

“My Side of the Fence”

A Collection of opinion articles by Jim Kish

Original foreword by Jim Kish's sister Jodi Kish, 2001

From my desk to you...

This book contains a collection of articles, mainly "The Fence", which were written by Jim. Jim had a zest for life, unlike anyone I've ever known. In putting this book together, some of his writing made me laugh and some of them made me cry, but each one brought back fond memories of Jimmy.

Jim was always a source of entertainment, whether at Boomtown Player rehearsals, Optimist meetings or family gatherings. Jim was never afraid to voice his opinion which was also quite obvious in his column "The Fence". Sometimes controversial but always "Jim". We may not always have agreed with him, but we respected his opinion, just as he respected ours.

Special thanks to Ken Chambers for allowing me to borrow the archive issues of "The Spirit" newspaper, so that I could typeset "The Fence". Thanks to the boys - Derek and Bob, who lent me their fingers to help type. And finally to my co-worker, Louanne Spence who helped me immensely with her vast knowledge of publishing.

Jodi

April 22, 1992

HOW A PAPER WORKS

Recently I have learned how a newspaper operates and it wasn't long before I realized that more people should know how it all comes together. Then they will understand why we sometimes edit submitted copy and sometime don't even print some stories.

First off, papers must be printed in multiples of four. That means there must be four or eight or twelve or sixteen or twenty pages. So if for some reason you have twelve pages and six inches of extra copy, then you must either create another four pages or delete six inches of copy from the original twelve pages. I think you know which is easiest to do.

Next, newspapers must be forty percent news, in content. But news does not make money, it only sells papers. Ads make money. A paper depends almost totally on its commercial ad clientele to generate income. Many of these clients advertise not to increase their business but to promote good public relations and to support their local newspaper. This is why we should support our local businesses, for it is they that allow us to print school news, council minutes and other articles that we all enjoy reading. The businesses that advertise with your community paper should be highly commended for their support. Without them the paper would soon die.

Another point worth mentioning is that all people have different likes and dislikes. Some of those people who could read sports by the hour, don't enjoy reading the personals and still others dislike the letters to the editor. Therefore to satisfy the largest spectrum of the readership we endeavour to print a broad range of topics, none too long or too short. That is why we ask people to submit articles that are two to three hundred words in length.

A twelve page paper seems to be the optimum length for a community tabloid format paper. It's not so big that two people can't put it out each week. It is the number of pages to print and most economical to mail. Although it seems very thin, it represents well over one hundred man hours of labour. Even with three computers we find that we are scrambling to

generate copy on Sunday. Computers speed things up some, but someone still has to compose the stories. The computers only really help in generating different print types and in spelling or grammar checking.

Subscriptions are important because it makes ads easier to sell if you So please remember that we depend on ads to pay for the paper. have a large circulation. But subscriptions barely cover the cost of printing and mailing the paper. So after we have met the forty percent news quota, commercial ads start to take priority, even if it means editing some copy. It is not that we are biased for or against anyone per- son or organization We have simply made a judgment call prioritizing which stories most readers want to read.

May 13, 1992

TO ERR IS HUMAN ?

Mondays here, are what we call zoo day. It's the day when everything must come together. All of the last minute ads come in. The pictures are developed and screened and the paper is laid up to its final form prior to being "shot".

We were running a little late due to spending Sunday with our Mothers, so on Monday morning I raced out to an ad client to shoot some final pictures prior to developing the last roll of film. I shot the pictures and raced back to the office to start work in the darkroom. I rewound the film and popped the back of the camera open only to find that "someone" had failed to load the camera. There was no film in the camera to develop. We were now short critical pictures for articles already laid up.

I went nuts...

I wanted whoever the person was, that closed that camera, to die a slow, painful death. I wanted to inflict harm and and discomfort on them for an eternity. I wanted them to pay...

I used to be a scientist. I studied air flow, metal stress and strain and fluid dynamics. In this world of absolutes I felt comfortable. I was good at my job and proud of that fact. Numbers, statistics probabilities and other empirical data were absolute. No almos,ts, no maybes & no mistakes. It is part of being a true professional. Doctors can't make mistakes, or airline pilots or race car drivers. And neither can research scientists for large companies. A mistake could kill someone and cause a law suit. Not that death would bother the company, but the law suit and the publicity would. So we didn't make mistakes. I guess that's why I felt a little uneasy when I opened the camera this morning. Because in my old company someone would have lost their job over a mistake like that. I didn't know how to deal with the frustration of reshooting that roll of film again.

Never mind griping about it, just get it reshot my boss said. But that wasn't good enough for me. There was no excuse for what had happened and I had to devise a way to prevent it from happening again. What I wouldn't give somedays for that boring research job and all of it rules, policies and consistency. But then again life just wasn't as exciting then either.

Oh, by the way I got over the frustration. You see it was my boss (wife) who forgot to load the camera and as always (even in big companies) the boss can make mistakes and be forgiven. She said it was a lesson well learned and it wouldn't happen again. I love her too much to get real angry,

So I guess we're just not professionals ... yet! And I can live with that!

August 12, 1992

GOODNIGHT SWEETHEARTS GOODNIGHT

Tears darkened the pavement at the corners of Elm and Main in downtown Bothwell last Sunday evening as we, the faithful towns people, gathered to close the most wonderful week of celebrations in the town's 125 year history.

A last minute pyjama parade that had nearly 200 participants and 2 dogs, began its procession from committee person Helma Penich's home on Main Street. The parade which was composed of two parts separated and half went West and the other to the East end of town and then met again at Main and Oak. It then proceeded through the town and ended at the East corner of Elm and Main.

Much to the surprise of many, Dennis and Brett Sansom, had set up their mini van with speakers and stereo. What a wonderful event. What a wonderful committee. What a wonderful town.

Then on the last bell tolled, the fire siren roared to life as if to lift the crowds spirits, back to the present and finish this week with a bang! People were hugging and kissing and shaking hands and crying and laughing and then finally dancing.

We are a very fortunate group of people. It is not often that one sees the compassion and caring that we show for each other in our town. I can't count the times I heard people over the week say "Gee I'm proud to live here."

God Bless the people who worked so hard to plan this week. God Bless the people who took the time to come "home" for the event. God Bless the townsfolk who supported each and every activity that was held. God Bless this little town!

August 26, 1992

OIL COUNTRY

Growing up in West Bothwell, I can't count the number of times I spent out at the Copeland Oil Fields. The smell of sulphur that many people turn their noses up at, is one that brings back fond childhood memories of playing with a dozen other kids out in the oil fields. From riding jerker lines and playing war around the well heads, to watching the monster belts quietly turn those huge wheels in the power house. Then those huge wheels turned little wheels that turned other wheels, till finally like an old locomotive the two huge arms that came off the final pulley to the horizontal wheel that pushed and pulled the steel lines over acres of oil fields pumping crude oil to the surface.

This was life in oil country. A land more rich in folklore than mineral wealth, but to its residents still a good place to call home. We are about to lose this wonderful place. These jerker lines and big wheels Ministry of Environment has decided that the salt brine that has run will soon stop and be replaced by more cost effective pumpjacks. The out of open pipes into the surrounding ditches for over one hundred years will destroy the environment. This brine must now be disposed of properly and at any cost. Even if it means losing a part of the rich heritage that we enjoy here.

The remaining four oil wells in the "Old Sitler" now "Barnes Field" produce about 5 barrels of oil and about 500 barrels of brine daily. The cost of disposing this brine nearly exceeds the gross proceeds from the oil. Therefore, John and Lonnie Barnes formerly of Bothwell, have no choice but to revamp the well sites to a more efficient process.

John and Lonnie do not want the jerker lines to stop. These men have also grown up in the area and love the soft, rhythmic sounds of the creaking steel rods and the tried and true method of one power plant pumping several wells. So when they were approached by our local historian Audrey Kelly and asked if they would consider keeping the field as it is, if some kind of subsidy could be arranged through a heritage grant, they welcomed the idea with open arms.

The proposal for application is now in the hands of Audrey and on her behalf I ask you to provide all the support that you can in this most worthy cause.

September 9, 1992

MEN THINGS!

Andrew and I did the "men" thing this weekend. We've done those for a couple of years now. Last year we went bow hunting deer or bear or something out in Skunk's Misery. This year we went fishing and to the Murkirk Airshow.

Andrew wants to be a fighter pilot when he grows up, so he is fascinated by the air planes and awestruck by the pilots.

We camped at Rick and Sue Wilkins and spent Saturday night around the fire with a pair of colourful fliers by the names of Murray Kot and Terry Lilliman. They were funny, kindhearted and friendly to this little boy who couldn't believe that "real fliers" had time to say "hi".

Andrew sat quietly beside me with a big silly grin on his face as he watched the antics of the pilots. He even memorized the "Grasshopper Song".

Andrew met other pilots too. Pete and Sue and Bob all caught his attention. They all seem to come from the same basic mold as Kot and Lilliman. Funny and friendly.

The Wilkins pond was full of rock bass and Andrew fished till I finally dragged him away. His little boy ways, his excitement, his spirit of adventure and his heart was as big as the sky itself. He hated to go but knew his "dream come true" must end sometime. He told me on the drive home that he wanted to get back to school to try out his new pencils and stuff, but somehow I think he'll boast of those wonderful men and women that are WW II vintage plane pilots. His buddies back the strip! I'm glad I took him!

Special thanks to Murray & Terry, Pete & Bob Spence and Rick and Sue Wilkins, you thrilled a little boy and made his dreams come true!

September 30, 1992

BIG CITY HABITS IN SMALL TOWNS

It appears that something that we thought only happened in the news has made its way into our small town simple daily lives.

This week we received a report of used needles being found at the picnic shelter at the park.

These needles are no doubt the aftermath of illegal drug use. Although there are diabetics in this town and some others who use needles for their intended use, it seems highly improbable that responsible persons would leave behind needles that would harm unsuspecting kids .

I am a diabetic and frequently use needles and furthermore, I test hepatitis positive which is a highly contagious blood disease that destroys your liver and is transmitted very easily by sharing needles. The other killer blood contaminate is of course the HIV virus which is also transmitted by needles.

However, as do most diabetics, I am careful to remove the needle portion of a syringe and dispose of them in a safe manner.

The main problem that I encountered in trying to find out just what to do if I found a needle, is that no one wanted to touch them. The police wanted to be notified, but really didn't want to touch them, and they said to call a hospital. The hospital didn't really want them probably because the problem is likely to get much worse before it gets better and it appeared that they don't want to become the "dumping grounds" for these dangerous wastes.

There does not appear to be a clear cut procedure for this problem, but here are some suggestions and facts:

Generally you can pick up a needle safely if you are wearing heavy leather gloves.

Rinsing a needle in bleach usually kills all contaminants on the sharp end.

It is probably best to burn the needle and not risk putting it out with other trash to possibly infect some unsuspecting garbage man. (this may change if we can't burn anymore). Probably the best thing we can do, is to tell our kids to watch out for this hazard and if they know who is using the needles to tell an adult or the police. Finding a way to dispose needle is just a quick fix. The real fix is to lock up the abuser and throw away the key.

As for the needle user, please help us protect our kids. If you have to use intravenous drugs that is your business but don't leave your needles around for our kids. They don't realize that your garbage can cost them their lives.

October 28, 1992

KIDS

It's been said for generations, that kids these days just aren't what they were, when we were young. "Why when I was a boy, I had to walk seven miles to school every day. Snow, rain, sleet, uphill both ways ... blah, blah, blah!"

The other day I went out to my parents and as I talked with my Dad, I watched my five year old.

Ever notice how a kid never walks in a straight line? They wander, here and there, exploring bushes, trees, corn fields, nuts on the ground, stones or anything else that their paths cross. A hammock is not just a hammock, it's a swing. Great fun to get in and out of. And in and out of. As a matter of fact, it merits several ins and outs.

Kids sing to themselves. They also talk to themselves, whistle and create great tales as they wander.

They will make a toy out of anything or nothing. They don't seem to have a concept of time. Yesterday is no more a thought, than tomorrow is. This moment... now... is what is important to them.

How wonderful it would be if we as adults could enter this "kids world" for just a few moments each day. If we could forget mortgages, payments, schedules, work and responsibility for ten minutes each day. Ten minutes to do nothing, to accomplish nothing, to just experience life.

I think that we are wrong. Kids are exactly what they were, when we were young.

We've changed, not them. They are still just as full of wonder and awe as we were, when we were exploring life.

Take a minute... right now. Find a kid and watch him... it doesn't matter if it's your kid or just one around the neighbourhood. Watch and enjoy.

Say thanks to God for not changing kids... and pray that he never does.

December 23, 1992

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It is again that time of year when we tend to take stock. What have we accomplished this year? Have we moved forward or simply made it through the year?

I don't think that there has been a more hectic year in my whole life. What started out as a computer school that appeared to be going over like a lead balloon, mushroomed into a successful newspaper venture. Although we are by no means

getting rich with this paper, we must remember "a man does not turn to his ledger to tell whether he is rich or poor... it is the heart that makes a man rich and he is wealthy according to what he is, not what he has." Somebody great said that!

Something that I have learned, is that loyalty still exists. We could have asked for no more loyalty than what this town has shown us. You have supported us right from the start and for this we are truly thankful. We will continue to try hard to please you. We are still in the learning stage and probably will be for another year or so. Please bear with our mistakes. We don't mean to make them, they just happen. I think maybe one of my ancestors was hexed by a camera maker. Not only can I not take a decent picture, but when I get lucky enough to get one, I screw it up in the darkroom. If I don't get screwed up in one of those two operations, I'll probably misfire somewhere else. But what would life be without challenges.

The 125 celebrations were no doubt the outstanding event of the year and I think we should be pleased with how well that week went. I haven't seen such support for anything in this town for some time. It made me proud to live here. Let's hope that 1993 brings the same type of small town friendliness and compassion. It is nice to know that in this world of despair and poverty, of troubled times and world recession, that back in the "sticks", they still have "time to set a spell" or "have a Ho Down". I'll never leave this place, I love it too much. At the paper, overall this year has been great. We have a wonderful town that reads us regularly and readership is everything to a paper. Thank you for your support and I hope that this Christmas is a special one for each of you, and that 1993 brings you closer to your mate dream, for you have brought me closer to mine.

January, 1993

THE PASSING OF A FRIEND

A wise old friend of mine once said that he hoped in his eulogy that someone would say that "he was a good man".

What more can be said than that? Compassionate, caring, giving, loving, generous, loyal... all of these things and more are what we call good.

Magda Bray was a good person. How do we make sense of the loss of a person so young, so beautiful, so caring... so good? When I am distraught with a problem that has no sensible answer I often turn to my "flip side of the coin philosophy." There cannot be up, without down, rich and not poor. Love without hate, in and not out, nor the point, good without bad. How can we possibly know the supreme joy of life without the sorrow of death. And the passing of a person so young and with so much to give makes the sorrow even harder to bear. There must be a point of reference. A point, no matter how tragic, that we can compare those thing in life that count.

She bore her pain boldly and selflessly. She gave of herself even to the very end.

I was fortunate enough to become her close friend in high school and in her I found a personality like no other I have ever met. She taught me some of the most important lessons of my life.

She took time out of her cancer therapy to visit me during my liver transplant and I came to know that as bad as I felt for a month, she had felt for at least a year. Before she died she had handled pain for over two years. Now when ever I feel low or need sympathy or decide that the world has treated me unfairly, I remember her. She makes me feel well again. She always will.

I hope that we can all learn from this fine woman, that the game of life is the most precious gift God can give, whether we are dealt a good or bad hand in the game and that we should be bound to making the most of it in the same way she did.

February 24, 1993

JUST WONDERING

Just how responsible is our town spending our money? Last week in the mail I received a notice pertaining to the manner in which household garbage was to be disposed of. This important document contains slight revisions from its original form of a year ago. Council was advised by the clerk to insert the new garbage notice into the property tax bills to save the cost of a town wide mailer or a commercial ad in a newspaper. This was not a bad idea but... not all town residents get their tax notices. As a matter of fact, a whole lot of town residents don't get them. Those who rent apartments don't get a tax notice. Those who rent houses or commercial space don't receive a tax notice. Those people who pay taxes through their bank mortgage don't usually see their tax notice. So the idea of including the trash policy seemed to be "not good" for this instance.

When Reeve Johnston brought up the very fact that he thought the policy should be put in a newspaper due to the above listed problems, he was virtually ignored.

The Spirit of Bothwell paper agreed with Reeve Johnston and printed the trash policy for free as a public service.

Apparently the clerks office reconsidered its actions after the council meeting and decided to mail out the garbage policy to all residents of the town, fold, stuff and mail individually each policy. The cost of mailing a letter to three hundred residents exceeds the cost of putting a HALF PAGE ad in the local paper. But on top of the mailing cost was the cost of folding and stuffing the envelopes. The most recent "rumour" is that the town office will soon require a part-time typist because the office has a backlog of work. With the time and money management displayed in the garbage policy ordeal I don't doubt that there is a backlog.

March 25, 1993

IT'S SPRING...

Last weekend Spring rolled into the Bothwell area albeit with a substantial amount of white stuff still on the ground and in the air. It has been many years since we have had temperatures such as this in the month of March.

February, too was a cold month filled with its share of cold days and snow falls. The fact that we never had those spring thaws and quick freeze ups, typical of our winters caused the sap in the maple trees to stay high in the trunks and provided less than a bumper crop of good old fashioned maple syrup.

The Campbell Conservation area held its Annual Maple Syrup Festival on March 20 and 21 and although the crowds were plentiful, the syrup was not. The folks at Campbell's have not produced their own syrup for a couple of years now, but even the large commercial producers were hard hit this year. The sugar shack attendant at Campbell's told me that the amount of work involved in the making of maple syrup, combined with fewer trees to tap and less workers to volunteer, made it possible to only simulate the process.

But one would never know. The huge cast iron pots steamed over open fires, and the trees were tapped with blue plastic spiles and joined to each other by plastic sap lines that collect the maple sap into a big tank. (I couldn't find a tree with a real old steel spile and bucket.) James Richmond had his teams of heavy horses to taxi the crowd from the hilltop to the pancake house. These monstrous heavy horses seem to enjoy being out in the snow even if it means working the whole day in mud and snow.

Our family wandered on foot (we were definitely in the minority)! From the parking lot down to the river and then up to the hilltop and finally down to the sugar shack and the pancake house.

We finished our outing at the pancake house. We had just had breakfast and decided that at the price of real maple syrup that Aunt Jemima would have to do at our house. We did partake in the annual ritual of the sampling of maple sugar candy. It is still and always will be too sweet to finish even the small piece that each one of us got.

We'll be back again next year, it's an event that celebrated the end of winter and hails the coming of spring. We have to return, I'd be afraid spring might not come without a trip to the sugar bush.

April 28, 1993

OUR REPRESENTATIVES

Last Monday evening the town of Bothwell's citizens group again stormed the town hall demanding satisfaction.

The town solicitor was present, an OPP officer was also there to preserve the peace and a member of council had even gone to the bother of having the fire safety officer in, to measure the council chambers to limit the number of persons allowed in the council chamber to 23 at one time.

Three newspapers and one radio station were also present.

Murray McEwan spoke first. He presented himself well. When you tend to be quiet by nature, people sit up and take notice when you speak. And if you are upset, people really listen.

Murray exhibited the small town spirit that makes us who we are.

I am proud to know Murray, and pray that our little town always does the "morally proper" thing to do. We as country mice, have this set of unwritten rules that govern our actions. We have to live with each other, so often, agree to disagree, and settle disputes over a coffee instead of in court rooms.

Ed Cane spoke after Murray. Ed had a tough act to follow, but still brought up points that drove home the message that Murray had started. If you see these fellows on the street, don't forget to shake their hand and say thanks for standing up and being counted. Now hopefully council will show the same small town logic and settle this matter without making a mountain of democratic red tape. We are simple folk and only require simple justice.

Don't forget council meets this Monday and they have promised to make the meeting available to as many people as they can.

May 12, 1993

ERWIN WEBER

I was only 18 when I first got to know Erwin. He was trucking cattle from Western Canada to Toronto. A quiet man, soft spoken and gentle. Later, I came to know him from his saw mill and soon for the log homes, that he and his partner built together. He was a honest business man, ready to give anyone the benefit of the doubt.

Later in my life I moved into Erwin's neighbourhood on Chestnut St. I met his little girls and saw how this man, with hands as rough as leather, lived each day for those little girls.

We spent some time in our neighbours backyards sampling home - made wine and just being good neighbours.

It is needless to say that I was one of the many people who were stunned and upset when on Sunday morning I heard that Erwin had died.

Bothwell suffered a great loss last weekend. He was home town boy. We all knew him and all liked him.

I'll miss this home town fellow. He was a part of our town that we'll all miss.

May 19, 1993

CANADA OFFERS FREE ROOM & BOARD TO FOREIGN PRISONERS

Last week an American TV show portrayed just what a nightmare it can be to break the laws of another land while visiting there. Convicted and even unconvicted Americans that are incarcerated in other countries for breaking foreign laws soon find out that prison in such places as Mexico, Asian countries or Europe are not all like Canadian prisons. Food is poor quality and not in abundance. Private cells are non-existent and Caucasians are the lowest class of prisoner. In the movie "Midnight Express", which was based on a true story of an American who was caught trying to smuggle drugs out of Turkey, it was portrayed how foreign prisoners are beat on the soles of their feet until they can't walk. Pleas for mercy fall on deaf ears and American consulates are ignored. In many of these countries, if you break the law, chances are you will die in their prisons.

Penalties for smuggling drugs, weapons or even for drunk driving or use of cannabis range from years of "real" hard labour to the death penalty. Last week's television show interviewed some American prisoners who broke Canadian laws. The prisoners were shown in federal prisons with four foot high fences. Living in apartment like luxury, cooking their own meals in kitchenettes, watching colour TV or working out in fully equipped gymnasiums.

I guess that is how our prisons have been given nicknames like "The Milton Hilton", located on the 401 at Milton.

Many of the inmates that we incarcerate in these prisons have never had it so good. Three square meals, full health coverage, educational programs, overnight visitation with members of the opposite sex and sometimes even pay for work done while in prison.

It is no wonder that we are the country of preference for serving time. I was always under the impression that prison was place where a criminal went to pay his debt to society. However, it appears that prison in Canada, simply gets the criminals off the street and into relative comfort for a few years. The lesson learned seems to be that if you break the law try not to get caught, but if you do get caught don't lose any sleep over it because the consequences are not all that bad. How do I teach my children that they must obey the laws or they'll go to jail? They'll just say "Gee, Dad sounds like prison is a reasonable place me... no rent, no bills, free food and lots of time to relax. Maybe if I break the law bad enough I could write a book in there and come out rich."

