

Editorial

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Remembering those who can't

As another Remembrance Day rolls around, and we're again asked to remember the sacrifices fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers have made fighting in Canada's wars, I am reminded of the scene I witnessed a year ago last August, when three Canadian ships left Halifax Harbour for the Persian Gulf.

Thankfully, all the crews that left that day made it back in one piece. But we didn't know that the day they left. And what struck me most were the crying wives and girlfriends who stood desolate on the dock, waving goodbye to loved ones.

It was my first assignment in my university Journalism course, and no matter what form of self-reasoning I used, I couldn't bring myself to approach one of the sobbing wives or children to ask them a couple of questions.

Many of my colleagues had no such qualms, however. I remember one particularly annoying CBC reporter who asked a little girl if she thought she'd ever see her daddy again.

This was not some remote story on television, or an old news reel from past wars, this was happening in Canada in 1990. The reasons why they were going didn't matter. Whether or not you liked Mulroney and the GST and distinct society status for Quebec didn't matter either.

All the concerns that at times seem so big paled in comparison to the feeling on the dock that afternoon. If ever there was a country that lacked perspective about what's really important, Canada is it.

The whole experience served as a reminder to me of the sacrifices people have made to secure our way of life. These were people my age, who looked very much like me, who were going off to fight a far off war, while I lived it up at university.

No one dared dream at the time that Saddam Hussein was such a bad military leader that our troops wouldn't see much action. Then everyone was worried, and expected the worst.

This experience is my only connection to what it must have been like on the home front during the two World Wars and Korea. You feel helpless and useless and hope for the best.

My uncle, who fought in the terrible house to house battles for Italy during WWII, once told me a story about how one of his friends had jumped on a live grenade and saved everyone else in the room. He felt guilty for surviving, and he felt the burden of owing a debt he can never repay.

As we offer Canada's war dead the respect and thanks they deserve, we should remember the unrepayable debt we owe all of our veterans, and appreciate them while we still can. Their contributions have secured our way of life — that we have the luxury to debate niceties like interest rates and unemployment figures, and not freedom of speech and association.

