

Woods and Wildlife

White Pine official tree

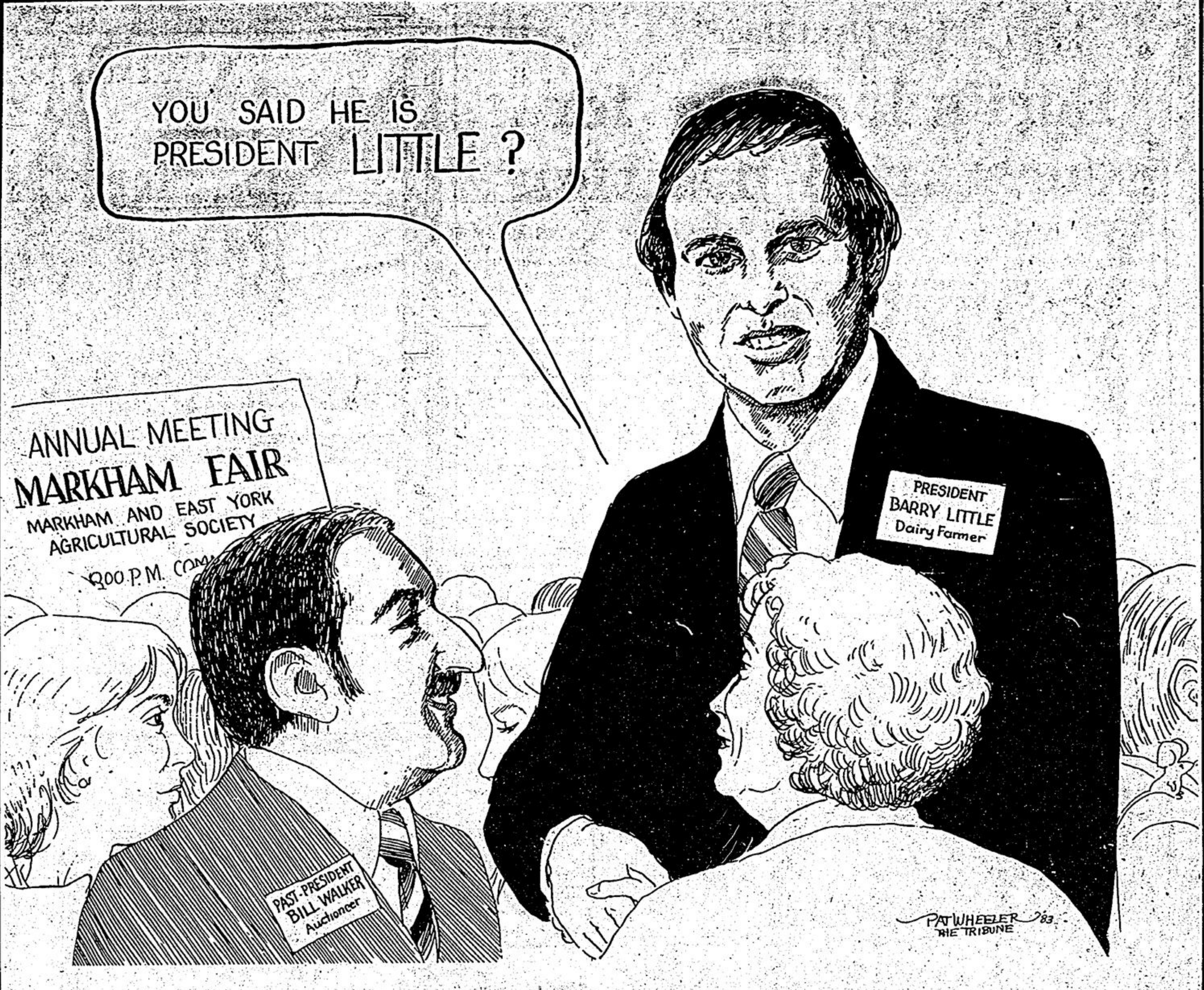
BY RON REID
Federation of Ontario Naturalists

Quick now, what's Ontario's official flower? Almost everyone must recognize the trillium as our floral emblem, since its three white petals so often serve as a symbol for the provincial government. Not so many are aware that Ontario also has an official mineral, amethyst. Now the Ontario Forestry Association has proposed that we become the first province to designate an official tree, following the practice of most states south of the border.

The choosing of a new symbol is a sensitive matter, so the OFA undertook its selection with the appropriate degree of pomp and circumstance. An Ontario Tree Council was formed, representing more than thirty organizations from industry groups to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. The sole purpose of this body was to choose one species of tree from among the 22 previously nominated for recommendation to the Minister of Natural Resources. On the second ballot, after a complex series of weighted votes, the winner was decided—the White Pine.