One of the questions I have to ask myself, is that while our government is cutting back on spending, by decreasing medical programs, closing schools and eliminating civil servants jobs, what would be wrong with showing some restraint in the prison spending budget. Maybe auction off some of the colour televisions or eliminate some of the recreational equipment or, heaven forbid, put the inmates to work on our highways for free.

Our country is going broke and not slowly. Record numbers of people social systems, high unemployment, slow poor economic growth and indecisive political parties making few changes anywhere.

I'm sorry, but I think prison should be at least uncomfortable. I think that for a criminal to truly pay his debt to society he should have to give up something more than the responsibility of his own care. Prison should be something that deters us from breaking the law. A negative result for anti-social behaviour.

Canadians should be ashamed and embarrassed about the way we were portrayed on the television show. We were shown not as humanitarians, genuinely concerned with compassionately dealing with a troubled criminal mind, but as chumps being taken advantage of and considered as "easy pickins" on a global basis. Canada... a nice place to holiday and a great place to go to prison.

July 7, 1993

FLIERS AND JUNK MAIL

An Unnecessary Evil

This morning my wife stopped and picked up the mail at 9:30 am. In it there were several bills and one piece of "junk mail."

Two hours later I had to mail a letter and while at the post office, I too, checked our box. This time it was full of not one or two, but nine! Yes, nine fliers, of which 5 were more than 4 pages thick. Out of the entire heap, our family will only read one from a major department store and the one from our local food store.

This junk mail must stop. But how do we stop it? The post office is being paid to deliver the fliers and they are bound legally to put them into mail boxes. They can't stop delivery even if they wanted to. We can't write the sender of these fliers to request removal from their mailing list, since often we don't know who to call and more often the fliers are shipped in bulk and mailed to a given number of postal codes. About the only way to stop receiving this mail, or at least slow it down, is to protect your mailing address. Be cautious about giving your name and address to phone solicitors. Often these telephone sales people are in the business of collecting lists of names and then selling them to prospective flier distributors.

One of the most effective way to stop this waste, is to complain. That's easy and we all love to complain don't we? Complain to your MP, MPP, the local dealer of a particular flier or basically anyone who will listen.

If retailers studied the facts they would find out that fliers are not good advertising value. It is estimated that over 85% of all fliers end up in the trash unopened. Newspapers provide the buying public with articles to read, the latest news and strategically placed advertising. It is also estimated that a community newspaper is read approximately 3.2 times per issue. Newspapers are also cheaper to advertise in and the fact that a consumer has to pay for a newspaper creates the desire for the consumer to read or at least open it and browse through it. A couple of weeks ago, I spoke to a relative of mine from Toronto. He said that junk mail was not just an inconvenience, but a menace that was out of control. He also indicated that his mail box was often so crammed full of junk mail, that he had on occasion thrown out important mail, that had slipped into junk mail or fliers. He also said that the city of Toronto was trying to deter the use of fliers, by trying to pass a bylaw, that would limit the amount of junk mail that could be delivered or possibly levying an expensive permit to the senders of this type of mail, to try to slow the flow of it and to use the funds from this levy to recycle some of the paper.

Many retailers have no choice but to mail their fliers, since their parent or supplier companies refuse to wholesale products to any store who doesn't distribute the fliers. Parent companies benefit from this in that often the fliers are printed by the parent companies them- selves, or a branch of the company elsewhere .

Probably the most important issue of this problem is the fact that our world is quickly being stripped of its forests. Once the forests are gone, our atmosphere will quickly deteriorate. We depend on plant life to generate the oxygen that we breathe. The animals that live in these forests, too will perish .

So don't gripe quietly to yourself as you sort through the next fistful of junk mail. Call your MP or tell the store about it. If we all make enough noise about this, things will change. While you talk with your MP you might question him on his views, I noticed today that one piece of junk mail came from his office .

NOTE FROM JODI KISH: Because of Jim and Ann's persistence in this matter, I, to this day do not receive junk mail in my box!

July 14, 1993

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

This week the provincial government released funds for the implementation of some new home care facilities.

Why is it that when the government spends millions of our tax dollars on programs that will reap no return on the investment, they justify it by telling us "they are putting Ontario back to work?" Or they pacify us with the idea that they had initially planned on spending 133 million but decided that 20 million was more in line with the current economic environment. (as if we should be happy about the government saving 103 million dollars.)

"Putting Ontario back to work ?" I think not. What I feel this increase in services will do is simply increase the amount of tax the employed population pays.

Quite frankly, I would prefer that the "winners" of the 5000 new jobs created with this social program should just go out and seek employment in the existing job market. Accept a wage (any wage) and share the burden that the currently employed must carry.

Creating jobs through the creation of more social programs goes against the most basic economic principal. There is no such animal as "providing free services". Somewhere, someone must pay.

It is not that I have no compassion for the infirm or aged or disabled. for I do. I have been there. I have used various programs since my second liver transplant, therefore, I do realize that these services are truly needed by some. I also know of too many instances where home care was provided to able bodied persons and times when home care nursing was extended far past the point when it was needed. It appeared that the nurse was simply extending the length of her job.

There appears to be no easy way to monitor who needs these services and who is abusing them. We should either forgo them completely or change the criteria for qualification. The availability to absolute "no doubt about it" cases only, to be reviewed weekly would certainly weed out some abusers.

There appears to be no way to stop the decision that has been made by those we have entrusted to care for the administration of our taxes. Meanwhile, we will have to live with more innovative social "reprogramming" and continue to support it with our tax dollars.

I sincerely hope that when the system fails that it is not me awaiting word on whether or not I qualify for a program. I also hope that the politicians that dream up all the these short term fixes to long term problems are by then aged and dependant on the systems that have created. They'll get everything that they deserve ... NOTHING .

July 28, 1993

WHAT A HOLIDAY!

I really don't know how I get myself into fixes. My ideas seem like really great ones at the time I dream them up.

After taking our two day trip to TO, we ended up discussing a topic that Ann and I have always dreamed of. We wanted to take the kids to Disney World. Now after three years of scrimping, we thought maybe we could do it next winter.

Of course, that trip would not be in grand style, with motels, etc., but more along the lines of camping and watching how we spend our money. After we get back we'll have memories and, no doubt bills. Now comes the stupid part. This is the part where Dad opens his big yap and comes up with a make work plan, the NDP couldn't rival.

"How would you kids like a swimming pool?" It would cost about the same as that trip to Florida only you would have it for years to come?

It's summer ... it's hot ... it's humid ... they're bored ... what kid in their right mind would say no to that?

I figured with what I could save on using my "holiday time" to erect the pool, that I could put one in quite easily as cheap as that Florida trip. We ordered the pool the following Monday.

The first day of construction was hot, but I was up for it. I was as excited as the kids and so the planning stages went quickly.

Perry McDonald dug the hole on the second day and I started to dig post holes for a fence and to support the pool walls.

Forty-two holes later, I was starting to stiffen up. My son, Andrew was a real help to me for one morning but I don't think he's been around since. He may have run away.

Sarah, who knows what hard work is and is capable of doing it, got out quickly and stayed in Chatham, hoping to extend a trip to a friends house until the water was in.

Ann became very interested in her newspaper publication, went to hide uptown.

But then there was Mel! ... She was an employee ... She couldn't hide. Friday, found our best office person, Melanie Maure at the construction site. Wielding fourteen foot 4x4's, like so much styrofoam. She was young and strong, in good physical condition and bent on proving me to be the one hundred and ninety pound weakling that I was. By the end of that day of the job, my muscles were really starting to stiffen badly. But I knew that soon I would have the rippling muscles of Arnold Swarts-his-name. I think I kept up to Mel fairly well. By Saturday, things were actually starting to take shape. Although my arms still pained constantly I think my mind had learned to ignore them. Then came a stroke of luck, we just might have water in this thing by Sunday.

Bob Pallister or as we refer to him "Engineer Bob" was on and off the job site constantly. I'm sure that I would have ended up buying two or three pool kits and liners without his help and guidance .

Friends what would we do without friends. I know I would have a lot less work done. First, Bob Pallister wandered in, then Gye & Lisa Tunks, Mike Ross, Dad, Dale Bray, some firemen and a virtual host of others, (if I've forgotten anyone please forgive me, my mind is still flexing.) We worked and laughed and by Sunday, we did indeed have water in the pool.

It's Monday morning ... I hurt over my entire being. The stiffness my body will never leave and so I'm sure I'll never swim in our new pool. The deck is not done, the filter is not hooked up and the place where I was going to put the door from the house to the pool in, is still a brick wall. The fencing is temporary, the diving board is still in the box, (not that it matters, because so is the ladder that you would depend on to get out, after your dive) and I am half done this project even though my bank balance says it should have been done long ago.

The next time I get a bright idea for a way to spend my holiday, I think I'll just skip the holiday thing all together, it's easier on the body, wallet and mind!

NOTE FROM JODI KISH: Even though Jim went through virtual (heck) installing the pool, we all enjoyed many wonderful times around it, and it was worth every ache and pain he had.

August 4, 1993

IT MAKES US WHO WE ARE!

It's Monday morning, August the second. Our little town is bustling with yard-sale junkies. You know the ones. They never pay the price that is written on the sale article.

My wife is one of the breed. I get dirty looks for driving by yard sales on the highway. If we stopped at every one of them we'd never reach any destination. They are like bingo addicts. "it's not the bargain, it's the hunt." My wife must have at least a monthly fix of bartering.

After finally arguing some poor soul out of their grandmother's watch or their widow's ring, she proudly displays her prey like a "she lion with a dead piece of meat" and proclaims loudly "BON CHANCE!" I groan and wince.

But our town is full of them. Some we know, many we don't. Friends that stop by to browse, and make small talk. No one is expected to buy, it's a social affair.

At the end of the morning we go home, our car is now filled with tons of the "odd knickknack" we've picked up here and there.

I truly feel sorry for our friends in the cities. They don't enjoy the same camaraderie that we country mice have. A yard sale is just a means of picking up a hundred dollars or so from a stream of strangers that wander in.

This day and next weekend will be fun. Clean fun, with friends we've known for years.

I wouldn't trade my small town life for all the conveniences of the city in a million years. This is my town, I've lived here for over thirty-five years and could never leave. I want my kids to grow up here and hopefully they too will see the same soft, quiet, peaceful, law abiding and caring attitudes that exist here.

Have a good weekend Bothwell.

August 18, 1993

OPTIFEST WEEKEND

The Opti-fest weekend has been with us for many years and has provided many wonderful weekends for the townsfolk.

This year was no exception. The weekend attracted more people than I can ever remember and all of the service groups that ran booths, did well.

At least that is what one would expect.

Most groups did do well. The Bothwell Figure Skating Club, The Bothwell / Zone / Euphemia Fire Department, and the Opti-ladies, all did exceptionally well with their food booths. The Bothwell Optimist club also made money. Three hundred dollars... yes, it's not a misprint \$ 300, not \$3000, not \$30,000, but \$300. For this \$300, planning started back in March. The chair-people and directors met a couple of times a month. The Optimists also ordered food for the food booth, the liquor license, made calls to ball teams, bands, parade entrants, collected donations for the parade, sought out various permissions from council and arranged the midway rides. They also arranged the mini-tractor pull, fenced the refreshment area, carried in tables to the picnic shelter, paid the parade entrants who required payment, ordered the beer, ran the beer tent for 20 hours over the weekend and then finally, packed everything away, cleaned up their mess and a lot of everybody else's mess and went home to rest... before getting up for work the next day.

Now there's a way to spend a weekend, eh? Three solid days of back breaking labour, putting out fires and cleaning up messes. Not quite my idea of a celebration but, hey, they got paid for it. They made 300 bucks. That must work out to fifteen or maybe twenty cents per man hour.

I don't think anyone in the Optimist Club is looking for sympathy. I do think that they deserved more than what they got for all of their effort. The Optimists look to give the townspeople a fun, but inexpensive weekend and they did that.

In retrospect, the Optimist agree that the midway rides were the costing mistake. They cost a fortune and I'm not sure if they are worth it. This year, for example, the rides lost \$ 2300.00. That was most of the profit that the Optimists other events made. The club has decided that they do not want to bring rides in next year. In lieu of rides they will have to find

another way to entertain the kids. (perhaps another group out there would be interested in taking care of the midway). I am sure they'll find a way and I hope it is successful.

The Optimist Club of Bothwell is maybe the best thing that ever happened to this town. They care for and entertain our kids with a Christmas party, Easter egg hunt, bike rodeo, Opti-fest, Halloween and beside all of this they find money for minor hockey and baseball, figure skating, boy scouts and guides and support both schools with special funding. Now, I ask Ann's question of last week. Why do they do it?

Our Optimist club needs members. Not names but good working members, male or female. They need administrators, leaders, followers, doers, thinkers or contributors. They need people to help spread the load out.

If you enjoyed last weekend, why not drop into an Optimist meeting ? Any age group is welcome. Our club is a bit to the younger side of many of the other clubs in the area. The Optimists meet the 2nd and the 4th Thursday of the month at the Scout Hall in Optimist Park and anyone interested in the youth of Bothwell would be a welcome addition.

August 25, 1993

I AM NOT ABOVE ERROR!

Just when I thought that I had this business down to science, along comes something really great, and proves all doubt, that I am a bungling idiot .

We at the "Spirit" have nearly always boasted of our "state of the art" publishing equipment. It was hoped that by using the best equipment, we could lower our overhead and increase productivity. "Work smarter... not harder", that is how I was taught to accomplish any task.

This type of task solving philosophy works just fine, as long as you are completely informed about the job at hand. But if you lack any knowledge about the job, you may be in trouble.

The publishing industry of today, is a high tech environment, that demands that the people in it are not just decent journalists, that people will read, but they must be photographers, darkroom technicians, computer software and hardware masters, and they must also understand the physical process of how the publication will be printed from computer to printing press. This is a very complex procedure. Even the London Free Press has just introduced computerized publishing in the past two months. And they still print most of their paper using the "paste up" method of yesteryear. The paste up method consists of making and pasting together each ad and each story with a computer or typewriter or using pre-printed ads, that are known as "camera ready". Not that the paste up method is bad, but it is a tedious job that requires meticulous care and only the very best "artists" can do it quickly and do it well. The other problem with paste ups is if you spill coffee on them or drop them in the mud or if your wife lines the cat's litter box with them, then they must be made up all over again, from scratch.

The latest in computer technology, on the other hand, is not pasted up, but rather laid up on the computer monitor and stored in computer memory, one page at a time and printed from a "tab" printer (which prints the page out in one sheet) or is tiled out in sections that can be quickly taped together to make the full page that is required. It is not uncommon for some small papers to take this weeks edition to the print house on a floppy disk, instead of the "older" large paste up boards.

The method used to print pictures is an optical illusion, that consists of a picture composed of dots. These dots are black or white and vary in size, not shade. So a picture is really just black and white dots and is an optical illusion, making the eye think it is seeing shades of grey.

Pictures or screens as the publishing business sometimes calls them, can be generated in several ways. Both involve using real photographs that are sometimes placed in an offset camera that take a picture of the picture through a

transparent dotted screen. This leaves the dots, we see on the newspaper reproduction. The newer method involves a computer to simply print out a picture of a scanned photograph using dots.

This process must take place to ensure that the printer's ink has individual dots to paint. If we tried to simply print the picture, the imagery is too dense and the result would be a black blob in the newspaper instead of a picture.

Last Monday "The Spirit" laser printer went on the fritz. Although we had it in for service two weeks ago, we soon found that it was going to cost more to repair than to replace. We found ourselves on the day before press time with no copy ready and no printer to print it.

You might say that we were a bit uneasy. After calling to several suppliers, we found a new state of the art printer would cost more than we wanted to spend at this time, so we decided to lease one until a decision could be made on the type of printer our future held.

The new leased printer was a real beauty. It contained the technology we would need to improve our picture quality. As promised, the screenings came out looking fantastic! We made it to press time with ease and good looking original screenings.

When we received the printed newspapers back, we were alarmed to see the very dark images that were produced.

I quickly went to the program that prints the screens. Most newspapers print screens or half-tones at 60 dots per inch resolution and at a 45 degree angle. This provides the best clarity and general quality that can be achieved.

In setting up for the new printer, I inadvertently set the resolution at 120 dots per inch and at a 65 degree angle. Thus the pictures came out too dark.

We are back on line now and I hope you'll notice the improved quality of our pictures (not just from last week, but from previous issues.)

I said it before and I'll say it again "we are still learning" but the school of hard knocks is sure expensive to attend these days.

September 22, 1993

THE DRIVE IN...

The other night we were watching a show that reported that there were only about 900 drive-in theaters left in the U.S. There used to be over 5,000.

The drive-in always brings back memories of great times. My favorite memory is of the intermission film clip that featured dancing food and counted down until the feature show started.

Do you remember the horns honking when the picture went out of focus? Lights flashing when the idiot in front of you rested his foot on his brake pedal and blinded you with his brake lights? And who hasn't drove off with the speaker still in the window?

Double dates. Necking with out being terrified of getting caught. Hot dogs, hamburgs, french fries... when was the last time you had a hot dog and fries at a movie?

Remember sneaking in five guys in the trunk, or worse yet, getting caught with five guys in the trunk?

My wife and I decided that the drive-in was one American Tradition that our children should experience.

The following Friday night we went to one of the last remaining drive-ins theaters in the area. The "Mustang", just south of the 401 in London. It is one of the last ones still running in our area. Most of the other drive-ins succumbed to the big new theaters that offer five or six shows in several theaters, located in one large building.

The drive-in is still a bargain. Fifteen bucks, got my three kids, my wife and myself into the show. The shows were the newly released "Free Willy" for the kids and later, after they fell asleep in the back of the van, "The Fugitive" was shown. Two new shows for fifteen bucks.

The snack bar was just as I remembered it from my teenage years. My daughter and I went and bought about a ton of popcorn and two monster pops and that didn't cost a fortune either.

The speakers are gone. Apparently the owner of drive-ins tired of replacing speakers and now broadcast the audio portion of the show to a radio frequency. The signal tends to drift and be weak sometimes, but I later found out that those old poles that used to hold the speakers now have a little wire on them that you tie around the aerial of your car and the sound then comes in perfectly. Of course, I found that out at the end of the double feature.

The kids thought it was neat to be able to talk during the movie and not get "shushed" and also watched a silent version of "Jurassic Park" from the back window on the other drive-in screen, after their show had finished.

We arrived home well after midnight and carried the kids up to their beds.

It was an enjoyable night out that the entire family enjoyed, we didn't spend more than \$25 (we couldn't have bought admission to a normal theater for that much) and we got to see two movies. We plan on doing it again soon.

October 10, 1993

QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

No doubt many of our readers have noticed that "The Spirit" has been slightly thinner than normal.

This is due to a few practical considerations.

The main consideration, is of course, feasibility. In the current economic climate of today, many businesses are cutting back on advertising. Advertising is the life blood of a newspaper. The fifty cents that you pay for a copy of this paper barely even covers the cost of the set up and printing of the paper. If we print a twelve page paper with insufficient ad work we lose money on the printing hand over fist.

Because the "other" Bothwell paper can boast a higher circulation area (their one publication covers at least five areas), "The Spirit of Bothwell" which actually has a bigger circulation in Bothwell, Newbury and Wardsville than theirs does, loses out to the big guy. Because we are the least established of the two Bothwell papers, we do not get government, lottery or "gravy" advertising.

Another consideration is quality of content. This is a community paper and when we have only 8 or 9 pages of community news we have to get to page 12 by using "fill" articles that are of little or no interest to a lot of people.

Waste reduction is also a concern and if we can condense our paper into 8 pages of Bothwell news, we are using, and distributing, less paper that has to be disposed of.

We enjoy putting out this paper. It gives our town a paper to call its own, it gives Bothwell a sense of identity.

Some of our readers have complained because our paper is not big enough.

We, at the Spirit would rather give our readers 8 pages of very local news, than 12 pages of "fill" or worse yet, less than one page of Bothwell news and 23 pages of irrelevant drivel from Dresden, etc. (not to demean other towns, but since I don't know that many people from those areas their news doesn't interest me.)

The other factor that we have no control over at all is developing news worthy topics. Some weeks are just slow news weeks. We try to keep abreast of the events that are going on, but in this wee town some weeks go by and nothing really earth shattering, or remotely news-worthy goes on.

So please bear with us on those slow news weeks and try to remind yourself that this paper is your town's paper and prints essentially your town's news, not Dresden and area. We report on the people that you know, and want to know about.

Thank you for understanding and please continue to support us. Hopefully we'll grow bigger together.

November 3, 1993

A WELL MADE DECISION...

Last Monday, we the people told our politicians how we felt, in no uncertain terms.

However, I can't count the number of people that I spoke to, prior to the 25th, who didn't know who they would vote for. It seems to me that, as in most elections, the voters did not vote in a government, they simply voted one out. Elections don't necessarily indicate the party that people want, but more aptly, who they don't want.

I have a friend who told me that, with government such as ours, with spending gone rampant, abuse of the social systems, the national deficit, over burden taxpayers and unemployment at an all time high, it would take more than four years and there will probably be a civil war in Canada." A country is not a country until it has purified itself and its systems with a war." he said.

I pray that my children never see a civil war, or any war for that matter. But I also wish for my children to have a good standard of living and don't have to support the social abuse the way I have to.

The Liberals have their work cut out for them and I'm sure that in six months or so they'll be the object of our wrath just as the Tories were. Our countries national debt took many years to create. I couldn't help but wonder how Preston Manning and Kim Campbell were going to eliminate it in five or three years. At least the Liberals never made any foolish promises like that.

They did make promises, and some that are going to be a real challenge to meet. No country ever bought its way out of a recession. Nor can you simply create jobs to manufacture goods that no one has the money or desire to buy.

Then there is what I feel is this countries biggest labour problem. That being the atrocious minimum wage. Small businesses can't afford to pay help nearly seven dollars per hour to flip hamburgers, or pump gas. With current payments for welfare, unemployment insurance and compensation as high as they are, it makes little sense to go searching for work, that pays less than not working. A recent article I read claimed that a Workmans Comp claimant nets more than their working wage while on the program.

Anyway, we voiced our desire for a change and we got it. I wish the Liberal party much success, but in my mind I can't help but wonder what kind of people want to take on a job where the primary goal is to fix absolutely everything.

