

Weekender

Comment

Bicycle paths needed

A proposal by the Unionville Optimists Club to build a network of bicycle paths in Unionville — and eventually extend the plan to old Markham Village and Milliken — is a tremendous idea.

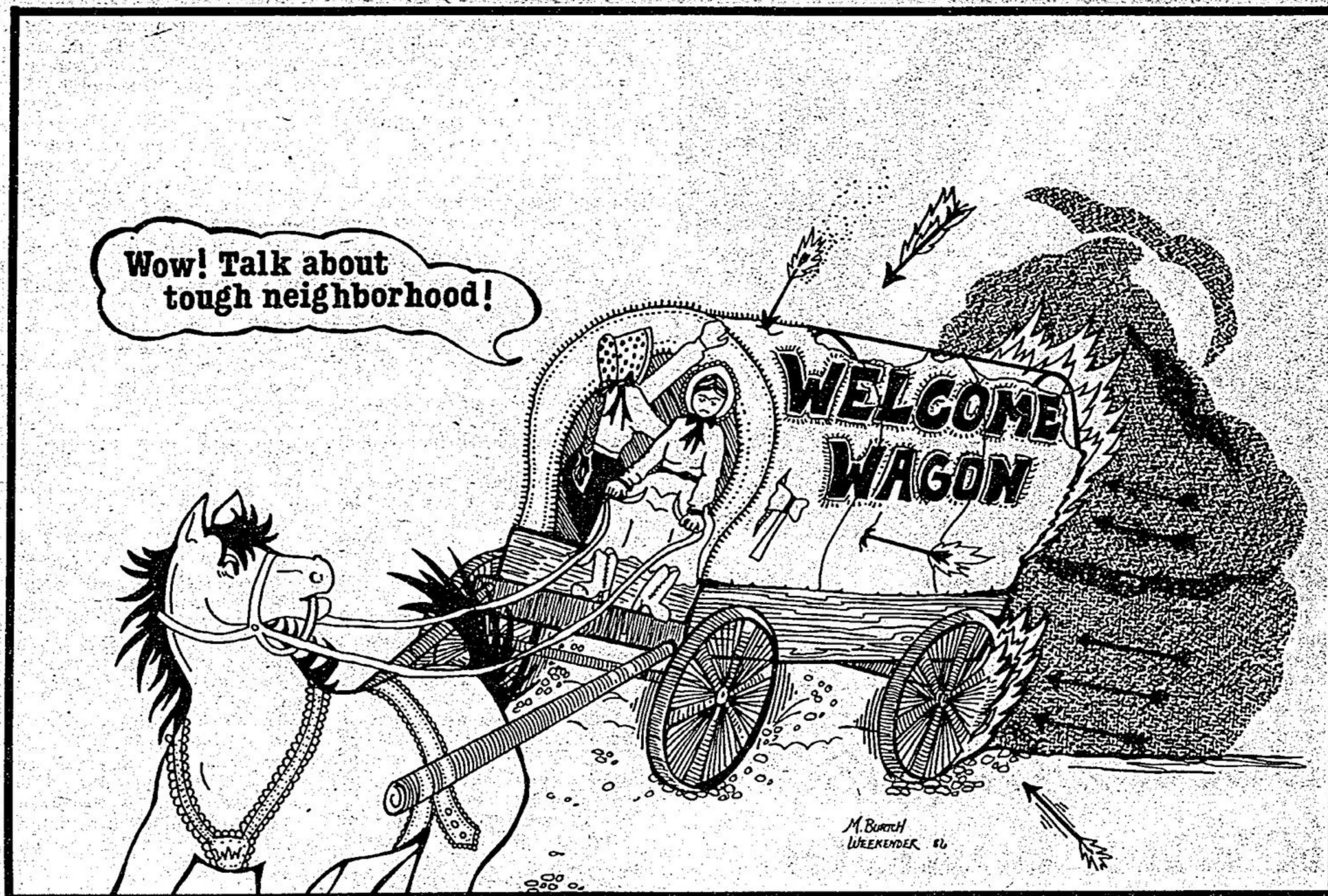
And the time to get started is now when new development is still taking place and land can be set aside for the paths. Developers might even be persuaded to kick in land or pay for construction of parts of the network.

