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Editorials

A 500 million dollar mistake

The federal system of government has its place, but that place should never include people. For people are for real. But Ottawa and reality are worlds apart.

So it is pointed out so dramatically in Walter Stewart's 207-page book, "Paper Juggernaut—Big Government Gone Mad", now available at John Lord's in Stouffville. It's all about the bogged-down Pickering Airport, a 500 million dollar white elephant that, according to the writer, was so anaemic in supportive facts and figures, it should never be initiated in the first place.

While the result of Stewart's "investigation" may be startling to some, it really only supports what Dr. Charles Godfrey and his People or Planes organization have been saying for years—nobody wanted it; nobody needed it and nobody selected the site.

Stewart's claim that much of the "planning" was done in secret, is no real revelation. This had to be. However, he says a cost estimate of \$500 million was reduced down to \$300 million because the initial figure would appear "too scary". If true, the decision was both stupid and inexcusable.

While ignorance is no excuse, we honestly believe that Federal Transport Minister Don Jamieson and his successor, Jean Marchand, weren't sufficiently "clued in" as to what was going on. In fact, from a remark made by one of the ministers at a particular meeting, we wondered at the time if he himself was certain as to the location of the site plus all its implications.

Let's face it. The civil servants are the government. They make the decisions. The ministers, while held responsible for these decisions, are merely figureheads. Thus a continual merry-go-round of promotions and demotions. The ministers change but the civil servants carry on.

This newspaper supported the Pickering Airport plan. We felt it would be good for the economy of the community. We also felt that the government, both federal and provincial, knew what it was doing. That the joint announcement, March 2, 1972, was based on facts and years of study.

Walter Stewart's book makes one wonder. Too bad it couldn't have been written seven years ago. It might have saved "you know who" five hundred million dollars.

Our shoddy postal service

Recently, an Agincourt area resident took out a one-year subscription to this newspaper. On payment of his ten dollars, he passed the casual comment that he hoped he'd receive his copy the same week of publication, meaning Friday or Saturday.

We made him no promise. For chances are he won't, in fact, he may not receive it by the end of the next week and maybe not at all.

The service, south of Steeles Avenue, at least for second class mail, is atrocious due to what would seem to be chaotic conditions within the distribution depot on Progress Avenue.

This terminal, so organized and automated, was supposed to solve all previous delivery problems. Instead, the opposite has occurred. It's worse rather than better.

Subscribers tell us all kinds of horror stories, mostly about waiting up to a month for one paper, then receiving four. They

become irritated, then angry. And so do we.

The majority of Metro residents want The Tribune for one reason—the ads. These ads, auction sales in particular, are often outdated if the paper is three weeks late in arriving. Hence the frustration.

Branch post offices, Stouffville included, have been extremely co-operative. Yet they (and us) bear the brunt of the criticism because the subscriber has no where else to turn.

The robots within the station on Progress Avenue aren't so accessible.

Time and time again, this newspaper has appealed to postal authorities to correct this shameful situation, to no avail. As a last resort, we're taking our complaint to M.P. Sinclair Stevens in the hope that he, now in the driver's seat, can twist a few arms and bang a few heads.

We deserve better and so do you.



Sugar and Spice

A novice at writing novels

By Bill Smiley

Every September, after a long summer vacation several of my colleagues ask me, jeeringly, I'm afraid, "Well, did you write that novel?" Or, "Did you polish off your play?"

And every September, I have to come up with an excuse. "No, I broke my pelvis sky-diving." Or, "I had it well in hand until the day I was out sailing we crashed into a 200-pound sturgeon, and I suffered a bad concussion."

One gets pretty good at the instant retort, the swift riposte, after twenty-odd years of it. To tell the truth, "Well, uh, no, I spent the summer drinking beer and going to auction sales and swimming and cutting my toe-nails, and trimming the corn on the ball of my foot, and reading four hundred novels, and cooking up a storm of frozen dinners," would be out of character.