November 17, 1993

ONE LESS COUNCILLOR

Bothwell town council's recent move to eliminate one more councillor will be no doubt be justified by the "vast" savings in revenue to the taxpayer. In that light, I'm sure there are some members of the council that would eliminate the whole council and run the town all alone. What is economically feasible, is not always wise nor practical. In the case of the town council it is my opinion that by eliminating one more councillor the ratepayers will receive less representation.

In the decision making process it has been scientifically proven, that the more persons given the opportunity to voice an opinion, the higher the probability that the right decision will be arrived at.

If the reason for eliminating a councillor is based on the cost of a councillor's wage, then why doesn't council decrease their wages, or better yet take only gas money and phone costs, (if any) as a wage .

A position on council is supposed to be held by a person who is serving the town to make it a better place to live, not to earn a secondary wage at the expense of the taxpayer.

The people of the town of Bothwell still have the chance to reverse this decision.

Don't lose more representation. This is not an easy decision to reverse one it has been made.

Our town ran effectively for over one hundred years with six councillors, a reeve and mayor, yet we allowed for the removal of two councillor positions, some years ago. I am of the adage that, "if it's not broken, don't fix it", and at the time we eliminated those two councillors, the system was not broken.

Next year we will go to polls to vote for a council, and at that time I feel we should have as many good minds working for the town as possible.

Remember it will be too late next November at election time.

December 15, 1993

GOOFED AGAIN!

It seems that every time that something goes wrong around here, I have something to do with it.

Take for example, two weeks ago when I tried to develop film in water, instead of film developer. For the longest time I couldn't help but wonder if we had somehow received a bad roll of film. At least until I discovered the beaker containing the correctly measured amount of developer in the darkroom, still unused. It seems I forgot to mix the concentrate with the water. Well at least I learned what film developed in water looks like ... it's perfectly transparent ... no image at all! Last week maybe some of you readers noticed that the legion news ended rather abruptly. Sorry about that Larry!

You see the boss around here wanted to initiate a new procedure called "Desktop Publishing". This relatively new technology is being used by the larger papers to some extent. Maybe some of you noticed that the London Free Press started using it on a few pages last summer. The procedure eliminated the need for layup, or the process of pasting each column of text and each picture onto a master sheet, prior to being printed. Instead the entire publication... ads, pictures, text and captions are all composed on a computer screen and the finished product comes out in three pieces or "tiles" from the computer printer. These tiles are lined up and pasted to the master layup sheets and then sent to the printing press.

If you look carefully at this paper you'll see exactly how the columns are perfectly straight and you will not find three evenly spaced words on one line because the computer hyphenates perfectly.

This process is not perfect for various reasons such as:

- you can only see two pages of the newspaper at any one time.
- you can lose portions of a story if you are not careful in your proof reading.
- one mistake on a page means the entire page must be reprinted instead of just that one story or ad.
- the software is not an easy package to learn and the first few publications will not likely be perfect.

On the other hand, desktop publishing eliminates spelling errors by automatically checking all of the spelling within a publication, including ad work.

It also produces a much more readable paper by typesetting stories two columns wide or wrapping text around pictures.

The major advantage of the software is that it eliminates the tedious job of laying up each picture, every title, columns of text and individual ads as they are produced.

We at the Spirit are dedicated to bringing our readership the highest quality publication that we can produce each week and we believe that keeping up with changing technologies will help us to do that.

However, part of the new technology process is suffering through the learning curve and we ask your understanding in that aspect. Meanwhile, we'll keep trying.

January 5, 1994

WATER? DO WE WANT IT AND DO WE NEED IT?

This year our town will be faced with all the pros and cons of a public water system.

We at the Spirit have decided that since no one else seems to be all that interested in what the ratepayers feelings are, we would do a survey and publish the results later this month.

Never in the history of our tiny town has such a large amount of money been spent with so little input from the ratepayers. Some ratepayers feel that an expenditure of this magnitude should have been put to a ballot.

There are a host of complications that may arise and many questions left unaddressed.

In this column I will field some of the input that I have received from local "authorities."

"Let's say that Bothwell will use 40,000 gallons of water per day. This works out to about 5 flushes, 1 load of wash, 1 bath, and 5 gallons of miscellaneous use for each of the roughly 300 households in Bothwell. Rather conservative to say the least. Over a year this would work out to 365 times 40,000 which is 14,600,000 gallons of water. If our town water shed is 1000 by 1000 feet and 5 gallons of water takes up roughly one cubic foot of area then over the year, Bothwell would have a layer of water (coming from Lake Erie) covering it 29.2 ft deep. The question is, where does this water all go? Does it all rush to our drainage systems and then back to the river and eventually the lake? Does it overburden our sewer system which has already had problems in the past? Or worse yet, does it simply raise our water table by a foot or two or three or five? I don't have a basement but those who do will give some thought as to how well their basement would handle a water table permanently a couple or more feet higher.

* What about the water pressure? That will be nice won't it? Going from 30 or 40 psi water pressure from our piston pumps to 60 or better from the water tower. But will our plumbing handle that extra pressure and if not who will upgrade it?

* How about the cost of the new water? Will it cost \$ 250 per household? NO, I'm afraid that is only the cost of the meter. The actual cost of putting water to your tap will be much closer to \$ 3,000. That's if you don't have to upgrade or pump your basement.

* Were there other alternatives? Without being an expert in the field it is hard to say whether there were other feasible methods of providing water or not. However, one ratepayer said we could have drilled on deep well for every three households. and supplied the town with water for a fraction of the cost and almost no maintenance to this type of system. There are already shared deep wells in town that service as many as five properties with no problems.

Another ratepayer questioned why Thamesville draws their water from the Thames River and we will not. Surely it would have been cheaper to pipe water from Thames to Bothwell than from West Lorne to Glencoe through Newbury and finally to Bothwell.

* Another question from a ratepayer was "Why don't we put in sewers now and lay the water lines down beside the sewer pipes for future use? If we had public sewers then our water points would not be subject to contamination from filter beds and we could continue using ground water. Then in the future if we had to have water the water lines would already be in place and it would be a matter of a tower and manifold system to hook into the existing underground pipe. Public sewers would add more value to land parcels and might help to alleviate current drainage problems in town.

In closing, we as ratepayers of the town were remiss in not attending the public meetings held pertaining to water. (they were well attended by anyone who had water problems.)

But perhaps we should have expected more communication from our municipal government prior to initiating such a large expenditure.

The last question I suppose is "Is it too late stop this project?" That is in the hands of the current council and you the ratepayers.

February 2, 1994

WATER QUESTIONNAIRE

Next week I will tabulate the results of the water questionnaire.

I wish to clarify my position on this matter, once again.

During council's last meeting, the members of the council who expressed opinions were obviously not very impressed with me or Ann's paper. I have to agree that this project has progressed a long way to star backtracking now.

We have purchased water rights and paid engineers. Maybe it would be detriment to stop now. But if the majority of the ratepayer wish is not to have water, even if it means "eating" the costs to date then I feel council has an obligation to listen.

I must also ostracize those ratepayers who did not speak out until this date. They are at least as much to blame for the situation, as council may be for not seeking more earnestly the public's opinion.

Our poll so far has been a great success with over fifty questionnaires returned so far. This is far more that what we thought we would get.

However, fifty questionnaires out of 300 households in this town still tells me that only about 17% really have an opinion one way or another and I can't blame council one bit for their actions.

There is still time to fill a questionnaire. Either stop in to our office and fill out one or find your old January 12th paper and get it to our office. If you can't make it to us, simply phone our office at 695-2508 and tell us you want to answer a questionnaire over the phone. We will then fill one out for you. You must give your name so we can avoid duplicate calls.

We will do this only for the dates of February 2nd to the 5th. After that it will be too late to voice your opinion with our poll.

We are trying to remain completely unbiased in this matter even to the point that management and staff of the Spirit can't fill out questionnaires.

We will print the results of the questionnaire precisely as they came in with no bias and will make the actual questionnaires available to any party who wishes to view them.

Call or write us today, it is your absolute last chance.

February 9, 1994

WATER RESULTS

The water results of the water survey are in. I must thank those of the following who took the time out to respond to the survey. The surprising number of responses have promoted us to do further surveys.

We will probably be running surveys on the following controversial topics later this year. The arena support group agreement, the Optifest weekend and what you would like to see, and what you would like to see in the up coming municipal elections.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record I want to ensure everyone that I am doing these surveys not to be a thorn in anyones side, but to help improve our town and help keep the ratepayers and the councils better informed on what everyones thinks .

We at the Spirit would be happy to run a survey for the town council on virtually any topic that they need input on. We are ready and willing to work with the council and would print town policies, request, editorial comments or reports, free of charge, if our councillors, mayor and reeve would take the time to write them. Advertising we must charge less than other papers and we can boast the higher readership.

This paper could be a valuable tool for our local politicians. Looking back in old issues of the other paper, we have found that the mayor almost always wrote a column, explaining what was going on in council and even gave a New Years Address wishing the constituents all the best in the New Year.

Surely, our little town has not grown too big and commercialized, that our council can't take the time to write to the ratepayers, just to keep in touch.

In closing, it's not this paper's intent to pick on the council or even to point a fingers of blame for any mistake that may or may not have been made. We simply want to keep the lines of communications between all parties open and accessible and provide useful constructive commentary for the future of the town.

The paper will not pursue the public water issue any further. We have done what we could, to expose the rate payers viewpoint and leave the topic in the hands of the council or other concerned citizens and will only report on what transpires in the future.

March 2, 1994

COMPUTER CRASH

It finally happened. Have you ever heard how a mechanics car is always the biggest piece of junk on the road, or that perfect office organizers have the messiest houses in town? Well, we at the "Spirit" who boast of high tech systems and state of the art computers, had the worst backup data anywhere.

Last week we were running just slightly ahead of ourselves, in that by about Friday we had five of our twelve page paper completely laid up and on computer file.

Then late Friday afternoon our main computer flagged "a critical fatal stack error." This is a major fault that can cause corruption a of some or all files in the hard memory. Computers stack commands in a kind of a pile so that they always draw the next command off the top of the stack. If these stacks become misarranged, it compares to hammering a nail, only the first command says hold the nail with one hand and pound with the other and then next command says to pick up the hammer ... the result is a bloody fist.

After spending an hour on the phone to Seattle, we came to the sudden reality that our entire hard drive was corrupt. All of our ad files. the masthead, publishers info box, page numbers and newstories, were all gone forever.

We took the computer into the repair shop, they tried to recover some of the information, however they too were unsuccessful. They recommended that we simply restore what we could from our backup data ... We had none!

We were then faced with the prospect of printing an entire new publication from scratch. We had to start all over from nothing on Sunday morning. We worked all day Sunday and well into the evening, then all day Monday, and well again into the evening, and again Tuesday, finally finishing about five hours late.

I don't know how we could have finished without the help of Mike Ross, who worked much of his spare time creating ads and reloading programs. Special thanks to Huron Web, our printer who rescheduled our print time with no hassle.

There is nothing left of the old "Spirit", the masthead, as I'm sure you have noticed it's completely changed, because it was generated on a different computer, nearly two years ago and never backed up. Ads have changed somewhat here and there and I'm sure that there were typos and spelling errors in last weeks edition and I have to once again ask readers to bear with us until we are back online and have regenerated everything all over again .

We have recently purchased a tape backup drive, which automatically generates a back-up of all data at the end of the day, so chances of this happening again are small. That is good because, I don't think Ann and I have the patience for another week like last week.

COUNCIL MINUTES

March 16, 1994

Maybe I'm just paranoid, but I can't help but think that the press was not expected at last week's council meeting. While it was indeed part of the Mayors report from the previous meeting, those minutes were not presented to the public until Monday's meeting.

Therefore, I ended up finding out about it by the grapevine. It was not posted or advertised and that fact made it nearly impossible for the average person to easily find out about it, if they wanted to go.

Our paper lives close to the street. We make it our business to know what is happening in the town and even as it is happening. There are many secrets that we alone know and don't reveal, because we feel that they would do more harm than good. Often people ask us "how did you know that?" We attempt to maintain a good rapport with all of those who will let us.

The news of this rather "surprise" council meeting took many council regular attendees completely by surprise.

There didn't appear to be anything on the agenda that was controversial. Not at first glance anyway. But when council finally got to the lottery licensing I began to perk up. I put down my novel - "Moby Dick" (sometimes council gets a little dry) and shut off my tape recorder so I could listen first hand to the discussion.

The various service clubs in town benefit from the sale of Nevada tickets, in variety stores, bars and restaurants. The Nevada tickets, however, can't be sold without a government issued license. These licenses are issued from the municipal office. Some municipalities charge for them and others don't. Thamesville for example has no charge and Zone Township charges \$2.00 per license. Bothwell, on the other hand, charges a straight percentage. This works out to about \$1550 per year, from just the Optimist Club alone. But the absurd part is that the Bothwell arena pays nothing and the Legion pays a different amount. So not only does our town charge for what others give away, but furthermore, they charge different clubs, different prices. Under the new gaming laws there is a provision for any municipality to charge up to 3% of the total prizes won in the lottery, for a license fee. Had our town went to the 3% fee, it would have doubled what the Optimists were paying and that would make the lottery only a mediocre fund raiser maybe not even worth administrating.

What brought this all to a head was when for the second time in about a year, licenses were not issued for one reason or another and clubs had to stop selling tickets to wait for new licenses. This cost the clubs a great deal in potential revenue. When the club filed requests with the clerks office, the staff there did not know what the new licensing costs were and so the licenses were delayed. The town council dealt with the new licensing fees at last Mondays meeting.

First off bravo to Councillor Wilkins, who boldly stood up for the rights of the service clubs and stated that he could not in clear conscience tax the good volunteers of the town. Semi bravo to Councillor Penich who agreed. I totally disagree with Reeve Johnston's statement that all clubs must pay a tax. Councillor Saylor took advantage of ammunition, provided by a letter from the Optimists and actually justified the tax, stating that the Optimists actually requested that they continue to pay the current tax and in reality that is exactly what the Optimist letter requested.

So council set the new fee for all clubs in town to 1.5% and out of town clubs at 2%. I can live with charging the out of towners for their licences, since the funds raised don't say within the community, but I strongly disagree with taxing our service clubs who funnel their funds back into our community. I think that council was inconsiderate and insensitive in their decision. I can't see how they can take money that is raised by volunteers and is targeted for community services and simply grab 1.5% of it to put into the town "pot" to help pay for what, as ratepayers, the volunteers already pay in taxes. It is like being taxed a second time because you volunteer time and effort to a fundraising club.

The cost to the town, of administrating the licensing can't be so great that the town couldn't donate that amount back to the clubs involved. The town doesn't give grants to the Optimists as they do for Minor Hockey, and other community groups so why no let them have their licenses for free.

I'm sure this is the last we will hear of this topic. Sadly it is the way of our small town to let injustices such as this simply roll off our backs. But I also hope that our next council will be more charitable to the service clubs in town. It's just one more straw on the back of the camel named "Bothwell".

March 30, 1994

COUNCIL

Here I go again picking on council. I have been on municipal council in previous years. Remember I'm the one who recommended putting the computer in the town office. I learned two lessons from that. One is if you want to remain in council, don't spend any money in an election year and two, being on council is a thankless task.

On the way up to last Monday's council meeting I said to my wife, "you know Ann if I were a councillor right now I'd just quit. I wouldn't take the abuse that the paper (the Spirit) or the citizens of this town are dishing out. I just don't have time for that kind of pain and frustration."

Moments later we were in the council chambers reading over the information package which contained the documentation for what was to be covered that evening at the meeting.

As Ann looked over the data, I leafed through an automotive magazine (it pays to bring a novel or other reading material for those times when council discussions get too dry to stay awake through.)

Suddenly Ann elbowed me and whispered "this is why they don't quit, look at their wages."

I looked and yes it was true, the position of mayor and reeve and even councillor have become a lucrative pastime. In the early 1980's when I was on council, I recall an annual wage of about \$300 to \$500 from my land tax at the time. But now wages range from about \$1200 to nearly \$3500 per year .

I mentioned previously being on council is thankless job... I take that back!

I guess I lived under the misconception that council wages were simply token monies to somewhat compensate for a service to your town. As honorarium, so that you didn't have to spend any of your money to attend council functions. It appears now that not only could I pay for my taxes, but toss in a quick trip to Florida with the change.

I tried to come up with a reason for the 500% plus increase. Had the cost of travel increased or were there more functions that required mandatory attendance, but as hard as I tried could only come up with one reason for the drastic increase. More meetings. In camera meetings, recreation, hydro, arena board, public water and maybe even to plan for meetings .

Please note that I have not voiced my displeasure at the council's wage. I only would like to see a further accounting for the wage. I feel that I am entitled to such as a rate payer. If indeed the wages for the hours spent in the public interest, then they are underpaid. Then I feel they should be justly compensated, either way. I must though further add that considering the upcoming costs of increased taxes, a public water system, drain work and other future endeavours, that the wages of council must receive as much scrutiny as the wages of the town employees have received in past years. After all, what is good for the goose...

Perhaps it is time for council to look at the amount of responsibility that they shoulder and shed some of it to those employees that are being compensated full-time for performing jobs within the town. Perhaps it is time to give more wage and responsibility to the town employees who can better deal with certain aspects of the town business that they tend to specialize in.

Perhaps the town foreman could exercise equally as good judgement on drains and the likes, perhaps the town clerk be given the power to make administrative decisions, and the arena manager to handle total arena and recreational operations and these persons report to council with their decisions, and why they were made instead of council deciding every little detail and then instructing the employees to carry them out.

I am by no means saying that my ideas are the way to go, only that I can't help but think that there are ways to save the ratepayers money and the council some frustration of the power was more equally distributed.

I am also sure that council will give this column the same careful thoughts they have my previous columns. I wonder if they read this far!

April 6, 1994

STRANGE BREED

What a strange breed we as Canadians are. We live in a relatively unpopulated country, up to our earlobes in snow and ice for 3 to 5 months a year and suffer through soggy cold wet springs and cool windy falls and temps nearly 100 degrees F. in the summer.

Maybe we have become so adaptive in our climate that, that is the way we tend to handle all of our problems. Perhaps our passive Canadian attitudes are derived from simply adapting to our climate. Too often we let others push us around!

Someone famous once wrote "God told us of the resurrection, not only in the bible, but in every leaf in spring." The sun now shines, the snow is melting, my income tax return is done and for the moment it seems that maybe winter will not remain perpetual. Soon the grass will green, the trees will bud and the daffodils will sprout and finally, yes, finally spring will come.

Maybe we Canadians would not feel right if our seasons melted into one with no extremes. How mundane Florida must be to live in. No snow in winter and no colour in fall. Perhaps we live in the best climate of all. Perhaps part of maintaining our own sanity is the insanity of our climate. How many times as children did we hope for that big snow, so school would close and we could go out to play in the drifts? Winter didn't seem as cold then.

So don't worry fellow Canadians winter is on its way out and soon we will revel in the warmth of a spring time sun and be planting our gardens and flower beds, opening our pools and breaking out our lawnmowers... winter will again be out sight and out of mind.

April 13, 1994

Baseball ... Bothwell has historically been considered to be a hockey hotbed of talent. Canada has established a reputation of producing world class hockey players for every league in the world. Our climate and accessibility to arenas and natural ice surfaces gives us a natural predisposition to the sport. But recently Canada has been exposed to a wide assortment of professional sports. First football with Montreal Allouettes and then the world champion Blue Jays and now it appears we will have a pro basketball team.

But baseball it seems will be our next popular forte ... the next sport avenue for our youth to court.

Already there are kids in Chatham are showing promise and baseball is coming back to small towns, first as T ball, then lob ball, progressing to fastball and hard ball. True baseball is fast gaining popularity in towns like Thamesville and Rodney.

I can remember when I as a kids, we played under coaches that we considered town heroes in the person of Mike Brearley and Bob Hamilton on the hard ball diamonds. Hardball was probably easier to coach then because kids in the sixties and seventies didn't have Nintendo, movies and barrage of other activities that offered direct competition to ball.

Baseball is unlike lob ball and the other sports of today in that baseball requires much more physical conditioning, lightning reflexes, strength and stamina and upper body muscle and co-ordination. The conditioning is important to even to the youngest of hardball players. Injury rates run fairly high and somewhat severe. Being hit with a baseball at nearly a hundred miles per hour, squarely in the arm or head or leg can result in severe bone breakage. Players get "gun-shy" after a hit and pitchers lose their nerve after injuring a batter or two. Catchers must be constantly be aware of a monster bat just inches from their glove.

Every player on the field must be capable of being ready for the abrupt changes in pace of hardball. Play almost stops for several minutes while pitchers walk batters or strike them out and then suddenly from this slow pace, a hundred miles an hour line drive comes from the plate to the infield within about two seconds notice.

There has been talk in the past couple of years about hardball returning to Bothwell. The cost of such a move will be over two thousand dollars when one includes the cost of converting one of the ball diamonds to a hard ball diamond with a pitchers mound. The cost of equipment is much higher than other types of ball also .

However, many of us remember the likes of the Fishers and the Kellys, Bothwell's yesteryear baseball greats. Perhaps Bothwell is a baseball talent hotbed also and has not been recently tapped.

Only time will tell if hardball can make a come back to Bothwell, but don't be surprised if next year or the next you can go the the park for a real live little league game. The ground work for baseball is now being set with the Bothwell Minor Baseball Association, which has enjoyed great success in the last couple of years. Perhaps one one of the players on our current roster will someday grace the lineup of a major league lineup. Again only time will tell.

April 20, 1994

SPIRITS BIRTHDAY

I can't imagine what it must be like to own a newspaper that was established in the last century, as many today are. We turn two this week and it seems like we have always been in the news business.

We've found that it isn't an easy business to be in. People are quick to criticize your content, your quality and quantity. Never has so much been demanded for fifty cents. We have had to streamline our business going to high tech equipment and working seven days a week. The budget doesn't allow for an employee to help out. We've taken on extra responsibilities like a retail outlet and some minor printing just to make rent each month. We love the work, but get little more than a feeling of completing something each week in payment for our labours.

As we have grown to the ripe old age of two... unfortunately we have made some enemies. Not intentionally mind you. But in this business we must deal in the truth no matter how bad it may be. We are bound to inform the public of the happenings around us. We must tell them truthfully and as unbiased as possible, just what is happening and if part of what is happening is controversial, and makes waves then we are prepared to ride out the storm and weather the implications that come along with the truth. We have never intentionally printed any mistruth or purposely biased a story in our paper. We definitely never set out to make enemies. The stories that have made enemies for us just happen to show people and things in an unfavourable light. They are not all bad or all evil or intentionally setting out too harm to anyone.