No other tree is so tied to the heritage of Ontario as the White Pine, even though the species is not hardly enough to grow in the northern reaches of the province. It was the pine that first attracted lumbermen to southern Ontario—tall straight pine for masts in the Queen's Navy, squared pine timbers floated downriver in great rafts, locally sawn pine for cabins and for early furniture. It is this White Pine too that forms the focus of so many Group of Seven paintings, and that shades many a rustic cabin in cottage country. Although the favoured habitat of white pine is dry sandy ridges, it can survive as well even in the water—sodden peat of a sphagnum bog.

If the White Pine is endorsed as the Ontario tree, the OFA has suggested a series of activities to promote its status. Antique pine furniture, for example, might boast a special provincial tag, or schools might plant White Pines on Arbor Day to celebrate our natural heritage. If all goes well, the bicentennial of Ontario's first major immigration of settlers in 1984 may be the occasion for the unveiling of our new official tree.



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ROAMING AROUND
A teacher-only on Sunday
By JIM THOMAS

The responsibilities placed on the shoulders of an elementary or secondary school teacher are great, both during the learning process and later.

Would you believe—nineteen years in various educational institutions before one is sufficiently trained to take over a class? It's true; and it doesn't stop there. The teacher is continually encouraged to add to his (her) qualifications through seminars and courses. Much like a doctor, dentist and other professional people, the updating of knowledge and information never stops.

This brings me to my question: What qualifications are required to be a Sunday School teacher?

Think about it. A minister, for instance, like the elementary and secondary school teacher, spends a quarter of his (her) life as a student. This, supposedly makes him (her) qualified to teach adults. How much more important then, is it to have qualified persons to teach our children?

I thought about this a great deal last week after Alan Powell, the Sunday School Superintendent at Stouffville's St. James Presbyterian Church, asked me to take over a class of twelve-to-fourteen year olds for one day only, in the absence of the regular teacher.

On one hand, by agreeing to take on this task, I was displaying some integrity, while on the other, I was committing an injustice. For who am I to offer advice and instruction at such a level? What are my qualifications? It's been thirty years since I last served in such a capacity. The occasion was at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham. I rode the three-mile distance by bicycle with Sunday School starting at ten and continuing through to eleven.

I must have been only a substitute because, after about six weeks, I was somehow replaced. I don't recall anyone telling me to leave nor do I remember anyone asking me to come back. I do recall an act of "indiscretion" that obviously irritated one or two parents.

As in most S.S. classes (this one was all boys), there were a couple of lads who were hard to handle. To maintain their interest and persuade them to do a little "homework", I paid each twenty-five cents to learn a prescribed segment of the Books of the Bible. This practice worked wonders with my "troublemakers". They'd do just about anything (including their memory work), to obtain this prize. Their Moms and Dads, however, weren't so impressed, considering it a form of "bribery". And one father told me so. A short time later, I was back in the congregation with the rest of our family and someone else was taking my class.

While my knuckles have fully recovered from that subtle rap, the memory still rings clear. I wasn't about to make the same "mistake" again.

The second most pressing problem was my right to conduct a class at all. Although an Elder in the church, I don't possess a B.B.I. (Bachelor of Bible Information) degree nor am I fully acquainted with all basic doctrines we true-blue Presbyterians are supposed to follow. Regardless, I accepted the challenge; and I studied, burning the midnight oil Saturday, long after Jean had crept under the covers.

Brother, did I learn a lot, things I'd long forgotten as a kid. The truth is, I found the lesson (all about Jesus' visit to the Temple), so interesting, I didn't want to stop. Nor do I intend to. I've considerable catching up to do since those days when we sat around the farm kitchen table and read from Aunt Charlotte's Stories of the Bible.

But did "my kids" learn anything? That's the important thing. I really wish I knew. Anyway, I found them attentive, knowledgeable and willing to participate which is more than I can say for my "class of '53".

But then again, perhaps in thirty years, their substitute teacher has learned a little, too.

Editorials

We don't create news we only report it

The media (and this includes The Tribune), has come in for its share of criticism from Town Council and others, with respect to publicity related to the landfill site and associated issues.

Chastisement of this kind cuts no ice with the Toronto dailies, most radio stations and national TV. They, we suggest, couldn't care less, for, unlike the staff of this newspaper, they're far removed from any contact source.

But not so we here at The Tribune. We know "them" and they know "us". There's no escape.

However, using the media as a scapegoat for Whitchurch-Stouffville's ills is no solution. It's merely something to hide behind.

The Tribune isn't the creator of landfill horror stories. We simply report what's said—by the mayor, members of council, the Con-

cerned Citizens, Regional Health Unit staff and the Environment Ministry.