Because every June I swear to all and sundry that I'm going to turn out a piece of prose that will make Dylan Thomas, Ernest Hemingway, Mordechai Richler and Margaret Laurence wish they'd been born thirty years later.

Some years it's going to be an autobiographical novel, with absolutely nothing held back. I warn my wife: "Can you take it, sweetie? There will be no holds barred. Everything exposed. The whole business down in black and white." She nods as she finishes the dishes.

Other years it's going to be a play that exposes the whole rotten, corrupt, perverse, middle-class life of this country. The wet teabags in the sink, the un-made beds, the after-breakfast martinis, the secret racism as we watch the Indians being decimated on the late-late show.

But, somehow, after twenty years of this

charade, I might as well face the fact that I am neither a Margaret Trudeau nor a Tennessee Williams.

A new piece of fiction that is going to sell, must have certain ingredients: sex, drugs, violence, perversion.

How can a guy write a redhot article when he has lived a practically pure life for a number of decades?

How can a guy write explicit sex scenes about nipples hardening and the scream of an orgasm, when all he's seen for the last twenty years is a couple of robins having an affair in the back yard?

How can a guy write about drugs when his nose is so many times fractured that he can't even smell onion breath, let alone the scent of marijuana?

How can a guy write about violence when the worst incident he has seen in years is one grandboy giving the other a cheap shot in the back when the other wasn't looking, knocked the other's head against the corner of the picnic table, and drawn blood and tears? It's not exactly Attila the Hun.

How can a guy write about perversions when the only thing he's seen for years is a baby-girl bluejay trying to pretend she's a baby-boy bluejay? Or a hen-pecked husband trying to pretend, when his wife has gone to the john, that he's Henry VIII?

No, I'm afraid you'll have to stick to TV, the movies, and Harlequin Romances, if you want your favorite ingredients. I just don't seem to have any background upon which to draw.

When my wife says to me, after a particularly brutal party or weekend, "How come you never have bags under your eyes, like me?", I merely answer the truth: "A clean heart and a pure mind, my dear." I must

admit that after the thirtieth repetition of this little slogan, she emitted an unladylike remark. But it's the truth.

It's not that I haven't had lots of experience. I went through a world-rending depression and ate potato-skin hash and porridge soup. I went to work at 16, for thirty dollars a month, twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

I survived a war in which both sides were shooting at me, especially the British Navy. I was almost kicked to death by a German Feldwebel, just because I'd stolen his pipe and tobacco. I ate mangels and drank rainwater in a prison camp. I spent a year in a T. B. sanatorium. I've survived thirty years of marriage, two rotten kids, and am still coping with two grandboys who are the most ingenious methods of torture since the Inquisition. I even graduated from a university, with honors, when they still had standards.

I spent eleven years in the editorial chair of a newspaper, which has buried many a man. I have lived through, and thrived on, teaching teenagers, which has sent more people to an early grave than did the editorial chair.

But still, whenever I think of writing a searing play, or a violent autobiography, I can't seem to put fingers to typewriter.

I think I know what's wrong. I didn't hate my father. That seems to be what you need to get you going. Or, if you're Jewish, your mother.

My father was a mild decent man. He didn't beat me. Indeed, he didn't pay much attention to me. My mother was loving, but not overprotective. Darn it, why didn't I have rotten parents like everybody else, so I could write a vicious, sexy, perverse novel?



Window on Wildlife

Season for seeing spiders

By Art Briggs-Jude

The web hung like a mist net strung between the needled branches of a small pine. In its close-knit centre, a large yellow and black spider poised on the end of a heavier zigzag strand, ready it seemed to be propelled by this coiled spring likeness. From the foliage below, a young grasshopper climbed the tallest stalk of goldenrod to reach the warm sun that brightened the plants yellowed plumes. He rested there for some time, till the dew was gone and the warming trend triggered his voracious appetite. Then, spying some lush greenery through an opening in the pine boughs he launched himself in that direction.