We have also taken some lumps with our advertisers and readers. Of course, as with any business, there are bad debts but surprisingly not many and there are ad clients who feel they have been wronged, surprisingly even fewer.

There are of course the complaints about letters to the editor, stories that provoke controversy and of the dreaded ads with mistakes in them. But despite all of the aforementioned problems, we have learned something else. We have learned that the vast majority of our readers, support our viewpoints, and understand that we are only human and subject to making errors. Our readers often, even very often, the past two years. Our readers have become like family, people that with. Our readers have been the reason that we have stuck it out for

we laugh with, cry with, enjoy with and live with .

So from us to you ... Thanks. We've enjoyed doing it and you have made it worth our while. We'll keep writing, if you keep reading and all that we ask in return is that you let us know what you think now and again.

So as they say in the news, "See you in the funny pages!"

April 27, 1994

I'll bet there were a least a couple of readers that turned to this column hoping to see a critique in the move to discharge the town clerk. Well, I'm still researching that matter and don't wish to comment yet, but I promise that I will.

Meanwhile, I would like to take a look at our community and one of the things that is happening and has been going on for many years. Fundraising for various charities and organizations has been undertaken by many people in our town. The most recent is Shannon Ashburn and her daughter Jillian, along with support of their family. From selling hotdogs on Main Street, to this year's very successful Dance-A-Thon, they put forth their efforts in an attempt to help others that may find themselves in a position the Ashburns were once in. I hear some people complain of everything from sore muscles and too much work, to not being able to afford a new car and the cost of sending their kids to university. We all have our "cross to bear" it's just that for some folks, their cross is not being able to get a new boat this year, while for others it is what a fine morning it is today because the medication they are on only made them throw up once before breakfast. It becomes a matter of perspective!

I have had the great fortune to watch the incredible tolerance and bravery that certain people exhibit under pressure. I have watched people laugh and joke without care knowing full well that they will die inside a month. I have watched friends die, because they were too weak for surgery or an organ didn't get donated in time. I must thank God for these experiences, for without them I could not know the true meaning of a good life. Not the good life of white sandy beaches, RRSP'S, new homes and fine cars, but the good life of wonderful caring friends, healthy kids and an unbroken home.

The Ashburn's stand out this week because it is their specific time. We cannot forget others of our town who do the same thing year after year for cancer, heart and stroke, the March of Dimes and all of the others. The canvassers who walk from door to door "bothering" their neighbours for money to support the people a fund that has not yet touched the people who answer the door.

So the next time someone knocks on your door asking for a donation to a charity, remember you may be touched by that very charity someday. Maybe consider it a subliminal insurance policy. Give what you can and maybe even thank the canvasser for taking time from their life to help extend the life of another, for what they do is noble and honourable, in a world where such things are becoming an endangered characteristic.

May 4, 1994

I can't help but notice that the dismissal of clerk from our town coincides with an election.

I was fairly well acquainted with clerk and apart from our former clerk's ability, or lack thereof it to deal with the public, he appeared always to be busy and give him his due, he could provide council with advice that they may not have had access to. Mr Langner appeared to be a calculating man, who although at times spoke out of turn, he rarely spoke from an uniformed point of view and never, in my presence did he expose nor put at risk the town or the council.

Months ago residents of the town of Bothwell grouped together to ask council to consider the dismissal of the then, Clerk Treasurer, Jerry Langner. A petition signed by over 200 members of the community was presented to council who listened, but would not act on the request to fire or at least reprimand the clerk, Mr. Langner had on several occasions become abrasive, impatient and uncooperative with ratepayers in the town. This is a social taboo in a small town like ours. Older people have come to expect patience and respect with taxes, mill rates and other municipal business that has over the years been computerized. Ratepayers, both young and old have every right to expect a cheerful and helpful explanation of what is happening regarding their town. After all it is their dollar that is catching the bill.

Unfortunately, the clerk was not alone in making the acquisition of information an ordeal. The council that backed him, also avoids questions from the public and seems to revel in private meetings and what they call "proprietary information."

A former clerk-treasure of this town often said "Ask me anything! There are no secrets here."

This philosophy made it hard to criticize a council or municipal office for keeping secrets. The current council would do well not to keep so many secrets. They give people and especially us, the press, more than adequate ammunition to criticize them. Even at times they are not deserving of the criticism.

At last month's council meeting, council moved to dismiss the clerk. I have to question this move. The former clerk's contact would have expired in four months. In August, and in the contract, a clause states that he may be dismissed at any time so long as he receives severance pay for a six month period. It would have been cheaper to allow him to finish his contact out and simply not renewed it.

As voiced by Irene Marchand, at the April meeting of council, "It too bad you didn't listen to us eight months ago. Needless cost of a solicitor..." COST you say ... Consider the costs a year ago, of extra council meetings to discuss the petition, the cost of having the town solicitor attend meetings, even the \$144.00 spent to hire an off duty police officer to ensure peace at one of last year's council meetings that many people attended hoping to be heard. Now, there have been "in camera" meetings to discuss the same man's dismissal, the solicitor had to be hired to prepare an actual bylaw and last but, by no means least, the \$19,126.00 payable to the former clerk because he wasn't given sufficient notice.

This whole clerk thing has been, excuse the term, "a dog show" from the start. When the former clerk-treasurer Sherry Graham re-signed, we at "The Spirit" were made aware of certain circumstances that involved council placing undue pressures on her and actually bringing her to tears on more than one occasion. In my humble opinion, our town is fortunate not to have been hit with a civil law suit, for job harassment in the Graham affair.

Following Graham's resignation, council hired an "interim clerk" (Jerry Langner) to act as clerk until a permanent position could be secured. During this time council advertised in the "Municipal World" magazine to fill the position for a municipal clerk. This advertising cost roughly \$1000.00, but netted over seventy applications. Many of the applicants were fully papered clerks, however the only applicant that was interviewed, was the one that was hired. He was also the interim clerk that was filling the position before the ad ran. It made the whole exercise of advertising for the position a technicality and fully, a complete waste of taxpayers money.

The new clerk appeared to have problems from the start of his full time employment. He, on several occasions caused ratepayers to simply walk out of the town office, upset and unserved. It was not like he was poorly paid. His wage was substantially more than the previous clerk, yet his hours were substantially less. He also received mileage to drive to and from work. Yet council backed this man up. Even during last year's public protests when they underwent the severe scrutiny of irate citizens who demanded that he be relieved or dismissed or at least reprimanded for his conduct.

I have to wonder what caused this miraculous about face by council. Mayor Brearley said that in one instance, Langner didn't attend a meeting that he had been notified in writing about. Langner called the Mayor later that afternoon saying that he had an appointment and would be unable to attend the meeting that the Mayor had called. Mayor Brearley insisted that the meeting would not take long and that the councillors had already been notified and were coming and Mr. Langner informed Mayor Brearley that that was not his problem. Another instance involved John Snow, Fire Prevention Officer and Mr. Langner, when Mr. Snow asked that the clerk forward a letter and the clerk threw it back at Mr. Snow saying that the letter had nothing to do with him and he would not deal with it. The clerk did later phone Mr. Snow and apologize for his behavior. Shortly after these incidents the clerk presented a doctor's letter to the town stating that he was taking 3 months medical leave. The next thing we know is that he has been fired.

It is apparent that council refused to listen to the people's complaints about the clerk, yet acted quickly and decisively when he crossed them.

In a meeting of the Committee of the Whole, our council recommended unanimously to contact the town solicitor to draft Bylaw-6-94, being the bylaw to terminate the employment of Jerry K. Langer as Clerk - Treasurer - Tax Collector for the Town of Bothwell. Whereas by Bylaw 592-92 the Corporation of the Town of Bothwell appointed Jerry K. Langner for terms set out in an employment contract between the Corporation of the Town of Bothwell and Mr. Langner dated August 17, 1992.

The employment of Jerry K. Langner is hereby terminated in accordance with the employment contract dated August 17, 1992.

They bylaw comes into force and effect on the date of its final passing. Read a first, second and third time and finally passed this eighteenth day April 1994 .

To me it appears that council is making a feeble attempt at redeeming themselves in the eyes of the ratepayer with the hopes of reelections in the fall. If indeed this is but a fraction of the reason for their actions, then in my opinion not only did it all happen far too late, but also it was far too little. This council has in my opinion been too secretive, uncooperative and far too free with my money. It is also my opinion that our arena is dangerously low on funds and without an agreement, our parks and recreation went from a committee of interested ratepayers, to a single persons control, it appears that our councils number will be cut this fall, (again despite many protests), many tenders for grass cutting, cemetery care and snow removal are now held by people in other towns, our municipal employees have not had a wage increase in years, our streets are littered with four way stops, the town hall auditorium has not been put to good constant use in years. There have been unnecessary bylaws pertaining to burning leaves and garbage that have caused a great deal of frustration for ratepayers and town employees alike. This council had a hand in all of the above. All of this not to mention that fateful H2O project that no one seems to know anything about.

Our little town is headed for disaster if things do not change. We need sensible, logical, government. One that will work not as two teams but as one team with the people, by the people and for the people. (I just made that up!)

If you can donate your time and common sense to this town please seek election. This town has a colourful past, but one that also had a reputation for good responsible government. Let's bring back the glory in the fall of 1994.

As always we welcome your comments and editorials.

May 11, 1994

Last week's editorial on council netted many comments from our readers ... mostly that it was about time someone spoke up! Still I feel that some of the councillors are taking a bum rap. They know who they are, being dragged through the mud by mere affiliation. I apologize to those councillors and urge you the ratepayers of Bothwell to make themselves more informed on who is doing what in council and seek out the names of the councillors that are trying their best to serve the town.

Anyways, on other topics. Last weekend the Bothwell Minor Hockey Association held their annual awards night. This is the night of the year when many boys and some girls anxiously await. Players on each team are given MVP, Most Sportsmanlike, Most Improved and Best Defense awards.

As a coach in the system, I too was asked for my input on who were the best on my team. I must admit that I lost some sleep over this request. My boys were 7 to 9 and each one has the sparkle in his eye of some day becoming the next Potvin, Gilmore or Gretzky. Each little boy had his good and bad attributes, but all gave the game their best shot. In the end I was stymied. I just couldn't pick any player that was more deserving than another, even with my own son the list.

I opted for identical medals for each player. Equal rewards for all those who played. There were boys on my team who improved a thousand times, but still found it a great challenge to skate with the puck or keep up with the rest. There were boys who were physically outstanding hockey players, but lacked sportsmanship or judgement or hockey smarts. And still others who maybe showed little improvement, but still had fun playing. Our team went from the second worst in the league to fourth place in the league. We beat the odds and had fun doing it.

I watched the year go by, seeing some boys parents never show up for a game, while others are at each game screaming their lungs out or worse yet paying their kids for each goal they score. This practice will teach a child that if he can keep sole possession of the puck, not pass to anyone and score all alone, he will be rewarded with money. Kids need their

parents at games to cheer when they win or score and to shut up when they make a mistake. (remember parents, you made the odd mistake at that age too and how would you feel to be singled out by your Dad screaming bloody murder at your error in front of all your buddies.) When you look at your son or daughter, remember you are looking into a mirror of life. They are you. Every action they learn is modelled after their heroes ... YOU! Every move they make on the ice is to impress YOU ... to please YOU ... to make them special in your eyes. Of course all coaches at the awards banquet did not and maybe shouldn't have done the same as I. In higher age groups, boys need approval and to be pulled forward from the standard ranks to receive special acknowledgement for exceptional performance. I guess it is part of growing up.

But to the boys on those teams who didn't receive special awards, don't lose heart. Many of the great names in hockey suffered the same as you before they were recognized. In the October edition of "Sportster" magazine Marty Marsh wrote a special, which told of how crazy the NHL draft was. First round draft picks who ended up as no-name pros are common place names like Gilmore, Tocchet, Fleury, Robitaille, all waited, while over one hundred other names were called the majors before their names came up. And don't forget when Gord Howe was cut from the New York Rangers, he too had his moment in the sun!

Next year you may still sit and watch as your team mates receive the awards but remember Gord, and smile quietly. Your day may come! Finally a word on those dedicated people who suffer from the criticism for almost everything they do. These are the officers of the minor hockey association. The need for assistance in this area is now paramount too. Any parent who can help should now step forward. Simply signing up your child and paying his registration is only part of the price. If each parent of every boy sat for one year on any position on the executive there would be no shortage.

Contact any member of the club to offer your help.

May 25, 1994

Summer it seems, has arrived in the great south west. Trees here are either stark naked or in full bloom. This year it appears that they almost over night burst forth with leaves that were never little baby maple leaves, but massive sunblocking things that hog the sunlight from new grass that suffered an even longer winter than I did.

Spring brings out the "goof" in all of us. It seems that we are just so darned happy that it is warm and sunny we have to express ourselves. We do that in strange ways. Really strange ways! Some of us are obsessed with the golf course, so these people hit the golf course at 6 am and play 18 or 27 holes miserably cold golf. (it is still just May and the mornings tend to be cold.) To top off idiocy, they get home at 10 am and tell everyone they see for the next 2 hours, that they've already been golfing and can't understand when their listeners look at them like they are straight from Mars.

Other goofy things we see, are people cutting grass weeks before it really needs it. Or people bent over flower beds, on their knees in wet grass with mud to their elbows planting annuals that will be dead in a month. Ever notice that flower beds are a reflection of personality? Ann's tulips are four feet tall! Her flower bed is full of perennials. She plants once and if they don't take ... tough beans! Other flowers beds are laser straight lines of equally spaced flowers that will be planted, allowed to flower and immediately after flowering will be re-planted with another type of annual that will follow the same pattern. This is a sign of an organized person... the ones that roll their toothpaste tubes from the bottom up or the ones that believe in "Video Cops" who hunt down those that don't rewind their rental videos.

Still others plant mini flower beds all over their yards. This indicates a need for security. If one bed fails then it has a backup, that will provide the needed up keep to busy the gardener all summer. The problem here is that none of them ever fail and the gardener spends every waking moment working in one bed or another until late November.

Myself, if I had my way, I'd pave the my yard with green pavement and plant fake steel flowers in late March, I'd even have fake maple trees that simply turned colour using a switch and the leaves would fold up on the branches, in the fall then another switch would unfold them in the spring. From forty or fifty feet, people would never notice the difference. This is the sign of an extremely lazy person.

I don't think I'll ever figure out why the human animal rushes every season, the fall Sears catalogue will be out in June. We Christmas shop in June. We Christmas shop during September sales. We golf late winter and close our pools a month before swimming weather ends. More people should be like me. I close my pool, just as that first good layer of ice is forming over the skimmer. I cut my grass for the first time when the kids start to get lost in the back yard. I shop for Christmas between the 20th and 24th of December and start my taxes at five to twelve on the last day. Let's just say I've come to work well under pressure.

Have a safe and happy summer!

June 6, 1994

Soon the lazy days of summer will be upon us.

Remember summers when you were a kid? Remember the last day of school? Remember the bus trips to the Thamesville pool... detassling corn, picking cucumbers, cutting lawns, remember how good "freezees" tasted? Remember playing hardball at night? Remember swimming at "Pickle Beach" or the swing at Shetland dock? Remember running through the sprinkler or camping Rondeau park for a whole week when the factory shut down? Remember going ankle or knee deep in the creek, catching tadpoles or frogs? Remember fire crackers? (I never met anyone who was hurt by them.)

I remember biking to the Wardsville Golf club for swim or to Shetland for the same (maybe traffic wasn't as dangerous then). I spent many summer days on the bank of the Thames River and others climbing around the oil fields.

Summer nights were never meant for work. There is a lazy magic in a still summer twilight, that casts a spell on people so that they linger past supper and stretch out their evening coffee. The porch swing takes on a higher level of comfort and you just can't break free of its grip to go and cut the lawn.

Summers have gotten shorter and colder, I am sure. Didn't summer used to run from April to October, with an average temperature of about 85? Water, too is colder now. It must be this metric system that makes colder. Even as children, we all awaited the summer holidays, when the second or third week of August rolled around we began to anticipate the new school year (although we would never admit to it.) I can't help but feel a certain amount of pity for the children of this era who will never swim in unchlorinated water, or spend a summer exploring our town and its surroundings. The park programs of today provide for more constructive past times. Supervised by ECE students and running on budgets that allow for field trips, crafts and a learning experience.

It's summer now, so slow down, spend some time playing catch in the back yard. Have a camp fire (small, contained, and used for cooking, of course) for no reason at all. Take a walk and don't get your cardio vascular rate up, just do it to relax. It's summer... the season we've waited for. It's summer... so lay back get bored and enjoy it. I think that's what it is made for.

June 15, 1994

FATHER'S DAY

This Sunday is Fathers Day. It will be my 38th as a son, and my 12th as a Dad. In our childhood days, Dads were special, but not like today. Dads of yesteryear were often too tied up with making payments and working 25 hours days to spend leisure time with their families. Those times did not allow for credit cards and a nearly unlimited cash availability. What one owned, on bought and paid for, usually in advance. Payments were reserved for home and sometimes cars, but they were considered a serious undertaking and each family knew their limit and hardly ever overstepped them. So Dads of the past could rarely afford the time to spend with the kids on a real regular basis. I think this made Dads special. It seemed that when kids got time to spend with Dad, they cherished it. Dads were heros. The whole family depended on Dad. My Dad always made time for us, even if it meant taking us to the fields to help him do the harvest at Grandpa's farm, even though

I'm sure we slowed the process more than helped it. He made us a hut at the pond to change our ice skates in. He taught us to drive tractors, and in our later years, was ever present when we needed help with a newly purchased house or car.

Now, Dad can't do all the physical things we watched him do years ago, but still when we need an experienced mind and a watchful eye to deal with a problem, he still seems to be the one who ends up at our side, engineering the project.

On the other hand, to be a Dad is an awesome responsibility. I remember when preparing for my first liver transplant, my prime objective if I should die, was that my family be cared for. I remember when I received a call to go to the hospital, in the middle of a Sunday night and how I feared more for the future of my children than I did about my possible demise later that day. In my prayers, I always include a line to grant me the strength and good health to raise my family and thanks for allowing me to carry on as far as I have.

There is no honour higher than to be a Dad. A Dad instantly becomes a role model, a confidant, a friend for life, a pillar of strength. You are no longer simply a man, word and action becomes good and proper in the eyes of your children. How many times as a kid did you say "Well my Dad said so" . That was the end all. The final word. Dad said it was so, and so it was. ...no questions.

There are many things this high tech, high credit world has brought upon us that are not necessarily good, but one that is good thing, is more leisure time and fortunately for our kids, many Dad share a wealth of their time with their children. If you don't, you are not just robbing your children of a father, but yourself of a gift of love and companionship that is unique and can not be replaced at another time. I hope you see your kids on Father's Day, and as often as possible, you deserve it and so do they.

June 29, 1994

Late last year the Bothwell town council made application to decrease the number of members of council. Their reasoning for this move was it put an end to the deadlock that could occur with a total of six representatives.

I can't help but wonder why the council did not see this as a problem when they decreased council from 6 to 4 councillors. To me the obvious solution would have been to decrease by one, if the head of council always wanted to vote.

For over one hundred years this town has had 6 councillors, a reeve and a mayor, but suddenly the decrease began. It did not save substantial money, hardly enough to pay for a month's worth of "in camera" meetings each year. It did not reduce bureaucratic red tape ... because man power was decreased not programs. It did force the remaining councillors to take on more responsibility, to put more on their already happening political plates.

Now, with council having more problems than ever before, they have again received permission from the Provincial Legislative Assembly to decrease yet again. They are now hoping to show equal performance with less people.

It is standard procedure in many municipalities for the "chair" head of council to reserve his / her vote to break a tie, not to exercise it constantly to create a deadlock. Such is not the case in our town.

I really feel that the ratepayers of this town have been had. We have been stripped of our rights as voters. Let me explain. When council advertised last year to decrease council, we at the newspaper came forth and generated a petition to stop the decrease. This petition was circulated signed by many ratepayers. I cannot say how many, for I really can't remember exactly, but it is fair to say there were more than 30 names and less than one hundred. The numbers do not matter for if only one person signed, it makes the petition a valid, legal, and binding document that must be read before the assembly if it is submitted, usually in the form of a private members bill.

A month or so back the publisher of this paper almost fell to the floor, when she heard a motion to decrease council, by one with the approval of the legislative assembly. You see, Ann had not only signed the petition but had personally folded it, sealed it and mailed it off to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Unfortunately she had not made a copy of it nor sent it as registered mail. I always find it intriguing how certain misplaced documents pertaining to little people, bothering big business some how get lost.

Mr. Bob File, Randy Hope's assistant in Toronto told us that he had checked with the Clerk of Assembly and no such document was ever received. Now isn't that funny!!!!

Sorry but we didn't think so. The council of this town knew full well of the petition. It was in the newspaper and there was talk on the street, yet when the assembly approved the motion, no one asked whatever happened to the petition. Neither did they waste any time in reducing the number of councillors to be vote on in the next election. I also wonder if any one else sent in an objection rather than sign the petition. If any one did so on their own I would be more than interested in hearing from you.

Mr. File informed me, that all we could do was to generate a new petition, and file it to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and begin the process over again. Now what fool would go through that heart-ache again ? Me!!!

Yes, once again we will generate this petition and once again we will promote it and urge people to come forward and sign. Remember, we are slowly but surely losing a voice in council. How long will it be before our council is reduced to one councillor, a reeve and a mayor, or worse yet, just a single person who randomly make all municipal decisions?

It is imperative that we keep as many people as possible. Although there is a cost to paying extra councillors, the dividends to having the input of six compared to four, make the money well spent. Although decisions take longer to make, they are almost always better decision when there is more input. More brains provide more ideas and perhaps one of these ideas could save our town thousands of dollars over the next few years. The other factor is that by decreasing councillors it does not eliminate municipal programs, there are still as many committees to serve on and as many jobs to be done and as may complaints to be handled, so don't expect to get your problems or complaints dealt with immediately because there probably won't be the manpower to do it.

We will place the new petition to object to a decrease in council in as many business places as will take it. Please consider this topic and if you see our way, sign the petition. We promise to make photo copies of the petitions and send it registered mail and this time maybe the politicians will listen.

Watch this paper and area stores for petitions and updates.

July 6, 1994

TO RUN OR NOT TO RUN ...

That is the question that many Bothwellites are asking themselves, as the upcoming municipal election, slowly but surely comes our way. The current council has its woes and it is rumoured that some of them will still run despite their less than perfect track record. I have been a thorn in their side, no doubt, and I wish for them all to know that there was no malice intended or any personal grudges held. This council albeit not perfect, are at least a group of citizens that were concerned enough about our town to run and hold office and to stay for the duration even if things got out of hand. They have had a tough row to hoe and must be commended at least for their perseverance, I can't help but wonder how many others would have simply thrown their hands to the sky and walked out of council, never to return during the Langner affair.

