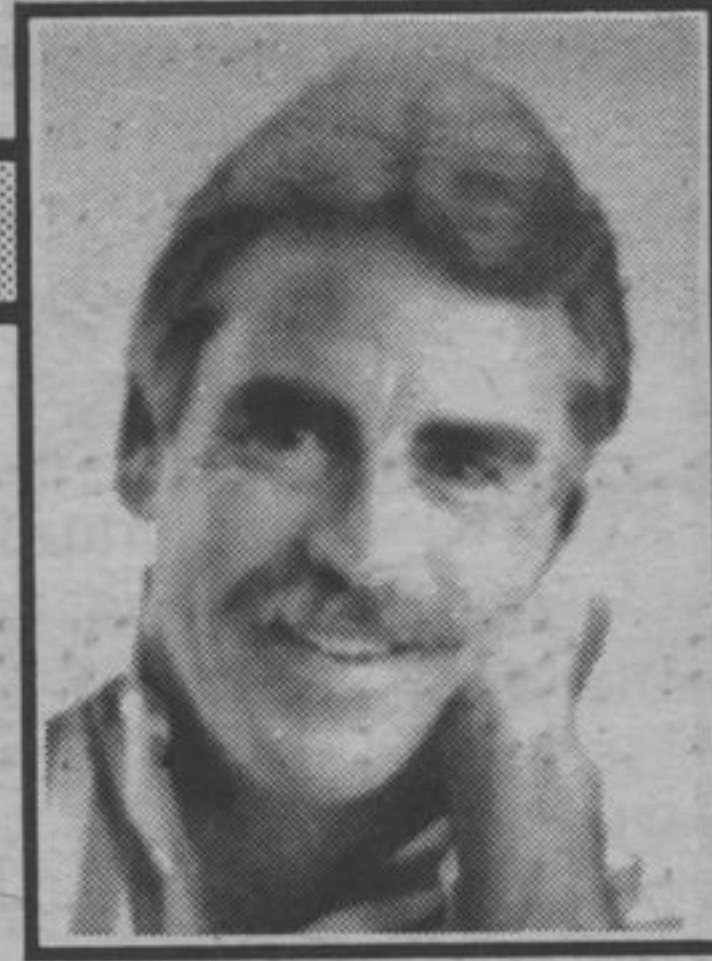
after the guy who introduces you explains he's so pleased you could come because Andre The Giant cancelled at the last minute, because Senator Pat Carney is on the Nutri System Diet and was insisting everybody drink those disgusting-looking milkshakes before dinner, because Senator John Buchanan was stranded somewhere between Parliament Hill and a minimum security detention center and because John Diefenbaker is dead.

"And now ladies and gentlemen.....HEREEEEEES....Wayne Tomalson."

Now I don't do much public

speaking so I picked up a book on the subject before I wrote my speech. Rule #1 of public speaking is to keep the speech simple, keep it so simple, said the book, "that the most slow-witted person in the world can understand it." And I have to tell you, when I took it up to his office to show him, Trade Minister John Crosbie just loved it! He made one, small suggestion that at the end of the speech I sing a few bars of "Pass the Tequila Sheila" but as I said to Mr. Crosbie, that's the song we'll always remember *him* for. Not me.

The other cardinal rules of



public speaking are not to mumble, not to speak too quickly and as I found out that night in the Quebec ballroom of the Chateau Laurier, make sure you have a guy at the head table named Claude (pronounced "Clode" in the Quebec room) who laughs like a rabid hyena having his

prostate examined by a medically unqualified woodchuck. This helps immensely, especially if you are billed as a humorist.

And it takes all the pressure off the guest speaker if Claude is not laughing at the speech but at incredibly dirty jokes being whispered in his ear by his buddy Frank, an Italian guy from Montreal.

This is a great speakers dream - a laughter who brings his own personal comedian to the party.

Of course it's true what experienced speakers say about working a room - timing is everything.

No matter what I was talking about all I had to do was keep an eye on Claude and when his head started falling toward the table

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Little things can mean a lot

Haven't you found that it's not so much the Big Things in our lives that make the most impression, but the little, seemingly innocuous ones which don't mean a darn to anybody else but ourselves?

I'm talking about all the little things that surprisingly come along in the dullness of our daily lives, to add a ray of sunshine, a sparkle, a renewed faith that human nature really isn't as bad as we thought it to be, that there are some good people still around who go out of their way to be kind, considerate, helpful, and just plain wonderful.

Like the person who takes the time and trouble to compliment you on how well you look (after a real sweat-and-toil effort to lose those ugly pounds), or how you are dressed. Doesn't it just lift your spirits way up there and make you feel as though you'd won a million dollars in the latest Lottery Luck-In? Even better. Money is just so much filthy lucre (oh, lay some of that filthy

Olga Landiak

Life, According to Baba

stuff on me!), but a sincere, complimentary remark is straight from the heart and unpurchasable.