Not only will this parkway be an auto-free place for cyclists and walkers, but it will also enhance parkland that already exists in the town — perhaps linking existing and planned parks.

A special word of commendation goes to the Optimist Club members who have pledged \$7,000 a year for the paths and hope the Town will provide an equal amount.

In 10 or 20 years when the subdivisions currently under construction mature, we will be thankful to Markham Councillors and the Unionville Optimists for helping preserve these greenbelt areas as people parks.

Now is the time for construction to begin.



Bittersweet farewell to my youth

I knew I was in trouble as soon as I approached the ramp. Only my macho pride and an alcohol-induced sense of bravado kept me from jamming on the brakes and aborting this misguided venture.

But those kids from the cottage next door had made it look so easy the day before, as one by one they would take off down the hill on their bikes onto the dock, up the makeshift wooden ramp and into the lake. Besides, I had already chickened out on my previous two approaches, so this time had to be a go, no matter what my better judgment was telling me.

There's something about turning 30 that makes you want to prove to yourself and the world that you can still cut it, that mentally and physically, you've got that teenage invincibility. This is so easy for me to see now, seven years later, having recently returned to the site of my last concession to youthful mindlessness.

The memory was still painfully clear, though the years have a way of helping us see the lighter side of our learning experiences,



embarrassing as they may have been.

Now it is my contention that my son, who was four years old at the time, must shoulder part of the blame for this little misadventure, for it was his idea that I try it.

But my wife just laughs disdainfully at such an excuse. She insists that anyone who would allow himself to be influenced by an infant should reconsider his sense of direction.

Anyway, the little guy dared me to do it. At first I just brushed the idea aside. "That's kid's stuff," I retorted, as I went off to read a comic book.

But the seed had been sown, and I found myself watching ever more intently as those young daredevils kept making those breathtaking plunges.

Finally, I could stand it no longer. We had just returned from an afternoon cruise of the lake, which had involved the imbibing of liquid refreshments of a spirited nature.

Now I should add, at this point, that I am no longer given to such nonsensical indulgences, maturity finally having taken a foothold in my life.

So, spurred on by slightly dulled senses, I decided that the time

was nigh, that I would show those upstart kids, and my four year old son, what a real stunt artist could do.

My effort made Evel Knievel's ill fated Grand Canyon rocket jump look like a moon landing. Bad planning killed me. I hadn't counted on the reduced visibility afforded by the removal of my glasses.

No way was I going to risk losing them, though, so off they stayed. I was pointed towards the dock by my aides. My approach was tentative, to say the least, and didn't allow me to attain enough speed to achieve the height necessary to successfully separate myself from the bike as I went up over the ramp and into the air.

The result was a less than spectacular execution, and a rather nasty 13-stitch "scratch". I guess I shouldn't have chosen the bike with the metal pedals.

Now to this day, what stands out most in my mind is the complete

lack of sympathy extended me by Mrs. S, even after I told her that I had dedicated the jump to her.

I told her it was important for a man to try new things, to respond to challenges. But she obviously wasn't buying. She just smiled limply and suggested that we talk about something else.

I thought that maybe the doctor in the little clinic in Northbrook, where I went for stitching, would show some understanding, perhaps even a touch of quiet admiration for a guy wounded in such a daring fashion.

I soon realized the error of that assumption when, after asking me how it had happened, he examined my knee, then called for his assistant to bring him his saw!

For the remainder of our holiday, I hobbled around the cottage, enduring nicknames like Peg Leg, Chester, and Gimpy. The kids next door continued to perform their death defying bicycle stunts, while I just sat watching, bidding one last bittersweet farewell to my reckless youth.

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