The decision to run for council is not one that should be taken lightly. One should do some soul searching and some self evaluation. Are you set in your ways and do you always stand by your first decision ? Are you a good talker ? (God gave man 2 ears and 1 mouth to be used accordingly). If you answer yes to any of these, you are not necessarily good council material. One must be capable of seeing things from many perspectives. One must be capable of listening to all points of view. One must be capable of admitting he or she is wrong or at least able to bend to the popular vote.

If you running for council to make a little extra cash ... forget it. Generally councillors spend far more in gas, time and energy than what the meagre pay makes up for.

If you are running for council to stop public water ... forget it. That matter is water under the bridge (no pun intended). The public water project is too far advanced to ever stop it for a reasonable cost. The die is cast and now we will have to learn to live with it. We still don't know ... but possibly water will be a great benefit in future years.

Don't run if you're running to eliminate the current council. Far too often people vote against something rather than for another.

If you feel that you can perform a service to the town, if you feel that you can offer constructive input to your community or if you feel that there are things in town you would like to see change or created then by all means put your name up for nomination .

Remember though that there will only be three councillors elected and also remember that the position of Reeve involves extensive travelling during regular working hours. If, when the election arrives you feel that there are 4 or 5 councillors that are better suited to the position than you, consider dropping out. A good nominee that runs will take votes from other qualified nominees. A good nominee can suffer defeat because too many persons ran for a position and each one took just a few votes away from each other.

We will be running a special column on the steps that you should take to run for council in the next few weeks. Watch for it and until then just think it over.

July 20, 1994

I've said it a thousand times. "What a queer species we are!" The expression usually follows some peculiar human behaviour and is asked by someone who is genuinely perplexed at someone's behaviour.

Let's take for example volunteers. If you have ever been one, you usually work hard to help a cause and are often ridiculed for your methods. Being one of council's rather consistent critics I can remember when I sat on council and after a year and a half, I was tossed out by voters trailing the polls and being cursed by the public for the purchase of the town's first computer. I vowed that I would never again get involved with municipal politics. I had done my best, I had made a decision in what I felt was the best interest of the town and I was ridiculed for it .

Too often people are far too quick to criticize methods or ideas and yet these are ones who quickly become too busy to do the job at hand themselves.

This year I have been exposed to a great deal of criticism, not so much to me personally, but to other volunteers of the town. I have witnessed criticism of the coaches, umpires and organizers of minor baseball. I too have heard criticism of minor hockey, the Sr. Bullets, the cub scouts and how many times have I heard how our town suffers from "no hardware store". Perhaps those who are so quick to criticize should have volunteered their time and ideas to help the local service groups or shopped locally and prevented local stores from becoming financially infeasible. I suppose it is human nature to express one's own ideas on any given topic but instead of picking apart the ways things are done, why not attend a meeting and offer to help or tell the group your ideas instead of putting down an idea without the courtesy of allowing the volunteer to defend themselves?

It is easy enough to say how you would go about things, but another concept altogether when you put your ideas into practice.

"I'd love to help if only I had the time", is quite easily the most popular excuse. I once used this excuse with a very wise old man when he asked me to go fishing with him one day. He told me something I hope I will never forget. "You always find time for those things in life that you want to find time for." I thought about it and indeed he was right. Regardless of how

busy my schedule gets I always find time for those important things in my life, like the couple of hours per night of television I watch, or like the hour or so I spend reading the Auto Trader with no intention of buying anything.

Bothwell is a good town, with many good concerned citizens but it hurts and frustrates those people who give so freely of themselves when they can't seem to please anyone. I have found that there are no volunteers in life that deserve being judged for their methods. I find myself making every attempt to stop myself and think "does this volunteer deserve my secret judgement?" "Is the person I am about to critique and show my temper about worth the headache or bad feelings it will create for them and if so will my judging them help or hurt their cause?" When I do this I find that most of the time I would be better off to simply brush the problem aside and consider it still a problem solved but just not the way I would have done it.

So the next time you go to perform a critique on someone who has not asked for it, bite your tongue and if you can't or won't do better than them, consider it "a problem solved just not the way you might have solved it".

August 24, 1994

PHOTO RADAR

Beware you pesky no good speeders, effective Monday August 1st, five mini vans hit the highways near Toronto and Ottawas to rid the highways of all you road bandits and begin what may turnout to be the biggest con job ever pulled on the voting public.

Despite the fact that photo radar has never offered any proof that it saves lives on the highway and despite the fact that more accidents happen to vehicles under the speed limit than over it, PHOTO RADAR, had become a reality.

Unfortunately it is, really only one more way to raise enough money to fund our provincial government's irresponsible spending habits. The province, it would appear, had dug themselves a deep enough financial pit that now it must resort to almost any conceivable way to keep its head above water. Speeders make a prime target. Not only are they breaking the law, which justifies the ticket, but speeders (rich ones) can now speed without worrying about demerit points or even losing time while a cop writes up a ticket and ostracizes them for breaking the law. Photo radar will not control speeding any more than the stupid black and white cigarette warnings on the new smoke packs will control cancer. While the cigarette packs are being laughed at, it is doubtful that many will laugh at an \$80 speeding ticket which will come as a surprise through Canada Post. (See, even the Feds win on this scam).

I have been doing some research on Photo radar and will present a three or four part editorial on it as soon as I get releases to re-print some of my research material.

Stay tuned to this side of the fence 'cause you're not going to believe what is really going on with PHOTO RADAR.

September 14, 1994

Hey guess what ? People in our town have become skeptical of joining Boomtown Players.

True, some have become too busy with their lives to spare the time anymore and I can't blame them for not wanting to put another iron in the fire. Others say that if they can't dedicate themselves with as much time and efforts as is required then they would prefer to wait until time allows the theater. But an overwhelming group seem to feel we are whipping a dead horse. The thoughts are that this group will once again try to stage a performance and not make it into the auditorium.

We are currently considering something called "busker theatrics". This is when a single performer or sometimes a small group get together and perform an act. Juggling, clown acts, pantomime, simple comedy dialogues are all good examples of busker theatre. But the really great thing about buskers is they need no stage. Their act usually contains very few or no sets or props at all and is completely mobile.

Buskers often roam fairs, the CNE, Wonderland, town celebrations and any other place where they might be able to scare up a crowd. Another great thing about buskers is that they usually perform for free or simply place a hat out in front of them, so you can drop a dollar or two for the show.

Busker theatre is not easy. It requires individual practice and hours of it. The show must look completely natural because the audience is only a few feet away. And because the show happens at close range the busker must be ready to cover for error and often try several times to pull off a stunt and similarly accept a minor flow or two in the performance until the busker gets the hang of performing in front of a crowd.

Buskers still need a place to practice and we sincerely hope that we can make a home in the Bothwell Town Hall auditorium. It would be a great place, to rehearse while at the same time giving the auditorium a caretaker that would spruce up the hall and bring her back to her former glory.

We still however, need people to turn into buskers. If you can juggle, tell a joke, act, pantomime, or would like to try learning, sign up for the Boomtown Players Busker Program. You won't need a great deal of time since your rehearsal times can be made to fit your schedule since the entire cast doesn't have to rehearse together.

If we are allowed to use the town hall we plan on staging a Christmas Variety show that would encompass some of the busker routines along with a short Christmas play, possibly a quartet or duet or even a solo. Perhaps a couple of selections on the piano or other instrument and maybe even a local choir to sing and or lead the audience in some Christmas carols.

We will be holding an organizational meeting later in September so watch this paper for more information on that.

October 5, 1994

Have you ever stopped to think that we as the human species, the most intelligent race on earth, are unique from all other beings on earth in so many ways? We are the only animal that earth that blushes. We are the only ones that clothe ourselves. We are also alone in the fact that we articulate. Only we can laugh, only we can cry, only we can cry from laughing or cry from happiness. We are capable of premeditated thoughts. We can plan! And one other thing we can do that no other animal seems capable of is "complain" .

We complain about everything from the weather to politicians (I won't get started) and from the way our cars run, to the way our wife cooks, the way our kids coaches coach, teachers teach and preachers preach.

Something else that only we can do and rarely bother with is give thanks. When is the last time you gave thanks. I don't mean thank the Lord for saving your life from a brush with death, I mean thank you Lord for this day. Sure it is cold and rainy, the trees are almost bare of leaves, winter's icy blast is just around the corner and it will be the start of six months of shovelling snow. Despite all of that, this is a day that the Lord has made and we should revel in it and celebrate its creation, for this day is a miracle.

Are you thinking, "Hey this day isn't so great. I mean, it's just another day isn't it?" Well why don't you try creating a day? Where will you start? I guess you'll have to have a sun, moon, earth, a few good people, some love, hate, good and bad. Now all of a sudden this simple day is taking on some proportions. You suddenly find out that you probably would have some big time problems in "making a day. "

I have to question people who actually think that there is no God, no central force to all that exists. I don't know about you, but I feel a lot better about being created by the most powerful force that ever existed, than evolving from some prehistoric slime. But if you want to be the son or daughter of slime that too is OK by me. You have every right to believe that. And if you believe that there is no being that should be shown gratitude for today, then so be it.

I come from a scientific background, I was once paid to perform scientific experiments and dealt daily with "Koanda Effect", "the Doppler Effect", "Hot Wire Anemometers" , " Standard Deviation", "Confidence Intervals" and a host of other scientific terms, so I guess I have based nearly everything I know on empirical data. (empirical meaning data that can be scientifically and undeniably proven physically). Therefore it stands to reason that I was not always a great believer in religion.

However, even the most highly regarded scientists in the world have admitted that there have just been too many "coincidental occurrences" or "highly improbable phenomenon" or "unexplainable happenings" to eliminate the possibility of a supreme being. That is where I stand. By the time most humans reach forty or so they have witnessed too many "acts of God" to deny His existence.

Unfortunately by that age we are also too set in our ways to actually admit that we were mistaken and yes there is indeed a God. Although many people feel that I was unfortunate to have undergone not one, but two liver transplants, I consider them the reason for my salvation. I came close enough to losing it all that I was taken from an operating theatre, with not only a new liver, but also a new outlook on life and its values. and its values. The simple possibility of Gods's existence left me and what remained was there is not a doubt in my mind that God is. Life became a celebration, any time spent not celebrating life, I found to be wasted. I love life and everything about it. I close my eyes several times a day and whisper "thank you."

Maybe this message of "celebrate your life" (is too complex or too simple) to convey to a non-believer. But I know that I am happier when I laugh than when I cry, so I make a point of doing the former a ot more than the latter.

I also give thanks. I give thanks for happy healthy children, for a small town, (even with its politics), for my friends, my wife and for my life (as simple as it is.)

I try not to preach. I remember when others did that to me and how I disliked it. My religion is mine and I prefer to keep it as an "original", so I share it only when I'm asked and this week I was asked.

So should you give thanks on Thanksgiving? Only if you are thankful, my friend. Only if you are.

October 12, 1994

It appears to me that if a person wishes to live an unfrustrated life, somewhat free of worry and despair, he must ignore certain aspects of life. Probably one of these aspects is politics, power and money. I think these three are nearly synonymous with each other.

In the last few years environmental protection groups have made us aware that we are destroying our own environment. We are generating waste at rates that even our incredible technologies can't keep up with. Power mongers, politicians and big business seems to be intent on making millions of dollars even if it means the destruction of the rain forests, the oceans and the very air we breathe.

Each day we inundated with hundreds of opportunities to reduce or increase the amount of waste that our world will have to endure. Yet even though many of us are creating a future hell on earth for our kids or grandchildren, we choose to take the easy way out and purchase drink boxes in lieu of bottled juice, of use plastic wrap in lieu of sandwich containers.

We humbly accept the barrage of flyer mail that we must pull from our mail boxes and deposit directly into our trash cans. This is perhaps the worst sin of all. Not only do most of us not ask for this mail, but we must pay to get rid of it and furthermore we even bear the lions share of the cost to deliver it, even though over 90% of us don't want it and even dislike it. The reason stores can mail out flyers is because the cost to mailing a flyer is highly subsidized by private mail rates. So every time you write Aunt Martha, a portion of your stamp money goes to help deliver flyers. While your letter costs you nearly fifty cents, a flyer often costs less than a nickel to mail. One of Canada's most precious natural resource is being wasted at such an incredible rate that newsprint has risen in price nearly 15% this year and is slated for nearly a 20%

increase next year. The sorry part of it is that a monstrous amount of it is printed into flyers that are read by less than two percent of the homes they are mailed to.

The rain forest of the world are being raped at such a rate that our grandchildren may only know of them by films and stories. The sorry part of this tale is that these forests may contain certain naturally occurring medicines that could prove to cure a host of diseases and also man unstudied types of plant and animal life that my exist nowhere else on earth. Yet the powerful businesses, press on, doing whatever it takes to keep the politicians off their backs and keep the flow of lumber products at all times highs and the income of money higher yet.

There is still about a 100 year supply of fossil fuels left easily accessible to man and what do you want to bet that the standard combustion engine will remain the mainstay of transportation, until the oil is virtually gone. Then I suspect suddenly the automakers or the oil companies will make some astounding new technology, that will introduce a new type vehicle that runs on another product, that they will also easily control the production of. With all of the new breakthroughs in technology, I find it rather hard to believe that a car can't be made to run cheaply on hydrogen or oxygen or some other naturally occurring substance.

Another unforgivable garbage crime is the way our government refuses to mandate returnable bottles and cans. The next time you drive down a highway or walk along side a town street just look at the number of cans and bottles that some kid would pick up, if there was a deposit for them. The provincial and federal politicians should be ashamed of themselves for this horrific oversight.

Beside this week's column are rather amazing facts about Canadians and how we waste. Perhaps it is time that each one of us makes a change to our lifestyle, to make the world safer for our kids and their kids. Write your MP about junk mail or about applying a deposit to all cans. Save your flyers and return them to the store who sent them. Send your kid a "litterless lunch" .

Chances are you'll never see the results of these small acts, but if you don't try, someday someone will suffer for our indifference. This is "waste reduction week" , why not establish a habit, maybe even a whole family habit, and help save our world.

November 30, 1994

I was listening to some of my kids music the other day and I heard a song called "when I was your age". The lyrics of the song were the words of a father to his son, telling him of how he had life when he was a kid, "73 of us living in a cardboard box", he said, "so poor we had to eat dirt" ... "if we were really good we didn't have to eat dessert" and dad was so mean "he whooped us every night til quarter after twelve. then made us whoop ourselves."

As teenagers, my sisters and I had a similar dialogue and mocked our Dad (when he was absent of course) and how tough he had it. "Had to walk to school ... in the rain, snow or heat", he said "7 miles ... no buses then", we mocked "7 miles, up hill both ways" ..." had to get up early ... sometimes so early we wouldn't hardly have time to sleep between school days. "

Perhaps it is a rite of passage from young adulthood to parenthood. I caught myself the other day saying "when we were kids we wouldn't think of talking that way to an adult." I stopped. I smiled. That felt great! No wonder every parent that ever lived, uses that line. It leaves your kids wondering what kind of hell you grew up in. It goes beyond their realm of reality. They think things like "wow, my Dad must have been like Superkid or something, he couldn't mouth anybody.", "I bet when the family cave got too cold he was the one who brave the dinosaurs to find wood to burn on the dirt floor. "

And they say "do you remember when there was TV, Dad?" or" did your car have power door locks, Dad?"

They've got you now. It's the old Dale Carnegie "get them talking about themselves trick." Parents fall for it every time. It's kind of like spilling your guts on Oprah. It is the time when you can strike your kids with awe. Parents invariably embellish their past. Cutting the grass with a reel type mower turns into an insurmountable task of great suffering and valour. "Why if

I hadn't cut that grass as often as your Grandpa made me, we have lost your Aunt Jodi by times ... and the wood ticks in that lawn would have made quick work of her!"

"How old were you when you learned to drive, Dad?"

"Well I was six, but your Grandpa wouldn't let me drive except only to get to my full time job 12 hours a day, gruelling sweat shop, child labour summer job" and then you think, "was that too much?" and in your mind you answer "naa!".

"Dad, did you have Sega when you were a kid?"

"Sega ! Heck no son, we had to make games when we were kids. Stuff like hide and seek and games that you didn't have to buy but we didn't mind cause we were so used to work, that by the time we were 8 or 9 we'd spend any spare minutes, no seconds talking about our 14 hour a day, gruelling sweat shop jobs that we didn't get paid for and how someday maybe we'd get nickel or something for the summers work. " Man this is like a heroin fix. Once you get started the monologue just flows. You don't even notice that your kids are smiling slightly or catching each other's glances. You are on a roll. You don't even notice that your oldest is staring blankly at the TV while you talk. You are creating hero, for they the young-uns. This is something they'll tell to their kids and a couple of hundred years from now your future grandkids will talk of 'ol great great great really great grandpa Jim, now there was a tough old coot, why he should have been president of something."

Then suddenly from nowhere, just as you were really going to get into some World War III stories, your youngest rudely interrupts with "Daddy, can I have an orange?"

"It's an orange and yes I guess you can."

Number two pipes up with "hey Dad can I make some crackers and cheese?"

The moment is lost. Your time in the sun was short-lived by and "a" orange and some crackers and cheese. Is there no justice?

You justify it by the fact that your childhood was just too much reality for them to handle and after all you don't want them to have a bad dream or wake up crying in the night.

So you peel the orange and get out the crackers and think "never had oranges when I was kid, they were Christmas presents."

December 7, 1994

Humbug! Yes that's what it is ... humbug. No I'm not talking about Christmas, it's Christmas shopping. There is little that I despise more than pushing my way through the masses of our "multi cultural" society to avoid the jabbering of foreign tongues and a zillion super-hyped uncontrolled children.

First, we fill the van with fuel, which is up ten cents a litre, because PetroCan knew I was going shopping this weekend. Then load the kids into the van. Stop a block from the house and separate them into their own seats at least two feet apart and return home to get the forgotten "list".

Now into the city. Bumper to bumper traffic on all roads and they are all equally hating this chore. I firmly believe stores have the ability to jump from one side of the road to the other, just so you have to make a left hand turn across four lanes of oncoming idiots to get into the parking lot.

The first search is not for that elusive present for Great Aunt Effie, but for a parking place close enough to the mall, that we will not need a camel and a three day supply of water to get to the store. Do you suppose any of these useless government agencies have calculated how many acres of our country is covered in parking lot asphalt? I'm sure if it were planted in corn we could feed a third world nation.

We find a car leaving (obviously he has come to his senses and quit) we approach the empty spot and the entire front end of our van is nearly sheared off by an incoming idiot. He slides to a halt with one hand on the wheel and the other held high with the one finger salute towards me and my family. We back out and humbly park in what is called the fringe area, I call it "grass"

We walk (I should have trained for weeks for this) to the mall. We may have saved fuel had we walked from Bothwell to the mall. We walk from store to store and stroke items from our list with phrases like "sold out" , "maybe in two weeks" , "check Toys R Us", "no way", and "got one just like it." When we do luck out and find something wait for fifteen minutes in one of fifteen lines of cashiers, only to find our item was missing it's barcode and wait a further fifteen minutes for "personnel from menswear to the service desk."

We feed the family in the food court. Each child choosing ten dollars worth of food from a different country and everyone finishing off with fifteen dollars worth of bubble gum flavoured popcorn.

My wallet is suffering from "national debt syndrome".

We return to our wee town exhausted and frustrated. Here we have the option of walking uptown or driving up often parking twenty feet from the stores entrance.

The sales help is personable and patient. True they don't stock twenty two different styles of wallets, but they have five really nice ones and does Uncle Fred really care if we spent only five minutes debating which wallet he would like? And if he doesn't like it, we don't have to journey back to the city line ups to return it. I stopped shopping the city for most things. I found that if I paid myself a dollar an hour for my frustrations, it was cheaper to shop in town. Not only do I feel better about supporting businesses in my town, but I can talk to the owners first hand if there is a problem with a product and I always get satisfaction.

On a more serious note, I cannot urge you strongly enough to support your local store. We must do this today or risk losing them tomorrow. The last thing I want my wife to say is "Honey, can slip in to Chatham to get a quart of milk and a loaf of bread?"

December 14, 1994

Here I sit at my 486-DX2 66Mhz PC writing this column using WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) software. We use local bus versus ISA or EISA motherboards. This computer uses a CMOS chip to set its defaults. It runs on 8 meg of RAM accesses WMF, PCX, PM5, CDR, and TIF files from CD ROM which is separate from the system ROM. The operating environment is Windows 3.1 over DOS, not UNIX and displays on a 22" SVGA monitor at 870x1056 DPI and finally prints to our HP PS or an HPCL5 printer. We don't PMT pictures and get the paper out ASAP and that's usually PDQ.

In today's world we are being acronymed out of our minds. Every technology has its lingo and all lingo has its short forms. We speak of SNAFU's, FUBARS and one of the more recent syndromes is the NIMBY (not in my back yard) syndrome.

I suppose some of this lingo saves some excessive "verbal diarrhea" , but is it really all necessary? I mean we watch UHF or VHF on TV, we listen to CDs, we watch out for PCBs, CFCs and I suppose VWs .

Everything we do today is abbreviated. Twenty years ago our grocery order of a bag of 1%, 2% or skim, 16lt of water, a kg steak and 24 x 350 ml of coke, would have sounded like an order bound for Mars.

Our kids often use the acronyms without ever knowing what they stand for. Although some of the ones who are scientifically inclined demand to know what the letters stand for, much to the distress of the unsuspecting parents.

I use computer lingo almost everyday of my life and gauge my lingo well acquainted persons quickly and efficiently of a problem of systems according to who I am talking with. I find the acronyms let me inform capabilities, without the long drawn out full names of each characteristic. I have become accustomed to using these acronyms and they don't bother me in the least. There is however, one abbreviation used today that I find terribly offensive. It appears only at his time of year and I find it demeaning, desensitizing and to be very frank ... ugly.

The word is "XMAS".

What an insult to slap on the name of The Saviour of The World. What a disrespectful, stand alone slur on a single being. One would never think of calling May 24th - Queens Xs Day.

My own son's name is Andrew W Kish (yes just W) yet I don't ever re-call saying "oh, today is W's birthday". Would anyone introduce the president of the United States (note I did not use U.S.) as President Bill X?

XMAS conveys anonymity to me - it's what's his names birthday! Sign the at X please. A place to show just anyone where some thing is or should be.