The old, old cliché says, money can't buy happiness. Too True. It can buy a heck of a lot of material goods (if that's what you equate happiness to), but after you've had a bellyful of that, then what? You'd give it all away just to hear a warm, kindly, loving voice telling you something about yourself that was not sought for, nor toadied to because of your position, power or riches.

Or when somebody does something for you that is quite unexpected. Gives or sends a small gift, runs an errand, or writes a card or a letter, just to show they are thinking of you. Now isn't that just the warmest of warm, especially when it's not

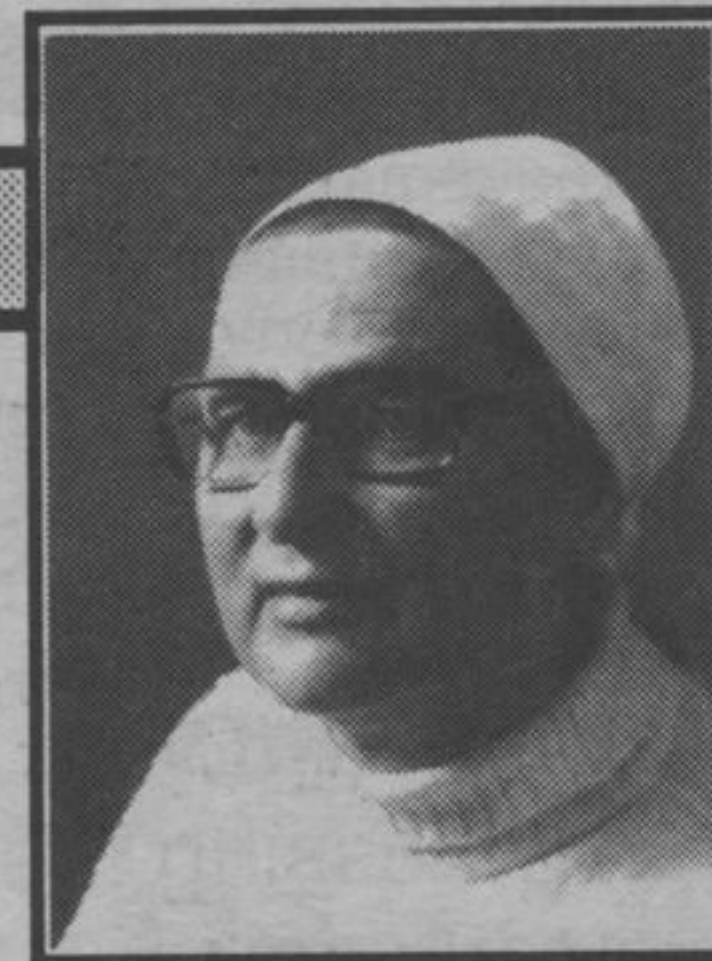
even your birthday, or one of the proscribed calendral occasions such as Mother's or Father's Day. Or Grandma's or Grandpop's. Just the mere fact that they have had you in their thoughts is enough to give you a warm glow of your own.

Or, if some merchant, store keeper or business enterprise does something for you and then waves it off with a smiling, "No Charge!". Now, doesn't that just warm the cockles of your heart for days to come, and don't you just remember that merchant, store keeper or business enterprise forever, go back many times, and tell all your family and friends about them? Of course you do, and you find it's a nicer, kinder world all round.

The telephone is a much abused instrument and sometimes we could hurl a few curses in the

direction of A. Bell's grave, but when that darn thing rings, you pick up the receiver and it's family or an old friend just calling 'to see how you are and what are you up to these days?', you bless Mr. Bell with angel's halo and a pair of seraphic wings.

We all love these little touches which come into our lives and brighten them up no end, and cherish the memories of them long after we've passed through more major happenings, but how often do we turn around and do the same for other people? How



often do we stop off and compliment others on their sunny attitudes and non-complaining natures which make them such a joy to be with and visit?

How often do we pick up that telephone, or that pen and paper, just to say, 'Hello, how are you? Thinking of you.' to others? How often do we pick out and send little gifts that don't cost much money-wise but are worth a million in their sentiment? How often, eh, do we stop off from thinking about ourselves all the time, and think of others in these hundreds of little ways which mean so much?

We all love to have others thinking about, and doing for, us, but how often do we retaliate? We can't be that busy day in and night out, that we can't take a little time off from the hurly-burly insensitiveness of today's living and do some small kind thing for the very next person we meet.

Try it. You'll get as big a kick out of it as that surprised human being. I promise.

Exporting our creativity

The recession is upon us. Even Michael Wilson, our bond merchant finance minister, admits it. In northwestern Ontario, the evidence is everywhere. Malls which once had a waiting list now display "for rent" signs, heading into the busiest retail season of the year. Sawmills have closed permanently or indefinitely. Pulp and paper markets are very soft. Accounting and legal firms report a big increase in receivership business. The only question on everyone's mind is how long and how deep this recession will be.