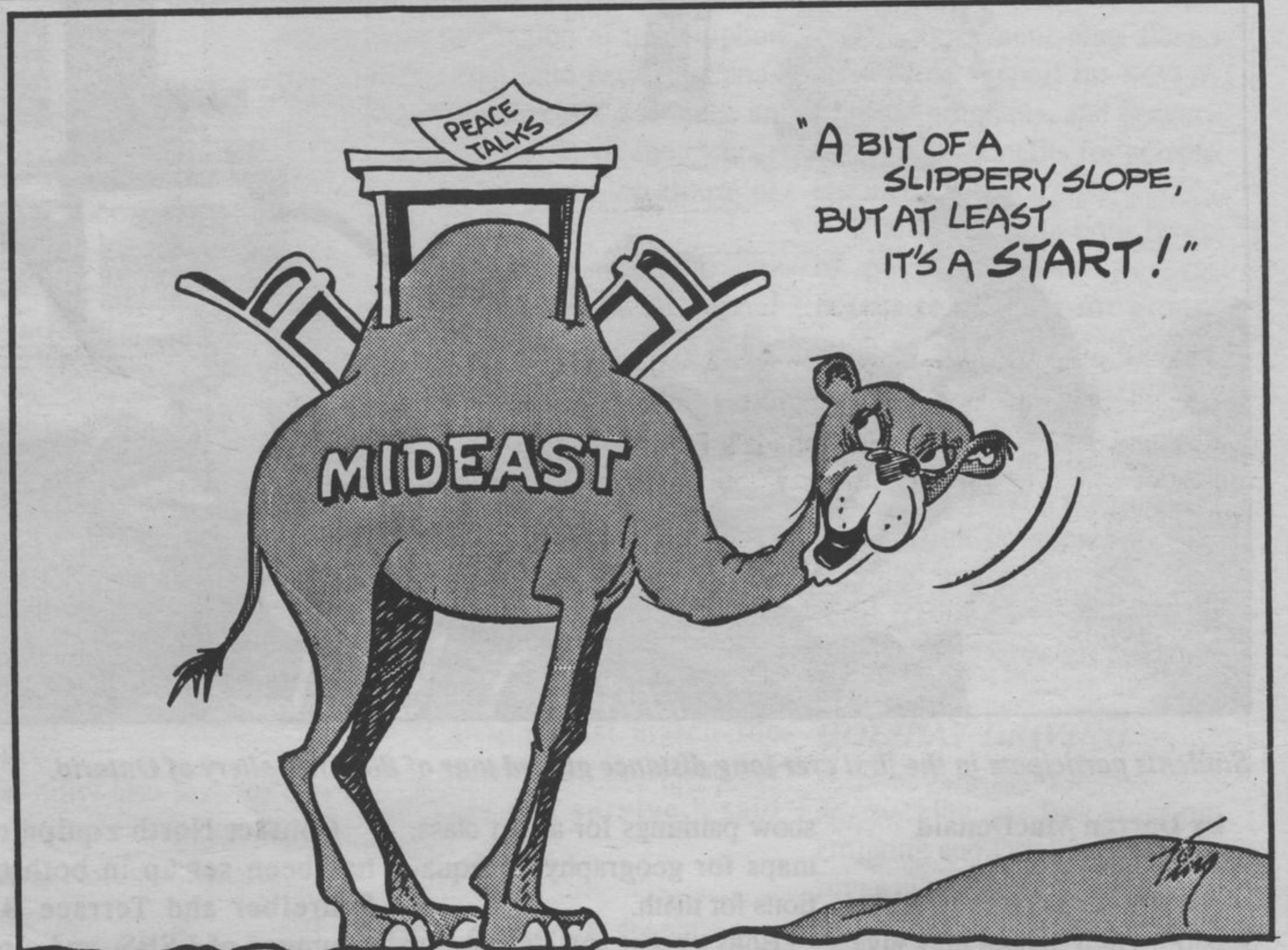
Letters to the Editor

The Terrace Bay Schreiber News welcomes letters to the editor on any subject.

Letters must be signed and have the phone number and address of the author for verification. We will not knowingly print false libelous or anonymous comments.

Letters to the Editor are important to community newspapers. They serve to reflect opinions of members of the community we serve. However, we must insist on these rules to ensure that this very important forum is used responsibly.

Letters can be mailed to the News, Box 579, Terrace Bay, P0T 2W0, or dropped off at the News office, 13 Simcoe Plaza in Terrace Bay.



Decline of the Drive-In

The first one in the world opened in Camden, New Jersey back in 1932.

The last one -- in my neck of the woods, anyway -- closed on October 20, 1991.

Drive-in movies, I'm talking about. Or 'Park-In Theatre' as that first New Jersey one was awkwardly called. It wasn't much. Just a big sheet of canvas hoisted over the roof of a scuzzy machine shop on the outskirts of Camden. The hopeful proprietor had bulldozed flat a field in front of the screen, creating parking space for 400 cars.

On opening night, 14 showed up. Each driver paid 25 cents for the privilege of squinting at a forgettable feature-length piece of fluff entitled *Wife Beware*.

It was a lousy flick, but then who ever went to the Drive-In for the quality of the movies?

Drive-Ins were never intended for serious cinema buffs. The sound systems were pathetic, your line of vision was obscured by passing cars, skimming popcorn boxes and distressed-looking patrons looking for the washroom -- not to mention the welter of bug carcasses ossifying on your own windshield.

But as I say, very few folks went to the Drive-In to see the movie.

And no, madame, we didn't just go for THAT, either. Sure, the Drive-Ins had a seamy rep. "Passion pits" my father called them. I won't pretend that they were playing Trivial Pursuit in that '57 Chevy with the fogged up windows in the back row, but there was a lot of kids in a lot of cars who weren't into any sexual hanky panky.

They were just fantasizing about it.

Fact is, most of the high school kids I knew (including Your Obedient Scribbler) were dateless on a Saturday night, more often than not. We went to the Drive-In anyway. Loading up on junk food, laughing at the terrible movies and letting rip with megadecibel wolf whistles whenever we spotted a car in which the heads had disappeared from view.

I tell ya, there's no substitute for young

sophistication.

But randy teenagers were not the only Drive-In regulars. A lot of the incoming vehicles featured Mom and Dad up front, closely followed by a backseat full of hyperventilating kids, from adolescent down to toddler. Drive-Ins were a swell recreational deal for young parents low on cash. Where else could you find a place that would feed you, entertain you and allow you to fall asleep if you felt like it?

Plus you could get in wearing your pyjamas.

Such a good idea, the Drive-in, and now they've almost as scarce as pterodactyl eggs. Why? What killed the Drive-In?