The birth of Christ was an event that shadows every other event in history and so I feel to replace Christ with an X is more than just a little disrespectful.

Maybe I'm over sensitive on this issue, but I consider "that word" blasphemous. It is very unlike the rest of our acronyms that are new and created to save time. I can't help but wonder about its origin. I mean how is "Christmas" harder to say than "XMAS"?

I prefer "Happy Holidays" to "Seasons Greetings" to "Merry Xmas". I prefer "Hi" to "Merry Xmas". Actually I prefer nothing at all to "Merry Xmas."

I can only hope that it doesn't catch on in the same fashion as our other acronyms. I don't think I could handle greeting friends in the street with "Have A Merry Xmas" , or singing "Oh ! Xmas Tree, Oh Xmas Tree"!

December 21, 1994

The Christmas Story is based on the birth of the Son of God. To persons who enjoy a strong religious belief it is truly a time of joy and celebration. It is that time that we celebrate the most wonderful of all events. The gift of God's son to man.

Still there are many people we all know that openly admit that they are not very religious. They admit that they find religion too restrictive or a bit hard to swallow. But when this time of year comes they are out with the best of the Christmasers; wishing Merry Christmases and buying gifts for every Great Uncle and third cousin removed in preparation for Christmas morn.

I have always loved Christmas. I love it because it is a time for family. It is when our families get together and reunite for something we all hold in common. Both my family and my wife's family are fairly devout Christians. True, we may not run about proclaiming our devotion. We are quiet about our faith. It is a very personal thing, even to the point of our families. I think that each of us has come to terms with religion that we are comfortable with and adopted it as our within. But as I said we all hold one common belief and that is that Christmas is a time of great joy and celebration. It is a time to celebrate life... a time to forget past differences and to renew the bond of family and friendships.

I cannot help but wonder what it must be like for those that do not have the blind faith of the existence of the Holy Trinity. What would Christmas be with out the scripture reading of Luke? I automatically affiliate turkey dinner with "Away in the Manger". Soft echoes of Silent Night make me feel good in my heart and I thank God for peace that still remains on earth, even if it only lasts for a week or two every year.

In contemplating this I think that Christmas is a necessary time for everyone. Those who are devout Christians and those who are not. Christmas brings out the best in everyone. Even those Scrooges who claim to hate this season can be caught smiling at a grandchild or wishing someone a quiet "Happy Holidays" , with a quick glance sideways to ensure no one saw them do it. Christmas marks a time for employees to socialize with the boss, for kids to socialize with adults, and for families normally spread over the globe, to unite both in person and over the phone lines or by mail.

Perhaps we all need this one time of year for an excuse to forgive. A time to start fresh. To forget the mistakes of the past twelve months and anticipate a short break in monotonous routines and break free of business and briefly indulge in mushy Christmas kisses, heartfelt hugs and handshakes and wishes for a wonderful future.

There are few passages that I can find in a Bible but my favorite is Luke, Chapter 1 verses 8 to 14. Relax and read this : "And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were so afraid. And the angel said "Be not afraid; for I bring good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. " And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased."

Peace among men with who he is pleased ... I guess that says it all. Thank you for reading me this year. I hope you enjoyed reading as much as I have enjoyed writing. She can't really fire me, I was never hired. So I guess, God willing, I'll be here next year too. Have a Merry Christmas, a wonderful and prosperous New Year, and stay well.

THE FINAL CHAPTER

January 4, 1995

CLEAN SLATE

A clean slate. Start fresh. Okay, I really mean it this time. No, really. REALLY. It's not funny, stop laughing. I'm going to make it this time. Sound familiar? It sure does to me. I'm going to quit smoking, lose weight, exercise, stop spending money foolishly, put \$25 a week in a savings account and probably have a nervous break down before the end of February.

I suppose I have tried them all and so I'm a bit of an expert on, at least, what doesn't work.

Here are a few tips that I have read about and experienced first hand. First off, who says you have to change at midnight on the eve of the New Year? Why not wait until you are back at work and your life has regained some form of normalcy and routine again. Why try to lose weight or stop smoking when you are most likely to be exposed to great food and social activities that entice you to pig out and light up? Try starting on January 7th. This will allow you one last blast and let you enjoy your holidays to the fullest.

Next, why stop everything at once, or better yet why STOP completely ? If it is smoking you are working on, then don't go cold turkey. It's been proven that the cold turkey method is the least successful. Cut yourself down to four packs a week or two packs a week. Set enough money aside to buy your smokes and don't spend beyond that. If it is weight you are working on, don't cut out all the food you enjoy. You'll hate yourself and won't stay on a diet you hate for very long at all. Try eating smarter.

Try drinking a glass of water before each meal and one in between each meal. Water is processed in the kidneys and they need a good supply of water to function properly. If the kidneys don't get enough water, the liver leaves one of its functions for later and helps out the kidneys. The function that the liver puts on hold is metabolizing fat. Try eliminating just one food item like chocolate or try limiting yourself to two slices of bread each day. Get into variety. It costs a little more at the time, but is well worth the little extra. Eat more fruit, canned, fresh and frozen, it provides a wide variety of tastes and is almost all good for you. Veggies are expensive and especially this time of year, but frozen ones are cheaper and there are still some like carrots, that are not too pricey.

I have found that if I try very hard to limit the quantity of food I eat in one sitting, that my stomach will shrink quickly over about three or four days and then I find that I am actually incapable of eating great hoards of food without being uncomfortable. So I try very hard for the first few days to decrease the physical amount that I eat each meal.

Avoid scales. They will only depress you. Have your spouse hide them. After all they are only numbers and we're interested in feeling better and looking better, not numbers. Weighing yourself will only serve to discourage you. Think positive and shut up. Think good thoughts, like how you will reward yourself with a great new outfit or a new swim suit next summer, stay up beat and don't wander around telling people how you are punishing yourself with a new diet. There is nothing more discouraging than having someone come to you in February and say, "I thought you said you were going to lose weight." It is far more rewarding to have them say in March " gee you have lost some weight haven't you?"

Another thing many diets promote is to set goals, I don't do this because when you set goals you almost inevitably set them too high. Simply tell yourself that you want to slim down. No pressure, no big goals. No 20 pounds on the first month. You are far more likely to keep the weight off if you lose it one pound per week. Remember one pound per week and next year at this time you will have dropped fifty pounds.

If it is smoking you are working on simply try to cut down. Don't tell others that you quit until you have quit for a few months. And don't be surprised if no one notices that you have quit, probably most won't. Quitting smoking is probably the hardest of all habits to stop. There is little reward in it the cessation of cigarettes other than you will be healthier. Changes to your health are so gradual, chances are you won't even feel much better after leaving the weed. You may notice that food has more taste or that you don't get winded so fast, but even these changes are gradual. You are more likely to notice how disgusting the smell of an ashtray is after quitting for several months. Finally don't try to quit smoking and lose weight all in one move. You will almost definitely be miserable. Take the one that is most important to you and leave the other for next summer or even next year.

So get up beat. Smile and think how great this is going to be. Look forward to results, not to the dismal future.

Good luck and write if you find time.

January 11, 1995

PRO HOCKEY

It would appear that we will not have a professional hockey season this year. This is a rather sad event in the history of the pro sports. The recent baseball and hockey strikes and lock outs have proven what many sports fans suspected for a few years now and that is that the pro players really have lost the true love of the sport and traded it in for cold hard cash.

These boys found something that they had a natural talent for and then exploited their God given talent for money.

From now on when I see a sports star share a Coke or a Lifesaver with a kid outside the dressing room, I'll remember this guy couldn't give about this kid, or any other for that matter. All he is interested in is the money he is getting for putting up with some brat in a commercial.

The youngsters of today must also wonder why their heroes don't want to play their sport anymore. A kid who felt that a Clark or Potvin or any other hockey stars could do no wrong, must truly wonder why these idols won't play unless they get millions of dollars to do so.

I used to think that pro sports figures were very special people. They dedicate their life to a sport, they work out for hours everyday to ensure they are the best they can be. Toronto's Doug and other NHL would-be's, played in other hockey leagues, but decided not to stick them out and although they shone in those other leagues the pay was not up to NHL stuff. Hockey players in other countries and other leagues in Europe are as good and even better and receive a paltry \$15,000 per year for their efforts. It is not surprising that the NHL is peppered with "ski" and "ov" suffixes to many great names. These European's must be awed at the incredible money the gullible Americans will pay professional sports figures.

We have also lost faith in some of our heroes as they have been caught on illegal drugs or in possession of narcotics, drunk and disorderly and fighting in bars like any other bush leaguer.

Stories of pros who spend tens of thousands per month on living expenses during the off season, with parties and vacations abound in sports publications today. It appears that the true colours of pro sports players are beginning to show.

I feel somewhat sympathetic to those boys who were in last years draft and missed their first season but on the other hand maybe they will learn a valuable lesson in economics.

And although we will miss Hockey Night in Canada and the playoffs and the race for the cup there are some consolations in the strike. Live theatre, music shows and other forms of entertainment are having a banner year. It seems that the hockey couch potatoes are being dragged from the living room into the street and to other forms of entertainment. The other winner is Major Jr. A, senior hockey and semi professional leagues are now getting better coverage and bigger crowds. I am sure that the bulk of the fans will return next year but there will be a certain percentage that will probably leave pro hockey behind for something they found to be as entertaining and somewhat less politically and momentarily driven.

January 18, 1995

FINANCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY

Financial irresponsibility. There's a mouthful that says a little in today's society. The term can be linked to not only big business but also sports, politics, the credit card debt, the national debt and just about anything that has anything to do with the dollar.

The Canadian dollar has recently taken a beating on world money markets. This has been fuelled by our national debt, our dollars decline against the U.S. dollar, and more recently, our Quebec separation issue. After all, who with any sense would want to invest money in a country that was about to address the issue of sovereignty?

Last week the New York times printed a headline questioning "Canada Bankrupt?" and in the article it said that Canada should be given an honorary title as a Third World nation.

Last week, we also saw then saw corporate giant, file for protection from its creditors, and the Federal government paid out 6 million dollars to United Parcel Service to "relocate" to New Brunswick. The New Brunswick government said the spending made good sense and created jobs. That same government also said that the move was going to happen anyway and the government money only made it happen sooner. May I ask "if it was going to happened anyway, why pay 6 mill to aid the inevitable?" This was job relocation not creation. True, New Brunswick will gain jobs, but Alberta and British Columbia will lose the same number. I see it as a wasted 6 millions dollars of tax payer money.

Our nation has undergone a rapid succession of what I see as irresponsible government. It appears to me that many of these guiltless representatives reap the profits of their station in life. Spending cuts seldom occur at their level and those with the power seem to end up with the money. They have made promises to save their constituents money and when the power was theirs they squandered money away with unnecessary pension plan, government grants and gratuities with absolutely no regard to the average man.

It is becoming common for the average voter to doubt the credibility, honesty and character of some politicians. Our country is becoming as corrupt as any dictatorship government. The only basic difference, from my side of the fence, being that instead of a single dictator living like a king while his subjects live in squalor. Canada allows its politicians to live like kings while the entire country suffers the national debt that exceeds the GNP of our nation. Canada cannot take this massive money waste for much longer. We will soon be broke. What happens when country goes bankrupt? What does it mean? How does it affect the average ratepayer?

A major fully industrialized Western Nation has never actually gone bankrupt, so one can only guess at some of the major problems that a monetary collapse would cause.

My guess is that when a country goes bankrupt, it can no longer back up its loans with any kind of federal reserve because the reserve is gone. Other countries will no longer do business with the bankrupt country because the its money is deflated to worthlessness. Social systems agencies collapse and because the people that run them are not getting paid anymore, they quit work and the government cheques stop flowing. No more UIC, Workmans Compensation, old age pension, mothers allowance, income tax returns, baby bonuses, or disability cheques. The whole machine stops. Suddenly the entire economy stalls out. When the dollar becomes unstable inside its own country then things really go crazy. Stores, unsure of the value of the dollar stop dealing in currency. Years ago when this happened in France, frantic shoppers drained banks dry of their savings and rushed to the stores with veritable wheelbarrows of money, but were turned away at the store because the value of the money was fluctuating by the minute. After a week or so of no commerce, people reverted to the barter system, trading food for services or one food type for another. But indeed many people were on the verge of starving before the system stabilized enough to operate on a barter system. I would imagine Canada would receive relief efforts in food and other necessities for the US. Hospitals close and health care immediately begins to suffer. Common cuts and wounds that require stitches can no longer be treated. Infection would run rampant. No more flu shots, immunizations, or ongoing treatments. No more free condoms, or free needles ... what would the aids epidemic do? I can't help but wonder what would happen to people like me, who depend on the government supplying several thousand dollars worth of experimental drugs each month. The anti-rejection drug is priced well out of the range of the average man and there are thousands of transplant recipients that would die very quickly without it.

Then finally I think something good would happen ... the government collapses or is often overthrown. If I were a politician I think I'd run before any kind of overthrow attempt is made. Historically governments that are overthrown are not given a golden handshake but more often a concrete cell.

Economists of today tell us that there are too many safeguards in place to ever allow for such a massive shutdown. There are countries that would step in and prop our dollar as happened in Mexico.

Still considering the possible effects to each and every person in the country I must admit some concern over our current economic climate. Many persons feel that there is little that they can do to stop our government from planning our financial demise, but there is. If each of us took ten minutes to call our or MP offices and voice our opinions there would probably be change. The only power you have is your vote but you can wield it like a sword at a politician. Good politicians realize that one vote can be the difference of a win or loss.

Other than that all we can do is wait and hope that our leaders will start to put the good of the country ahead of the good of themselves.

January 25, 1995

ON PUBLIC SPEAKING

It's public speaking time at the schools in Bothwell. All over town our kids are making the choice over speech topics. They are deliberating over whether to speak on a rock group, a vacation, computers, video games, sports figures or some other "in the news" topic that maybe the one that is picked to go on to the regional speaking contests.

I consider myself to be a public speaker. I have been trained to speak publicly. I have spoken to university medical students, auditoriums crowded with strangers, and I have performed on stage in several plays. I have read books on speaking. I have even considered making public speaking a career.

I am usually amazed at the topics and the desire of kid speakers. They generally are not passionate in their topic, but simply want their speech to be funny. Maybe this is an insecurity of being laughed at intentionally in lieu of making a fool of themselves by muffing up, although I have never witnessed any speaker being laughed at in this predicament.

Speech topics are not to be taken lightly. In choosing one, the speaker should decide how much work they want the speech to be. If the speech on a topic that the speaker is not familiar with then there will be considerable research to be done. Generally, the amount of research that will be required will be several times the information that will be conveyed in the speech. On the other hand, if the speaker chooses to speak on something they are familiar with, then the speech takes on a new concept. It becomes a thousand times easier. The speaker merely conveys his or her feelings on a topic they already know about. There is little or no memorization and if the speaker does forget a portion of the speech, they can ad-lib and fill in the holes from pure knowledge. But most important of all the speaker is capable of speaking with a passion. Conveying their true feelings and actually sharing their feeling with the audience.

For those who speak well before a crowd, topic is not as critical. One of the best speeches I have ever heard was on "How to treat the common cold." It lasted three and one half minutes and the audience hung on the speaker's every word.

Don't think your speech has to get laughs. Some of my best "talks" brought a large portion of the crowd to tears. Leave the laughs for comedians and clowns.

Watch the clock and stay inside your time limits. If you must speak between 3 and 5 minutes, target for 4 and practice until you have it down perfectly. When you get to the audience, pick out a person or article in each corner of the crowd and as you talk move your focus from one corner to the other in no real order so the whole crowd will think you are addressing them. Remember you only have four minutes. That should be 30 seconds to introduce your topic, three minutes to tell the audience all you can tell them about it and 30 seconds to summarize with two or three main points you want to remember.

Keep the body of the speech simple and never, never assume that someone knows anything about your topic. Avoid technical jargon and abbreviations.

It is very hard to find a test audience, but to be successful at speaking you will require practice. The more practice you get, the better you will be. Another big key to public speaking is "settling in." This doesn't mean you shouldn't be nervous. I have spoke many times and I am nearly always nervous at the start. But once I have started, the nervousness leaves and I concentrate on the addressing the crowd and delivering the speech the way I had planned. Soon I am too preoccupied with my delivery to be nervous.

Finally, don't be crushed if you are not a big winner. I once took a speaking class with forty other people and saw students at the end that were still not effective speakers. But in that class, there was one man who on the first night forced himself to speak to the class and nearly broke down from the stress. He choked and sputtered and stumbled through his talk and then nearly ran back to his seat, disgraced and embarrassed. By the end of the course he was easily the worst speaker in the class, but he could get up and talk for 2 to 3 minutes and hold the audience's attention. His confidence had grown and he received the class award for the greatest personal achievement over the course. When his classmates congratulated him, many of them complimented him on his bravery. He had profited more from this public speaking class than any other student. He played the game even when he knew he didn't play well. He finished knowing he wouldn't be the best in the class, but also knowing that he had accomplished something. He had won a battle in his mind, he had conquered his fear of speaking. He had the satisfaction of completing a journey he was not very enthusiastic about starting and he knew that he was better person for it.

February 1, 1995

Friends

I remember as a kid, my parents had a circle of friends that they socialized with on a regular basis. I remember the Robbie Burns Nights, when the "gang" would congregate at our place before the dance.

This childhood memory was one that I fondly remember and find myself wishing that I could once again be that wide eyed kid watching the antics of Lloyd and Jack. They were funny guys and my brother and I saw them as heroes. We even played "the Lloyd and Jack" game, often arguing who would get to play who.

There were the Robertsons, the Willers, the Bodkins and a few others. But this circle of friends became an event, that I think was probably looked forward to by all of "the gang".

House parties were common then and I can remember watching the company arrive at our house from the top of the staircase at the old Bedford house. I can remember being excited, I could hardly keep still. This was a party that was going to be great fun, even if I had to watch from the top of the stairs. (I wonder if mom and dad knew we weren't in bed.)

I can remember growing old enough to stay up until eleven or so and watching as the crowds got a "little crazy" and then begrudgingly heading for bed when mom told me for the third or fourth time.

"The gang" has drifted apart now, but there was a day when this group of people were like an extended family. They laughed, cried, celebrated and suffered together. I wish that Ann and I had a very closely knit group of cohorts like that. We of course, have many dear and wonderful friends, but with society there just doesn't seem to be enough time to socialize and enjoy other peoples company.

With hockey, golf, baseball, video taped movies, work, upgrades to the house, overtime, car payments and money, money, money, money, we have let socializing take a distant seventh, eighth or ninth priority.

I am concerned, that we, as a race, may forget how to socialize, I didn't realize that in watching my parents socialize I was learning behaviour that I would need in my future.

Today, it seems we have become too mobile. When I was a kid, a trip to Chatham was the event of the week, but not every week and a trip to London was even more rare. Our parents didn't need the cities the way we do. Our parents had a couple of hardware stores and a lumber store right in town. They had two grocery stores, three barbers, four clothing stores and five gas stations all inside of town. So their trip to Chatham was a big thing and today I know many people who make two trips to Chatham in a day and then are in London after supper.

How the heck can we find time to get together with friends spending four hours a day behind the wheel of a car?

Perhaps it is time to return to simpler pleasures. Consider your circle of friends and think about having a "get-together" , every other Friday night or at least once a month. Alternate houses and don't make plans for one night only, make it a regular occurring night out. We reserve nights for meetings, why not make it a part of your routine ? Don't necessarily eliminate the kids, but for sure don't bring them without letting your hosts know. Perhaps everyone involved will want this to be their night, without the kids.

Try to avoid expense. Have each couple bring their own refreshments, snacks or plastic cups or even napkins, this will take the cost out of having company over.

And husbands should try to help pick up the house prior to the party, since wives tend to consider this a very important factor. Like you can't talk over a bit of mess!!!! Hey, it will probably be a mess later.

Finally, our friends always help tidy up a bit before they leave. We don't expect it but it is a really nice gesture and your hosts will truly appreciate it.

So call your friends and get planning. I think you'll find it a very rewarding way to spend some leisure time.

February 22, 1995

BOTHWELL BULLETS

The Bothwell Bullets. This Senior A hockey team has its avid followers and its enemies. I suppose there are some who are concerned that their hard earned cash paid at the arena gate will go directly to line the players, owners or staff wallets.

The Bothwell Bullets are not a lucrative investment, in fact they finished their last season just slightly in the red. They are no better off this year. The incredible cost of equipment, sticks, buses and the host other costs involved in a team like this make it a cash hungry venture. Other people ask, what do the Bullets do for the town or for anyone else for that matter?

The Bothwell Bullets are not a run of the mill Senior Hockey club. They are one of the best in the league. Even though they must solicit the local businesses for operating cash they still endeavour to raise most of their money through dances, card parties and the ever controversial blue room bar at the arena. The "Blue room", by the way is only a bar about 3 to 4 hours a week. The rest of the time it hosts figure skating, arena board, minor hockey and other meetings that before were forced to meeting in damp dressing rooms with poor lighting and other less than ideal meeting conditions. The Blue Room was funded by the Bullets with the help of some local electricians, carpenters and concerned taxpayers.

The Bullets draw roughly three hundred people out to each home game and those people often stop at local restaurants and varieties on the way to or from the game. The Bullets provide (for those who want it) top notch hockey entertainment.

For many local kids, the Bullets are local heroes and as close to sports celebrity as they will ever get. The door to the dressing room is often crowded with kids seeking autographs following the game.

The Bullets are not boys, they are full grown men with full time jobs and after skating for over an hour they must grow weary of signing autographs, when all they really want to do is get to a hot shower and ease sore muscles and then get home to bed so they won't be late for work in the morning.

Yet they smile at the kids and sign away and welcome the popularity, never seeming to tire of those little boys who see them as sports heroes. The gruelling schedule that a Senior team keeps would tax even the most avid player. They practice (hard) for an hour and a half each week, then rush home from work, forgoing time with their families, to catch a rough riding bus to a town a hundred miles away. They play one home game and usually one away game a week although two away games in a week are not uncommon. The dedication to hockey must be strong to do all of this for no money.

Each fall the Bullets host a hockey school where they offer local kids a chance to get some early ice time and spend some time with the Bullet team as hockey tutors. This hockey school in one of the less expensive one held and would take place in Bothwell if the arena were open early enough. However, last year the school was held in Alvinston.

The Bullets are now in their first round of playoff hockey. It is nearly imperative that they get through this round and get big crowds doing it, in order to finish this season off out of the red.