The alert spider tensed as he saw the shadowed insect form approach, then sprang into action when the grasshopper hit the web. The surprised jumper meanwhile had managed to get one powerful back leg loose and was in the process of freeing himself, when the spider charged. Quickly grasping the struggling hopper with its front legs, the spider began turning its victim over and over, all the while wrapping it with strands of new-formed silk. Soon the whole insect was encased in a mummy-like shroud, whereupon the master weaver paralyzed it with a single bite, then carried it bodily to the centre of the web. There it would devour it, or maybe even store it for a leaner day in autumn.

If you walk through uncut fields at this season, or look along your garden hedgerows, you'll probably see this black and yellow Argiope suspended head down in its characteristic web. With a body length of one full inch and such conspicuous bright markings, it's among our largest and more colorful spiders. It belongs to the family called Orb-weavers, a group noted for their engineering feats of web construction. When

we look at these intricate patterns of perfection, its hard to visualize they were constructed in the dark of night and are completely replaced every few days.

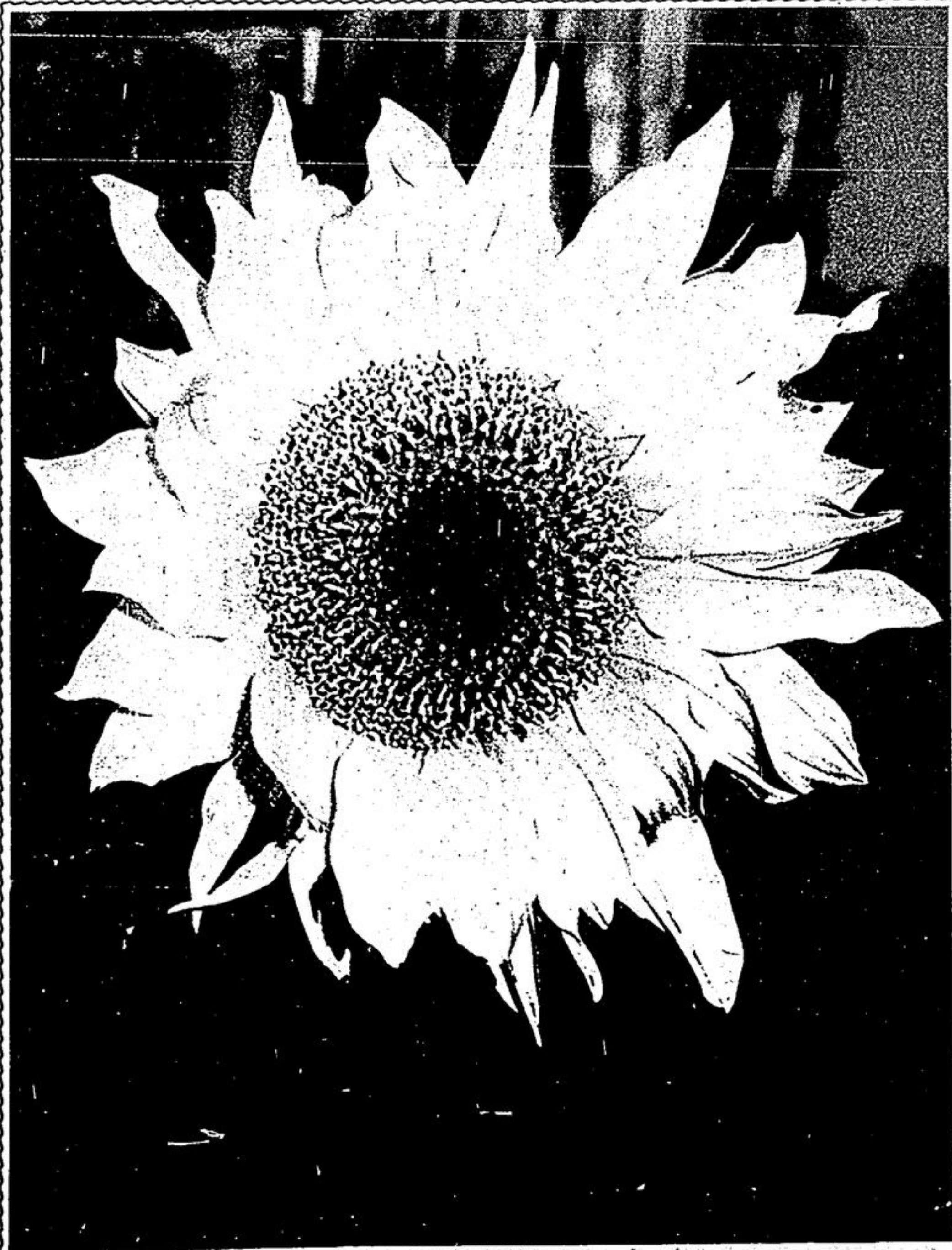
Unlike the fibers formed from the mouths of caterpillars (silk worms) spider web material is produced from glands in the base of the abdomen. The outlets of these glands are called spinnerets and when the fluid on emergence meets the air it hardens to form the strands we see. Actually these amazing fibers are insoluble in water, and will stretch as much as one quarter their length before breaking. In fact the silk from one southern spider is the strongest natural fiber known to man and was formerly used by island natives to fashion fish nets. But when we begin to give spiders more than just an apprehensive look and find out more about them, we realize that all the kinds are not web-weavers. Yet instead of detracting from our observations, these traits do in effect stimulate our interest and broaden our knowledge of these much maligned creatures. Most spiders for instance do produce silk fiber, but many use it only to create egg cases for their young. Others, however, form draglines to travel from one perch to another, while balloon spiders release silk strands into the air until they are lofted to a new location on the strength of a breeze. The much heralded trap door spiders of the southern U.S. dig a tube-like cavity in the ground which they line completely with silk. To make the hinge on the lid, this spider merely chews around the rim leaving one side attached. The outside is covered with debris and the spider sits with the door closed waiting for the vibrations of some unsuspecting insect above.