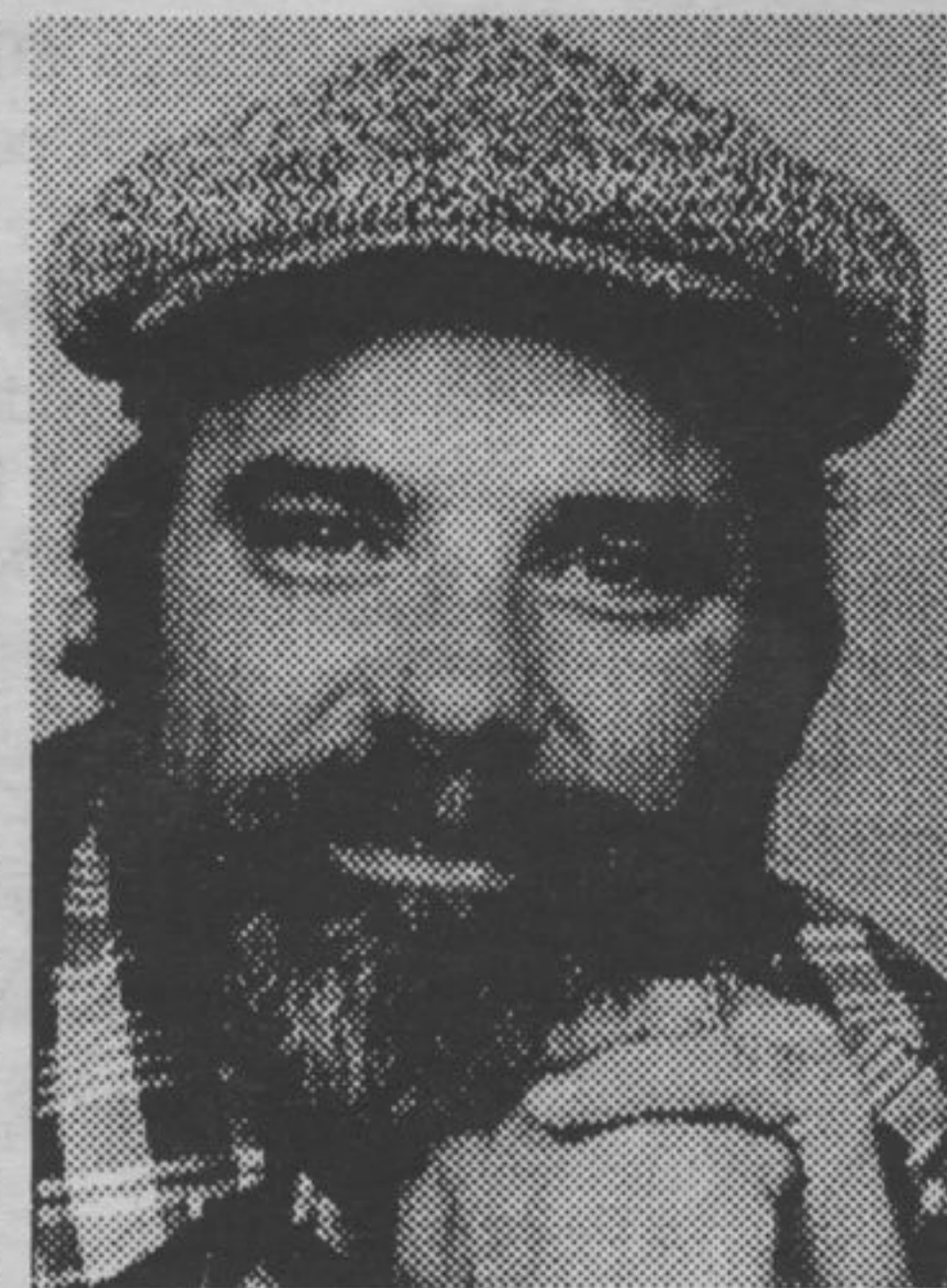
A couple of things, I think. The price of land for starters. Any Drive-In worth the price of admission has got to have at least 5 clear acres of parking.

Any idea how many townhouses you can cram into 5 acres?

Then we have the modern car. Back in the 40's, 50's and 60's, North American cars were big and roomy, with sofa-sized seats and enough in-cab space to stage a volleyball game. Today's cars look like attache cases. They're cramped and unyielding. Only a masochist would willingly spend an evening in them.

So the Drive-In screens are going blank, one after another. On October 20, 1991, it was the turn of the K-W Drive-In in Kitchener, Ontario. The K-W's been packing them in Friday and Saturday nights for the past 41 years. On the last night, just seventeen carloads paid to see *Forbidden Planet*, the last film that would ever flicker across the K-W's concrete block screen. The site has been sold to -- here's a surprise -- a land developer.

Forbidden Planet was pretty bad -- even as lousy sci-fi thrillers go. But I'll betcha it's infinitely better than the next thing that pops up where the K-W Drive-In used to be.



Arthur Black