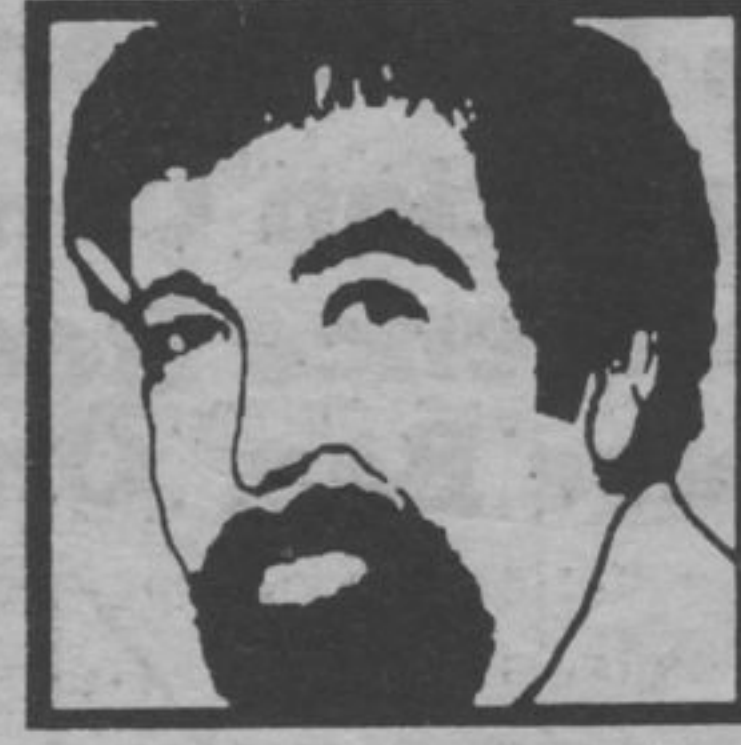
The Royal Bank of Canada's economic gurus have concluded that this recession will not be as deep or prolonged as the one we all remember ten years ago. Jack Vermeeren, the bank's senior economist, told a business outlook conference in Thunder Bay November 13th that the Royal's optimism is premised on four main assumptions:

- a so-called "soft landing" by the United States economy, which has so far only teetered on the brink of recession, and not plunged into one.
- a recent statement by John



NORTHERN INSIGHTS

by Larry Sanders



Crow, governor of the Bank of Canada, that "inflationary pressures seem to be coming under control", and that he was prepared to start reducing interest rates. If interest rates do indeed decline, then the Canadian dollar will fall and the position of our export industries will improve.

- the GST will only have a short term impact on inflation, only raising the Consumer Price Index 1 per cent and for less than three months, after which prices will stabilize or even decline, and thus the inflation rate remain below 5 per cent through 1991.
- continued strength in the European and Japanese economies, so there is no overall weakening in the global economy.

Other forecasts are much more

pessimistic, because they operate on different assumptions, such as no "soft landing" in the United States, and continued stubbornness from John Crow and Michael Wilson on their anti-inflation policy of high interest rates. On top of this, all the forecasters worry about the "wild card" of a possible war in the Middle East, which, even according to the optimistic Vermeeren, "could drive oil prices as high as \$60 a barrel, with predictable inflationary results."

I have a problem believing economic forecasters, although I respect their ability to assimilate an enormous amount of information. Where their analysis breaks down is their inability to cope with the accelerated pace of

change. If you read their predictions issued a year ago, they were way off. No one predicted the reunification of Germany so quickly, and the waves of change that swept across the rest of Eastern Europe. The crying need for new billions of dollars for infrastructure in Eastern Europe has placed an enormous demand on the world's money markets, and kept global interest rates higher than the forecasters predicted. Also, no one predicted Saddam Hussein's brutal annexation of Kuwait and the resulting turmoil in energy markets.

But forecasts sometimes have an impact that far exceeds their accuracy. As consumers read stories predicting that economic times are only going to get worse,

they restrain their spending, and the economic slide gets slipperier. Consumer confidence is further weakened as the economic decline deepens, and layoffs multiply.

At Quetico Centre November 7-9, a "Forum on the Socio-Economic Health of Northwestern Ontario" addressed all this from a regional perspective. Among other things, the forum analyzed our "capacity for change" - our ability to use information creatively, quickly, and seek long-term solutions rather than some "quick fix". The forum was not designed to produce new structures to do this.

Cliff McIntosh, the President of Quetico Centre, and one of the principal designers of the Forum, says "we have all kinds of structures now. The bureaucracy is overwhelming us. My experience in northwestern Ontario is that there are committees upon committees upon committees. And there's that old cliché about committees - keeping minutes and wasting hours. We want to avoid those kinds of things. Really

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