This team has provided Bothwell with a quality of hockey like we haven't seen and furthermore, has provided a team of our minor players to step into once their junior careers are over. Already the Bullets are well stocked with area players, like Hamilton, Kelly and Vanderydt, all of who did their early hockey years in the Bothwell Minor hockey system. Future Bullet teams will no doubt be comprised of the kids that are currently in our minor system.

So why not pitch in and come out to some playoff games. The cost is low and the hockey is fast and hard hitting. I think you'll be surprised. Let's help keep the Bullets alive and well. Just think in a few years it could be your son or grandson that will be a Bothwell Bullet!

March 1, 1995

I just know I that I'm going to get myself in a pickle with this column, but I feel that the possible closure of the Bothwell Horse Barns is a topic to be addressed.

First off, I do sympathize with the men who use these barns for low cost accommodations for their horses. But I simply cannot justify maintaining these facilities if they are an insurance liability to the town.

I was present during the chief building inspector's tour of the barns and what I saw simply amazed me, the filth and lack of maintenance was incredible. There were main structural beams with beams that had been repaired or bound together with six inch sags in them. Dry rotted beams that had been repaired or bound together with twine. Holes in walls that horse had apparently gnawed through. Two by four ceiling rafters laid on their wide (weak) side bowing in the centres. I stepped into the westerly barn, and after being shown the dry rot in a centrally located main beam, I retreated to the cold outdoors feeling better about freezing to death than being crushed when that beam gave way.

The roof of the middle barn showed extreme sagging in the centre, broken windows that have just been boarded over, the plywood probably cost more than replacement glass would have. The soffits and fascia were rotted bad missing and the lean two that joins one barn to the next did not appear to have been used for anything more than junk storage for several years. I also saw medicines of various types strewn over shelves in no particular order and positively not fully stored. This particularly alarmed me for the security at the barns is very low also, kids could easily access this area.

Not being an electrician I really can't say whether the wiring was out of code, but simple household plastic covered wire and often lamp cord ran for some distances to light a stall. I never did see a fuse panel or breaker box. Many barns built years ago still meet codes of today because they don't require upgrading. It appears that the whole system comes under scrutiny.

Probably most amazing thing to me was that the barns were still standing at all. In years gone by, buildings in a lot better condition than these ones have fell victim to Halloween pranks. These barns also would appear to me to present a great appeal to kids who want to try smoking. A match or a cigarette butt dropped in these barns would mean imminent disaster.

There were no fire extinguishers anywhere that I could see and the straw and dry wood in these barns would go off a veritable tinder box. I can't even say that I saw a tap or running water, although I must assume that these exist.

So I do sympathize with the fact that the men that use these barns will probably have to find another place of residence. My sympathy is cooled by the fact that some of the same men did simply use the barns. They never effected any maintenance or repair and I can't help but wonder if I would want to keep my horse or other pet in such an environment.

Furthermore, I can't justify taxpayers money subsidizing this venture anymore than a track or privatized business or sporting facility that cannot pay for itself and its maintenance and is used by such a low number of people. After all many of these men make horse training and racing their profession and with every profession comes costs of operation. I personally don't think that a \$12 per month, per stall, rental fee can be considered a real cost of operation. That works out to 39 cents a day. The horsemen also pay their own hydro bills, but my rent is nearly 10 times more than their rent and my hydro is nearly 3 the times hydro bill. Then I still pay taxes, heating, maintenance and upgrades. I know that perhaps in the past these barns have hosted events to entertain the town, but some people consider this newspaper entertainment (some think it's big laugh) but still the town doesn't offset to subsidize my profession.

I am not trying to raise the ire of the horsemen and I'm sure that they are not the lone problem that appears will cause the demise of these long standing fixtures. Other councils of previous years should have probably made routine checks and upgrades but didn't and now it appears to be too late. These barns seem to be the victim of one council after another who chose to turn a blind eye to a much needed revamping of a town property. I can only imagine how a horseman would be very angry at losing this facility. Even though they must admit the barns are most definitely a risk in one way or another to themselves and the general public.

I'm not engineer, but I can't in my wildest dreams conceive turning to effect enough repair to make these barns usable again.

To all of the horsemen that will be in to visit me and inform me how inaccurate my column is this week, please remember that I wrote what I saw. I wish you no ill feelings and to see the barns disappear will do me no good.

I will close now wishing for a peaceful resolve to this unfortunate dilemma and also hoping that any person that has an opposing opinion, or other point of view, will voice it soon with letter to the editor.

March 22, 1995

Last week and over the weekend, we were literally bombarded with irate employees, phone calls from other papers and visits from other reporters hungry for the "real scoop" .

Mass layoffs are no fun for anyone. But they have become a fact of life for Canadians.

Some of the employees that were laid off at "the Tube" felt that the government or union should step in and force some kind of control in the job loss rate. Although I feel sorry for the people who are now without a job I can't help but think that the company owners deserve their right to operate their companies as they see fit. After all, for many business owners, that at one time or another risked all they owned to start their companies. Not only did they have no job security, but neither did they have health benefits or unemployment insurance if their business failed.

"It's not fair!" I remember an engineer who I once worked with and his favourite saying was "of course it's not fair, who told you it would be?" He was fired with about 30 seconds notice. What do you think he said when we told him how unfair the company had been to him? Bingo! He had another job at a higher wage inside of a week.

Now is not the time to worry about where the next meal will come from. Now is not the time to mark the painful end to a career, but time to look forward to a new job, an opportunity to widen horizons. This could be an exciting time to retrain in a field that one is really interested in. A time to shuck the restraints of a job in a cooped up factory full of noise and fumes and mundane chores and make a change to sales or travel or business or heck, even entrepreneurship.

Here are some tips to entering a job search field:

Start quickly, no boss is anxious to hire someone who has been dole for 6 months, they're not tuned into a working environment. Get out and get pounding pavement for that new job. Don't be too picky. Often a job that starts rotten is simply a test to see if you have the right stuff for something more challenging. Don't demand "your" field. A change is as good as a rest. You might enjoy sales, or typing or construction. Get a professional to generate a resume for you. Nothing will turn off a prospective employer more than a hand scribbled resume on dirty paper, that is a photo copy of a ten year old resume. Be sure to include everything you have ever worked at. Every little job you did, even if only for a day or so to fill in at your old job.

One of the best and quickest talents you can learn is typing, touch typists can nearly always land a job. It takes about a month to learn to be good typist and with the computer age typing is an invaluable asset. When you get an interview go early and go prepared. Be at the interview at least ten minutes early. Wear a suit or at least dress pants and a sports shirt. Depending on the job don't be afraid of a tie, but don't go in with a three piece suit for a job as a janitor. Use some common sense. Males will be more successful with a fresh hair cut and shave, while women will find success with minimal makeup and slightly conservative dress.

During an interview, talk positive. Don't dwell on losing your previous job or sour grapes from that loss. Tell your new boss how you are anxious to start a new job as soon as you can, on any shift, for any reasonable wage and on a trial basis, to ensure that you like the job and your new boss likes your work. Above all remember, any job is a start and a foot in the door can lead to many other places. Even if the job doesn't work out, it is one more thing to add to your resume as experience.

If you land a job, don't cancel any of the other interviews you may have. Reschedule them and don't "fib" about why. If a potential boss thinks he may lose you to another job, he may pay a premium or make an offer too good to refuse. Tell him you have a job that you are trying but that you are still open to all offers and you would still like an interview at another time convenient to them.

Don't be afraid to try something new. Take an "inventory on being". Sit down and write what you love to do and what you hate to do. Make a one year plan for the future and a five year plan for the future and review them every six months. Mark the reviews on a calendar. Most of the persons who are successful, are so because they remain focused on a future plan. Remember if you are doing something you love, it won't seem like work and you'll spend more time doing it and be happier all of the time.

Don't get discouraged if you are not successful in the first couple of weeks. It's spring time and there are a ton of jobs around the house, yard and car to do. Summer will follow with lots of summer employment and no heating bills or bad weather to worry about.

If your search for good employment seems to be dragging out, consider starting your own business. Bothwell has lost four or five businesses in the last three years. This town needs a bakery, a hardware or a fixit shop. Don't overlook the fact that computers are becoming more and more popular and people want training and need technical assistance with them. Remember also the benefits of a home based accounting firm or seamstress services. There are a zillion opportunities, but remember, use common sense. Re-opening the former hardware, as a specialty shop for ceiling fans may not be wise decision. But, I'm sure there were doubts about a major marine sales and service operation 30 miles from water and yet there is one of those here in town. Ask your friends for comments on any idea that you may have. So don't sit about, feeling how incredibly hard done by you are, because you've lost your job. This may be the start of whole new rewarding life time for you.

March 29, 1995

It's finally over. Yes, a short seven months ago, parents of more than a hundred local youngsters anxiously signed their kids up and paid registration for the 94-95 Bothwell minor hockey season. Now after a minimum of 50 hours on the ice, and some teams nearly twice that, parents sigh a huge sigh of relief as Moms wash stinky sweaters, pads, pants and socks, some of which haven't seen washer since last year, and pack away the equipment for a two or three month reprieve. Dads finally get their Saturdays back, to cut lawns and do maintenance jobs to the house and car that have been sidetracked for trips to surrounding towns, sometimes twice on a weekend. Even the kids seem to be glad for the rest and change of pace.

For many families, the entire winter is scheduled to fit around hockey. There are many treasures to be found in the old hockey bag. I found Lego, hockey cards, various notices and score sheets, my whistle, spent caps from a cap gun, a brand new pair of skate laces, (I just bought a new pair last week) an empty bottle of shampoo, (lying in a gooey corner), three hockey socks, a plastic pad that's been missing from his pants for two months, an old bottle of my cologne, and 8 rolls of tape, all partially used. Each time my son comes home from the arena, he must open his hockey bag and put articles that need washing in the laundry, he must tear his goalie pads down and stack them upright to dry and hang up his shoulder pads and pants on a line to air out. I shutter to think about some of the hockey bags belonging to boys who don't follow this regime, (maybe they just burn the stuff at the end of the season and buy new to avoid disease.)

Every coach in the league gives serious thought to quitting next year, but they'll all be back. They're made of good stuff and they realize the importance of their job. By next fall they will have forgotten how they hollered themselves hoarse, they will have forgotten getting stoned 22 to 1 on home ice and players that gave them untold grief. I think the only people who anticipate the new season more than the kids are the coaches.

But for many people who love this sport and want to see their child excel in it there will be summer hockey school. Many of the kids will go to more than one school, some will skate once a week all summer long. Hockey is a very expensive sport. To equip a player from scratch, with new equipment usually costs about \$400, but can easily exceed \$600. And if you have

a goalie, you can add in an extra couple of hundred, until he becomes bantam age, when you will buy \$500 to \$700 worth of goalie pads. Combine equipment with registration and you will be near to \$700, then top that off with 30 weeks of driving to the arenas, snacks, a couple of sticks and a dozen rolls of tape and you easily be looking at a grand. Equipment must be replaced as it wears out but more often when it is outgrown. This makes the field of used equipment a lucrative one. There are many stores that specialize in buying and selling used equipment.

It really doesn't sound like a very appealing sport does it? But to play, to score, to feel the wind in your face as you skate, to work with others as a team provides a satisfaction that can't be found anywhere else in the world. It is the thrill of the game that addicts many boys to this sport and they play from the age of five or six until they are fifty or sixty. So here's to hockey, the worst, roughest, most expensive, demanding and wonderful sport in the world.

April 5th, 1995

The Royal Canadian Legion needs you.

Last week Branch 252 of the Royal Canadian Legion, Bothwell issued a questionnaire to this area.

Why not give some consideration to answering the questionnaire and to the legion itself. The Bothwell Legion hall itself is one of the few facilities around that is open to the public for nearly any use. It sports a spacious dance floor, a stage, a fully equipt kitchen, washrooms and cloakroom. It is fully ventilated for smokers and non-smokers, air conditioned and well heated. To top it all of this off, it can be rented out for an incredibly reasonable rate.

There are a host of things that this building could be used for and would allow the citizens of this area a great meeting place. In looking through old Bothwell papers, I try to imagine what it must been like when the "Bob Kopriva Orchestra" played on a routine basis at the legion hall. I find myself wishing that I had been born at that time, instead of now. Too many times today we forgo visiting with friends to watch the latest video release on a Saturday night. If you invite friends over, wives have to clean the house to (have your house guests ever given an inspection for popcorn under the sofa pillows?) and husbands can't wander the house in dirty sweat pants and torn undershirts.

I think I would be nice if just one night a month, Ann and I could go out and not have leave town. The legion is close enough to home that I don't have worry about my kids, I can at any time in the evening, shoot home and give a quick check on them and the sitter and be back to the legion inside of 10 minutes. I can talk with my friends and leave at my leisure. I can have a drink if I want to or abstain if I feel so inclined. And if I "over-medicate" I can always walk or bum a ride from a friend and come back in the morning to pick up the family chariot.

I don't need live music. Sometimes I prefer tapes of CDs to live. At least recorded music can be turned down or up. On this one night a month those people that show up to the dance could bring in their favourite music and play it over the legion sound system. With no band. the only cost would be a small admission and drinks. Perhaps local club could provide and sell sandwiches at midnight. It could be a win situation for the legion, the attendees and anyone who wanted to make a light lunch. I can't imagine an evening like this costing more than maybe \$8 per couple. You could eat and drink what you feel like you can afford. When is the last time you got out with close friends for an evening at that price?

A night like this is not just great fun, but a chance for the people of our area to interface, to discuss, to unload or reminisce. Evenings like this promote a healthy community. They turn a town full of ratepayers into a closely knit group of people who watch out for each other.

Small town people who stay in touch with each other tend to forget petty in differences and help out any person who gets in a "situation". I can vouch for this. The citizens of Bothwell helped me and my family in a thousand ways during my illness. It is a debt of gratitude that will always humble me and one that I will endeavour to pay back for all of my life. It is the small town ways of caring and it is kept in a healthy state by sharing nights at dances and other events with friends and neighbours.

So take a good look at that questionnaire and take 5 minutes to answer it. Maybe even consider joining the Legion. Ann and I joined the Legion a couple of weeks ago, and we feel that even if we don't do more than visit the clubroom once a month or so, we can still proudly proclaim our membership.

We both plan on fill out out a questionnaire and will recommend the monthly dance idea.

Please show you care and get involved. The Royal Canadian Legion had provided support to community services for around 50 years. The original ranks of the war vets are now becoming depleted and it is up to us to carry on the tradition. If we forget the legion, part of what will go with it is the memory of thousands of boys who fought for the freedom we enjoy today. It is important that we never forget them less their deaths be in vain. Help the Legion live, consider it today.

April 12, 1995

A Second Chance

You know it's not very often that a population gets s second chance. But here we are, the entire population of the town of Bothwell and they're being given a second chance at having a hardware in town.

When the former owners of the hardware decided to close the doors they told me that the costs of keeping an inventory, combined with the buying public's inability to be patient, and offer loyal support had taken its toll. Mark up on hardware products is low and so if stock sits on a shelf too long the interest costs in buying the stock are soon eaten up waiting for a purchaser.

Still, one has to ask if we, the townspeople, were really very fair. True, there were times when we had to wait for products to come in but how many times did we simply not even give them a chance? We simply went to the city and saved the five or ten bucks and obtained our purchases from a "super store".

I have to ask myself, "is the saving really a saving or just a short term convenience?" the K-marts and Walmarts can market certain items cheaper than small town stores, but that is however your dollar stops. Ask yourself these questions.

How many times have you seen a Wal or K-mart ad in this paper? All they do is stuff your mail box with flyers and litter the post office floor. Remember the vast majority of costs in a paper are covered by advertisers and as the small town advertisers are forced out the marketplace the less money there is to support a paper or the host of other things small town businesses help with.

How much money do you think that big stores donated to Bothwell Minor Hockey or Minor Baseball or Carry On Gala? These associations and events depend on the small business community to donate to them and help out not once, but several times a year.

When is the last time you fell a couple of bucks short on a purchase and simply told the city cashier you'd drop it off the next time you or the kids were uptown?

When is the last time you looked a super store cashier straight in the eye and said "just mark that down and I'll be in at the end of the month to clear it up."

When is the last time you sent your kid to the city five or six times in an afternoon returning and getting parts to finish a job around the house? When you consider these questions a small town store suddenly takes on new value.

It is important that we don't use our small town store businesses simply as an emergency centre. We must also look to them for the purchase of larger items. Ten dollars worth of emergency plumbing fittings in Bothwell doesn't provide the mark up of the gas barbecue you bought in the city for \$ 20 less than you could buy it in town. And when it needs service "simply load it into the car and drive for a half hour, drop it off and pick it up next week."

So here we have come full circle. We have watched as one hardware struggling to survive and slowly fell prey to our city vices and now we will see a new hardware open.

The questions, I suppose, are "what have we learned in our year without a hardware?"

Do we now support this new venture and make our purchases here regularly to make for a healthy new addition to the business sector in town? Or have we learned nothing and will we continue to support corporate America for the short term again?

I have learned. I know where I will buy. I know that I want this business to survive and I'll do everything in my power to support it. What about you?

April 19, 1995

ARE THE GODS ANGRY?

You must have heard me recount how I once, as a younger man, went skiing on April Fools Day. If you haven't, you are one of a few, since I have told this to every person who ever uttered a word about Spring being late. I suppose I must resemble the elderly whisky-sipping mountain man, half asleep in a rocker, out front of the general store when I would say, "Why I remember back in '78 it snowed so hard on April Fools Day, that me and the boys all took to skiing."

But now it is the middle of April and for some unknown reason the Gods are playing with me. The 'Winter Weather God' knows that I cannot abide winter in April. The 'Swimming Pool God' is smirking at me as I look longingly out the window and watch as April snow-flakes fall on the pool cover.

The 'God of Clean Vans' is rolling on his back across a cloud, holding his belly because it hurts from laughing at me every time I wash my van and it stays clean for 2 ½ hours.

There is nothing for me to do. Hockey is over and it's too cold for baseball, tennis, basketball or any other outdoor activity. The television is running reruns of reruns. I've got chronic, terminal cabin fever and I'd prefer double pneumonia to following that O.J. thing. "Is he guilty? ... Is he not? ... Do I care? ... hey get a life?"

Some smarty pants once said, "Spring is a time for new beginnings." Did you Gods not hear that? What part of that simple phrase don't you understand? Let's get on with it.

The 'God of Grass Cutting' must be very low in the hierarchy of the God seniority list since he doesn't appear to pull much weight. My dog has taken to peeing in the drive because my lawn is such a mess. On the other hand maybe the 'Grass God' is still in God Miami or wherever these big power guys relax at while I'm shovelling snow.

It's obvious that the 'Rain God' and the 'Temperature God' are having a big power struggle. Every time the 'God of Water from the Sky' wants to rain on someone's parade along comes the 'Temp God' and turns the rain into snow.

Then of course, there are the 'New Gods on the Block.' There is the Rap God — he has allowed rap to remain "in style" longer than pet rocks and hot pants. At least hot pants were ... were ... were ... well I can't explain but I liked them. If only 'Disco God' had that kind of power. What about the 'Mail God'? He has been holding back your income tax return for a month and a half now, and in the one year you even filed early to beat the rush. Then there is the fearsome 'God of Lose Truck Tires' — say he has been a busy guy lately hasn't he? I also believe in 'Computer Gods', 'Water Puddle Gods', 'Puppy Poop Gods', and 'Demons' who make my children fib.

I have the sneaking suspicion that these are deceased politicians. Their actions make no sense, happen at the worst of times and do little to change anything for the better or for the worse. How do these guys get to be Gods you ask? Would

you want them hanging around your heaven? Not good enough for Heaven and too bad for Hell, that's how I've got it figured. That's why I couldn't run for political office. With my luck I'd end up being the 'God of Smitten Women'. Could you imagine the kind of havoc a God like that could wreak?

Actually I hope these make-believe Gods exist and are enjoying the heck out of my misery, because I hate to think that my pain is not providing some kind of enjoyment better than the television reruns I have to watch.

I shall close with a comment about the 'God of Political Funding'. I must ask where does this God go from the day after an election until three months before the next election? Perhaps he is busy making all of the money that the politicians will give away in a feeble effort to convince the public they are worth one more term. Does this ploy work? You'd have to ask the 'God of Cheap Tactics', maybe he knows.

April 26, 1995

CHOICES

Choices ... the world is full of them. From the time we are children until the day we leave this old earth we are faced with choices that will shape and mold us, our world and the other people who share this world with us. Choices begin in early public school. Whether our children excel or fail or simply choose to work as hard as they have to in order to pass, is a choice they make. This choice though is often molded at home when parents don't teach the child to take responsibility for a clean room or minor household chores or check to ensure that homework is being done. Parents should remember that teachers of today are very accessible. I often drop in to see my kid's teachers every other week and unfortunately sometimes more often than that. But the teachers seem to appreciate my concern and assistance. Teachers of today, can only teach. They can issue menial punishments such as writing assignments but these punishments don't carry much "clout". (Clout being the operative word here).

Later in life, these kids will learn what they can do based on the success rate of their childhood choices. If a child gets away with murder as a kid, then maybe he or she will try murder as an adult.

I was told this week that the kids in our local schools can obtain drugs or alcohol for free, if they so desire, right here in town. Now that is quite a choice isn't it? As a parent I hope that I have instilled a sense of individuality in my children so that they will not jump on the band wagon and try things that I have told them are dangerous.

I can't help but ask whether having all of these choices is good or otherwise. We have the choice of smoking, but not until we attain legal age. Bringing me to the case of the variety store owner in our area who was fined \$5000 for selling tobacco to a minor. When was the last time you heard of a liquor or beer store being fined, or don't they ever sell to minors?

Where did our choice of whether or not we wear a seat belt when we drive go? Then there is our choice of being able to read in English or French, the instructions or ingredients of anything we purchase. I can't wait until I have to write my column in both official languages. (if you think my spelling is bad in English, wait until you see my French). Our government is quickly narrowing and eliminating our choices for us and to offset that, many special interest groups are demanding more choices for their causes.

What was once a happy medium has become dangerously lop sided. We used to give our kids the choice of being well behaved or answering to a spanking. Today we no longer have that choice. Our kids can sue us for spanking them (I hope they aren't reading this) or call a kids help line or run away from home and live on student welfare. I ran away from home a few times and was happy to return home after an hour or so of freedom even if it meant a "hot seat" when I got there.

The sad part about choice that I have found is that with what little choice we have left in our world, we still tend to base our choice on the wrong reasons. We shop in the city for "lower" prices or better selection. We shop in the U.S. because it's cheaper. We choose exported products because they are superior to Canadian. We vote out old politicians instead of voting in new ones. Yet rarely do we back up our choices with any real research.