The adverse publicity, some say, is hurting the Town; and they're right. The Town's being hurt badly and will continue to be hurt until the site is closed and the controversy ends. This, we readily admit, was our main reason for demanding the dump's close-out as of June 30, 1983, as promised by the Ministry. Now, it seems, we'll have this monkey on our back for at two, maybe three more years.

Critics of the media would have us paint a rosy picture—create a silk purse out of a sow's ear. This isn't possible. Why? Because polluted wells, potential health hazards and public protests are dirty business, dirty business that will be "cleaned up" when politicians give people (not dollars) top priority.

Had reason for ecstasy

A positive feeling pervaded the annual meeting of the Markham and East York Agricultural Society, Wednesday night—and no wonder.

With an income balance sheet eclipsing all previous totals, the directors and members had every reason to be ecstatic. For it was a totally successful Fair, apart even from the shirt-sleeve weather and the financial report.

There were innovations in the Fair of '82 that we liked, one of these being the strong accent placed on agriculture. This theme was obvious at every turn, "bridging the gap" as President Bill Walker put it, between urban and rural; producer and consumer.

To this end, President Walker himself must take much credit. He obviously influenced the board in this direction—and it worked; to the overall success of the show.

We see little likelihood of this "atmosphere" changing in '83. The new president, Barry Little, is just as "steeped" in agriculture as his predecessor; not a professional auctioneer but certainly a professional farmer. Undoubtedly, he will want to continue and perhaps add to the rural environment that proved so successful last fall.

The Town of Markham is indeed fortunate to have such an institution in its midst, and the personnel to maintain its standing as one of the top fairs in Ontario.

VIEWPOINT

Seeing the other side
BY JIM IRVING

My car, which is much younger than I, but which seems to think I'm the one who should be providing the power, let me know the other day it was in no mood to travel.

That meant a return to the Richmond Hill garage whose resident physician only recently had pronounced it sound of body; and, as it turned out, renewed problems and costs.

The latter weren't enormous, but had I gone to church that Sunday, I would have had to bend over and tie my shoe laces when the collection plate came around.

So I was angry. Angry, impatient and intolerant of any explanation they might give for something I thought should have been covered a couple of weeks before.

I argued strenuously with the service man, interrupting him in mid sentence, and overriding any of his attempts at explanation with my outbursts. But, of course, I eventually had the work done, paid for it and left, uttering the worst deprecations I could, and in every kind of key.

It made the ride home a joyous one, for I was happily calling them everything in the book of ill-found phrases, until suddenly I realized I'd heard that harangue before. Very recently, too. And what a dead end it was.

Where was it? Ah, yes; at town council when the Concerned Citizens dropped in for tea. The same sort of anger, petulance and disregard for the other's right to speak. I hadn't wanted to believe what the serviceman had wanted to say, no matter how reasonable; and I wasn't going to. He was wrong and always would be. The Citizens were of the same bent.

Fran Sutton and her husband, Doug, speakers for the group, are not the easiest people to listen to. She demands, she doesn't ask; sometimes she threatens. When she receives answers she doesn't want, or that might show her to be wrong, she changes the subject by asking another question.

Her husband, Doug, seems to want only to antagonize. His delivery is sardonic; his tone, contemptuous. He seems unwilling to listen. Just as I at the garage, the verdict has long been in and nothing will change it.

How a little politeness all around would have helped.

Mayor Eldred King, not always the most patient listener, handled this session most admirably, I thought. At least, he did until he indulged in that pettiness about the press: the press is there only in such moments of tension—forgetting that local coverage is constant; that his own picture appears in The Tribune (shaking hands, cutting ribbons) more times than the editor's name; that naturally, such outfits as CBC-TV, are only interested in national stories. Does the mayor think they should be there every week to hear applications for severances?

Mayor King has everything it takes to be a leader. He is handsome, intelligent, articulate, personable and capable. But there is an insecurity in him that seems to make him uneasy about anyone who isn't with him 100 per cent. Instead of welcoming one who might provide a healthy balance to his extreme conservatism; he seems to look on such a possibility as a threat.

A longtime friend of mine, now a well-to-do businessman in Argentina, once told me that when he interviews job applicants, he looks for someone who aims for his own. "That way, I know I'm getting the best one," he said.

Are you listening, Mr. Mayor?

Mayor King asked Mrs. Sutton to try to see both sides of the question. A most reasonable request. Now, if he can only turn the page of his newspaper and see what's on the other side. Then maybe the next time council, the Concerned Citizens and the press get together—at least, meet in the same room—they can pack up their paranoi in their old fit bag and pretend it's the first time around.

There's still hope for a peaceful settlement. At the last meeting, the Suttons brought their tiny baby.

He slept through it all.