We can't help wonder at the remarkably instinctive behaviour of these small creatures

when we discover they are almost the only animal besides man that makes traps to capture prey. In fact, some species of spiders actually throw a snare of silk over their victim, while others like the Bolas spider, cast for passing moths in the manner of an angler using a sticky globule attached to a silk line. Among the more interesting members of this catching group are the Triangle spiders found as far north as southern Canada. Its three-sided web is in fact anchored on one point by the spider itself. When an insect comes in contact with the web, the spider pulls the fine mesh tight, then suddenly lets it go slack to further entangle its prey.

However, between the familiar Daddy-long legs of our sheds and cellars and the ominous Black Widow spiders of literary prominence, there are a whole host of interesting creatures walking on eight legs. Few spiders will bite, and all offer fascinating observations right in your own area. If you take the time, you may even see a Pirate spider invade the web of another and attack it, or a brown Wolf spider chase an insect over the rocks to make its capture. On our lawns and low places you'll see the tunnel webs of the Funnel Weavers, and to get a good look at the occupant, tickle the edge of the web with a long straw.

And because spiders are found almost everywhere in abundance you'll have no trouble finding them. They're an intriguing group of small creatures that go about their daily task of consuming millions of insects without much fanfare. So the next time you see a spider in your garden stop and look, then step around it for a change. Doing you no harm and doing your plants some good seems a sensible reason for leaving it unmolested.



The flower that thrives on sunshine

Often ignored and unappreciated, the sunflower can add color to your garden or even a fence row. This beauty was spotted

by a Tribune cameraman at Lehman's Gardens on the Ninth Line, south of Bloomington.

Jim Thomas.