It seems to me that one of the few things growing old gives us is the patience to weigh out our options and choices and choose according to a better thought, or form of reasoning. As I grow older I make fewer and fewer snap decisions and tend to wait until tomorrow after I have slept on a choice over night. There must be something about the light of the morning, since I have found choices often appear different in the light of the morning sun, after I have studied the choice and its long and short term benefits.

So the next time your have a choice to make, regardless of how simple or insignificant it may be, stop yourself and give it some thought. Perhaps even wait a day or so.

Make a wise choice. Considering how fast we are losing our choices you may be glad you waited.

May 3, 1995

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment ... is one of the words in the English language that I don't understand. I once collected unemployment insurance for two weeks in between jobs only to have UIC phone me and tell me they wanted their money back because they had issued cheque for the wrong two weeks. They took their money back and somehow forgot to reissue cheques for the right weeks. So I guess I can say that I have never received and kept an unemployment cheque.

I don't think that I am especially talented. I do have a high pressure welders ticket but short of that I don't have a degree or specialty that most men my age have. I can't ever remember being without a job for more than a day or so. Some jobs that I worked weren't too pleasant. The one like priming tobacco, working in the oil fields or in a plant with 150 or so other welders, were not among my favourite jobs of the past and none of them even paid all that well considering the manual labour involved but they were jobs and that beat the heck out of not working at all. I have worked on farms, driven oil tankers and cattle trucks, worked as a factory labourer, a junk yard flunkie, a school teacher, a laboratory technician, a computer programmer and more recently a newspaper columnist.

Therefore, I guess I have a hard time understanding people who have been on unemployment insurance for a year and just can't find a job. It appears to me that these people are being just a little too discriminative in their choices. If they can't find work in their own field and for a heck of a good wage then they prefer not to work at all. I have found that I don't tend to worry about where the next meal is coming from or what will happen if the paper fails because I would simply go out and find work. This philosophy seems to allow me the freedom to write what I please, when I please ... although not all of it gets printed. It provides me with the confidence to speak my mind and write what I feel even though I often get threats from individuals that tend to disagree with my viewpoints. I have been threatened with law suits, admonished by government agencies and politicians. But I figure if they sue and win, then we lose the paper and continue on with life in another field of interest. No worse for the wear, possibly a little smarter but no less healthy; no less a person; and probably with just one less problem in our lives to deal with.

I suppose I've become somewhat prejudiced in that when someone tells me "oh, I'm unemployed ... there's just no work out there." I can't help but think buddy, there's work out there, you're just afraid of what you might find.

I guess the point I'm trying to make is that people have come to think that they are entitled to a free ride for a certain amount of time because they have paid into a social program whose intent was not to allow for a one year vacation at the expense of the rest of the working class but as a safety net so that families wouldn't go hungry during two or three month job famine.

I can't help but think if unemployment insurance lasted only three months instead of a year, that those people who are collecting it would more earnestly seek a job and be more successful at their quest.

But no one seems to be interested in the long term. We have become a people who live for today. We collect unemployment until it expires even when we are constantly reminded that it and the other social programs are slowly breaking the country. We will worry about that problem when it happens. Imagine what it will be like when our social program network finally collapses. There will be no old age pension, no workman compensation, no mother's allowance, no student welfare. What will we do without medicare? Who will pay the doctors? Who will pay the government administrators...? I guess if there's no money to issue social system cheques we won't need administrators to issue them. Now we have gone full circle. They will all have to go on unemployment insurance, because there will truly be a job shortage.

May 10, 1995

THE BOTHWELL TOWN COUNCIL

I told them so. They should have listened to me. Now they're sorry, and they're stuck there.

The Bothwell Town Council.

During last year's elections I requested nomination papers but I didn't submit them back to the town clerk. I felt that running for public office at that time would be as crazy as wanting to be President of the United States.

I mean, what kind of crazy wants to step into a government that is nearing onto a trillion dollars in debt, crime is at an all time high, AIDS is killing 10% of the population and you are the sheriff of a world that seems intent on self destruction?

The Bothwell Council may not have as critical decisions as the U.S. president but they too stepped into a no win situation.

They walked blindly into a water project that will not only cause great hardship for their constituents but by its very existence threatens the financial stability of the entire town. They too would have to deal with the unionizing of employees, an aging arena, a garbage disposal nightmare, a failing downtown business section, the purchase of industrial development land and negotiating wages for town employees who have not had a pay increase in years.

I think that this council deserves on "at a boy". Last week they finished the budget and set the water rate. These two items on their vast agenda mark the first of many milestones they will have to pass.

The cost of public water is to be \$3,000. That is not a great deal compared to Florence and other outlying areas who have paid upwards of \$5,000 but it is still a staggering amount for most people in town who didn't want water in the first place. The Ontario Clean Water Agency force fed water to our community and now we will pay the cost. Perhaps many years in the future we will be glad that we have public water but for right now I, along with most others in town businesses, am trying to budget enough money to put \$3,000 worth of water to my home and another \$3,000 to my business. By the time I pay trenching fees and revamp my plumbing for the new system I figure I am probably looking at about \$8,000. This is a hard pill to swallow for a business as young as our paper is. It will no doubt mean less donations and free adverts. It will also mean tightening our belts... big time. I can't say that I am very impressed with public water, not now, not ever. Public water represents several vacations for me and my family and I resent it terribly.

Clerk DeWit said last week, "It is a very lean budget we will have this year".

Of course it's a lean budget. This council was hog-tied into a lean budget. There is no money for anything. The water project has eaten up any extra money that could have been spent in other ways.

There is no money for arena upgrades, wage increases, town improvements or even something as seemingly simple as a new horse barn. I can't help but admire the ratepayers of who fought public sewers until they beat it. Whether it was right or wrong the fact is that they stuck together and took their case to the OMB and fought until they won. The truly

unfortunate part of this situation is that now council has set the stage for what will probably be a period of low growth and very lean times. It is nice for a council to be thrifty but another thing to have no money to work with. Another thing to have to scratch for every dime. It becomes a no win situation. At the end of their terms they fires that were inherited. Many other much needed town projects will will have accomplished little because they were too busy putting out go on the back burner until this water is paid for.

So before you condemn this council about the exorbitant water costs remember it was not their idea. This town needed some leadership that would get it through some tough times and that is what they got. At least now we know for sure just how much money we will need to set aside, or otherwise come up with, to put the water issue to bed once and for all.

May 17, 1995

BROKEN LEG

There are certain things I should avoid. I should avoid politics. I should avoid buying used cars. I should avoid rusty bolts that skin my knuckles and fixing electrical things. I suppose I must resemble Tim Allen of the TV show "Tool Time".

The other thing I should avoid is chain saws and ladders. Every time I use them I end up with unnecessary grief and last week was no different. When my son was small he would run across the floor and stumble and fall. I would laugh and ask, "Are you OK ? Did you fall down?" He would indignantly reply, "No Daddy, I jumped". It must be a man thing.

Everyone asks me how I fell out of a tree. Well for your information, I didn't fall, I jumped. And I didn't flap my arms to fly, as the rumor mill indicates. I was probably simply reaching for a branch on the way down. You see, we men can think under stressful situations like falling, I mean jumping, out of a tree.

And please don't listen to the stories you'll hear about me crying for my Mommy. The truth was if I hadn't had my truck right handy, I'd have probably walked the measly six miles to Newbury Hospital. It actually occurred to me that a cast wouldn't be so hard to put on right in my tool shop back room. I've got lots of poly filler in my tool shop back room. It's just that I was short on dry wall tape and really I only went to the hospital to make them feel needed.

I broke my heel. Big deal. It really shouldn't change my life that much. Being a man I can handle the blinding pain. I'll no doubt change a few of my habits just to make my family feel helpful.

I will probably be back to normal once again very soon, I'll again be unafraid to take the stairs up to my room or feel the need to enter the washroom cautiously, so I don't jar my toes. Gosh, those rooms are small when you are trying to manipulate around them on crutches. The thing that really upsets me is that I did all of this to allow access for the most sophisticated clothes line on God's green earth. Now if it had been for a reasonable cause, like hanging a hammock or building Andy a tree house, it might have been worth it. But I mean why do you think they invented clothes dryers? Will we ever allow the clothesline to fade into the past along with washboards and tooth powder? Furthermore, I think this is all the product of a chain letter I received a week ago. So who ever sent it, this is all your fault!

My backyard looks like a combat zone. I can't get out to clean it up. Ann's clothesline is still not up, so I'll probably still be wearing the jeans I have on today six weeks from now. She is fairly stingy when it comes to wasting hydro on the dryer.

Life for me has changed somewhat. Everything I do takes somewhat longer. I have to plan hours in advance of toilet duties. I can't carry my own coffee to my desk. A trip across the street to the variety seems like a trek to the South Pole and I simply avoid the staircases, regardless of how small.

Six weeks, That's what the doc said but knowing the way we men heal I'll likely strip this cast off myself in about a week. Well maybe two. Anyway, I have a sneaking suspicion that the next six weeks are going to be trying for this family. Of course, me being the man this agonizing time pass quickly but something tells me that Ann will think this six weeks is like a life prison term.

May 24, 1995

The best ... that's what every parents wishes for their children. I'm sure most fathers have day dreamed about watching their son play in the NHL or step up to the plate with a Blue Jay jersey on. Mom too must at some time envision their daughter with a stethoscope slung haphazardly around their neck and dressed in surgical greens as a promising young doctor.

We push our kids for the best marks, the highest score, the most awards. "Stay in school" we tell them and too often we fork over thousands of school dollars that end up in college pubs or turn promising young adults into professional students.

But it doesn't matter, if that kid stays in university for 8 years to get a 3 year undergrad degree, we proudly proclaim of our offspring's university degree and simply write off the extra five years as getting well rounded education.

We don't demand for them to work while in school because then how could we expect them to finish top in their class? I mean, all of what homework and a job, where would they find time for any social life at all?

But what rather hurts is when, after specializing in one field or another, these educated children go out and accept a job outside of their field and remain there of an eternity. Or worse yet, finish school and don't bother to get a job of any sort because their field is saturated. They decide to live at home until they are... well who knows how old? The next thing you know they mutter phrases like, "Well I can't leave Mom now that Dad's gone. She just isn't capable of looking after herself." Something that I have found amazing is the ability of the elderly and frail to get along just fine without their kids. They started life without the kids and often just as content to leave that way. They may do things a little slower, a little thriftier or a little more old fashioned than what we like, but they still get the job done.

So what is the key to happiness in life? Do we oust our kids? Do we live with our parents forever? Do we bother with post secondary education? I always smile at the quotation "to men, life is a game and whoever has the most toys at the end wins". But toys cost money and so does that mean we must have money to find true happiness? I don't know for I've never been harnessed with the problem of what to do with the extra 20 or 30 thousand in my bank account.

Happiness in life is yours. It is what ever you need to spin your top. It may be money, it might be love, maybe it's family or career. But happiness has as many definitions as there are humans on earth. Sadly enough, happiness to some would be three meals a day. But sure as heck you don't need top marks, a university degree, a high paying job, successful kids or money to have happiness. Happiness is relative state. Try to think of the happiest day of your life. The day you were married? Your first born child?

Mine was about a week after my first transplant when my three kids came the hospital to see me. It was the first time in my life that I had been separated from them for several days. I still remember the feeling of my heart soaring skyward. I felt it would burst from my chest. Tears streamed down my face as they cautiously stepped forward and hugged me.

I shall never be as happy as that day in the hospital with my wife and children... safe and glad to be alive. That is my happiness.

May 31, 1995

Okay, it was novel for a day or so but now it's become a pain in the butt. I want it off. I want it off. I want to scratch. I think I speak for Sean too! We're sick of the names like "hop along" , "step and a half" and "Fetus". We hurt ourselves you know. You people should be showering us with get well gifts and sympathy.

Being men, of course we don't show our pain but normal people would simply pass out. Women would compare it to natural childbirth. We are not used to depending on others and of course, others are not used to waiting on us. But just after I burnt my remaining good foot trying to carry a cup of tea on crutches I decided, "hey I'm going to need some help

through some of this." Still my kids randomly slam doors in my face and leave me standing in the pouring rain and my wife sighs deeply when I ask her to get up from the table for the salt shaker.

Sean and I try not to meet in front of the public eye. It seems that two guys on crutches provides, would be comedians with twice the ammunition for jokes older than the dust on my high school year books.

I don't know if he has noticed but what ever appendage is injured is somehow the one that the door slams on the most, the dog runs into the most and the one that has an uncontrollable itch.

These stupid things are hot and dirty. Don't bath your leg for a month and see what kind of unique odour you come up with. It's pretty sad when you would give anything to wash a part of your body that you usually walk on.

Our armpits have become calloused. Our arms are toning nicely after two weeks of constant muscle aches and ever our abdomens must doing something because the pulled muscles there are just starting to relax. Sean gets a walking cast, the lucky dog, while I will remain a slave to crutches for my full six weeks. I find some justice in the fact that I get my cast off a month ahead of him.

Anyway Sean, "carborundum sub" , we'll get through this thing and celebrate summer a little bit late. Keep your chin up.

June 7, 1995

Quite often people ask me where I find the inspiration to write. Do I have some special talent that I can simply turn on and off to come up with this weekly column? The truth of the matter, is that I am neither all that talented nor do have a switch that can turn on my creative writing mode.

The real truth is that quite often I must fight for my column. Many times I write my column two or three times on the same topics. I find myself seeing the same topic written with different words and phrases for a second time. There are some obvious tricks that I have stumbled on to keep my topics fresh. The most important I have found is to experience new things constantly. This has been just less than easy in the past few weeks since I've been harnessed with a 20 pound cast that makes it more comfortable to watch TV in lieu of taking trips and doing other things.

Last week we took off for a day to go see a pro ball game in Toronto. Although I at first looked forward to this. I broke my foot in the interim wait and found myself apprehensive about hobbling around Toronto on two sticks and a good foot. But the rooms were booked and the kids had their hearts set on it, so off we set.

Following the Harvey family we set the world land speed record for a trip from Bothwell to TO.

We checked in and soon were watching the Detroit tigers and the Toronto Blue Jays play their last of the three game set.

Later, we took the kids for a swim and I decided to head back to the room early so everyone else didn't have to move at a snails pace to wait for me. As I entered the elevator a well groomed man with a pretty wife, a wee baby, a suitcase and a box full of baseballs entered from the other door. I immediately noticed his world series ring. When we got to the lobby I congratulated him on a fine game and asked for his autograph. I had no paper or pen, but his wife cheerfully spoke up, "I have one in here, I'm sure" and dug through her diaper bag and came up with a pen. I was more than impressed. This kid who had just pitched nine innings of pro ball and was fighting his way out of the stadium with his arms full and his "new" family in to tote stopped; set all of his stuff on the lobby floor and patiently waited for the pen (no doubt at the bottom of her diaper bag). He bent in front of me so I didn't have to lift my cast and signed "Pat" .

He didn't make any money for it I'm not some cute little kid that would be thrilled to death by it; he'll probably never see me again; and for sure he probably didn't feel like doing it, yet he showed no impatience, nor did his wife. I couldn't help but wonder why. But before long I found myself hoping that this kid represented the true spirit of "pro baseball" . He wasn't some arrogant, snotty, self centred and over paid ball player that I had imagined were on strike. He was a people person.

He just liked people. He enjoyed signing that autograph as much as I enjoy showing it off. It was the highlight of my trip and I think that kid knew it would be.

June 14th, 1995

The television said, "the voting public has spoken." I would say it was more of a "holler. "

As I watched the election results last Thursday night I surfed from channel to channel listening to results, cheers of winning parties and excuses of losing ones.

But then an announcer on another channel said, "this was an angry election ... the people of Ontario are angry and voted against something they hate ... the want to return to the politics of the 50's", which brings me to this week's topic.

HATE... this word has been used so often for such unworthy causes that it has lost its meaning. People have forgotten what hate is. Have you ever stopped and contemplated just what is worth your hate? Are you capable of hate? Is your hate only extreme dislike? I don't think that I have ever hated anyone. There are people I prefer not to associate with but I don't hate them. I try not to even ignore them.

But hate has come to Canada; to Ontario and probably even Bothwell. In contemplating this I find it sad how a town that I once felt very much at peace with, and comfortable in any store or business, now has become dissatisfied with each other and tolerates loathing because of a minor difference of opinion. I can no longer roam my own town and feel totally comfortable in any store.

My town is being torn apart from within. The horse barns, the public water system, garbage disposal, drugs and vandalism have all helped to slowly turn one or another person against each other. People who were friends for years no longer speak, even families are being torn over differences of opinion.

I have my opinions on all of these topics and I am sure so does every other citizen in town. The only difference is that I air my opinions in an editorial column while others air theirs to those they can trust to secrecy. They seem almost afraid to say what they feel. It seems that we have become incapable of separating our feelings from our friends. Can we not forget for a minute about the differences we hold, to greet one and other on the street? Are we afraid that if we say, "Hi, how are you today?", we won't be able to talk turkey when the time comes to discuss a matter that is important to us individually?

I am afraid for our town's future. I am afraid we will all become enemies and so this will be my last "FENCE" for awhile.

I am always amazed at the number of readers who compliment me on my column and tell me that they read me every week. Furthermore, I thank you for your compliments and appreciate your loyalty. But I do not write to provoke anger. I try to provoke thought. I hope that when a reader is finished reading "My Side of the Fence" they will contemplate and formulate their own ideas.

I can not be party to the recent hate campaign that is currently in my town.

I will not contribute to it and I don't think I will write again until things have settled down and cooled off in this steamy little metropolis. Have a good summer and don't forget to smile and say "Hi" - I will!

June 21, 1995

What a great feeling .. You love me .. Yes you really, really, love me.

Last week I was inundated with kind requests not to stop writing. You're are really too kind. And of those who were darned glad I quit writing, well I guess you should have voiced you opinion sooner.

You many not see me as often, since sometimes I mentally "dry up". Ann says I've been dried up for year but I mean, I run out of things to write about. However, as usual when I have something to say you'll definitely hear from me.

This week and next marks the coming of graduations at our local schools and as usual I travelled from school to school shooting graduation pictures of each of the departing classes.

This year was different though. My own first born starts high school next year and suddenly I realized that my wee baby is now a full grown "young" adult. Her little friends Kim, Melissa, and Jennifer have all grown up. These little girls attended each others birthday parties, pyjama parties and grew up fighting and loving the way best friends do. Last year we all played ball together. We had a pool party. As parents we listened to who was "going with who", although we never found out where or when you were going out.

Suddenly I felt old and sad. I didn't want you guys to be grade eights. I wanted to see you as you were in grade one or two. In pretty dresses with skipping ropes and dolls.

You are about to enter high school. It will be the start of one of the greatest adventures of your life. It marks your entry to adulthood. It will be a time when you will be forced into making decisions that will determine how you live the rest of your life. Some of the decisions will not make you popular. Some will make you look square and as an outsider. But remember, some times, some where, you will have to make a choice that is all yours. No on can make it for you, it is yours and you must make the decision.

In this decision try to remember that you may be happier as a truck driver working long hours for average wages, than you would be as a doctor in the six digit figure income bracket. It is not as important to be wealthy as it is to be happy. So do what you love. If you are happy in your life's work, success will follow.

And finally, and most importantly, try to get a firm grasp on your priorities. Remember your family and friends. Take time out to reflect on who you are and how satisfied you are with your life. In your later years (my age) you will realize that happiness and family is by far more important than work or wealth.

Above all show honour and respect for yourself. You are the reason that your parents live. You deserve that best you can attain. I shall miss you all. You have added a great deal to my life. Good Luck and God bless you all!

June 28, 1995

For as long as I can remember I have been somewhat fascinated by glass. Not fanatically mind you... it just piqued my curiosity. I have been told that glass is a liquid and that if you look at the stained glass windows in extremely old churches you can actually see how the bottom of the window is much thicker than the top, because it is, ever so slowly, being pulled down, like so much thick toffee, by gravity.

Glass has been around for centuries. I often wonder who discovered it. It was probably stumbled on by accident, but who would have been crazy enough to try to duplicate it? It didn't travel well and so in the new world people tried to simulate it with oiled paper or cloth or other simple tricks, but nothing is as clear and words as well as the real thing. It is durable, had to scratch, optically perfect, water proof, heat proof to an extent, and can be tinted various shades for beauty or filtration. For all of the technology we have today, we still depend on this age old material for many, many, daily needs. We eat off it, drink from it, store things in it, and even cut with it. Indeed some surgeons use broken glass in surgery as it has been proven to have the sharpest edge in the world. Although we have refined normal glass into various speciality configurations such as laminating it for car windshields, coating it for UV protection, filming it to reflect heat, we still use basic glass just as it was made centuries ago.

My interest in glass began one Saturday morning as I passed through my youngest daughters room. She was 3 or 4 years old and just waking, so I sat down on the floor and stared absentmindedly out her window. I looked though the hundred year old pane and studied its imperfections. I realized that this was how the world looked a hundred years ago when my

house was built. I sat there content and at peace with everything. It was one of those times when one is just happy to be where one is. Warps and bubbles in the glass made the world outside different somehow. It was on that day I fell in love with the old glass in my house. I became afraid of breakage. Old glass was getting hard to find. I used to scavenge old window panes in case one of mine broke so that I could replace it with "old glass".

I guess then it stands to reason that the day my wife demanded that we replace the leaky old windows with energy efficient ones I chose not to discuss it for a year or so or brushed it off with "gee, hon, we really should be saving our money" .

But the inevitable soon happened. This year as the curtains in the kids rooms and the upstairs bathroom waved in a winter breeze that came forth from leaks in my sacred old panes, my wife demanded new windows.

Now there was nothing wrong with my old windows. Sure they had the odd cracked pane and they leaked around ancient window putty, but this simply acts as an air exchange. Fresh air is good for you and believe me the air around my windows on a windy January night is definitely fresh.

The new ones go in this week. No doubt they will seal perfectly and be 400% energy efficient. They will open, tilt, twirl and whirl in every conceivable direction so that a housewife could clean them from twenty feet back while doing her nails, watching "Montel Williams" and sipping a swiss mocha coffee all the while. They will never need paint, or oil or a candle run up and own an edge just to make them slide easily. Yes, my new windows will be perfect in nearly every aspect. They won't have unsightly cracked corners, or warps in the glass or whirls of air bubbles from when they were made. And the energy I'm going to save, I'll probably be able to retire at 45.

But when I look through those new windows my mind will always travel back to a time when my last baby lie asleep in her room and I stared out at a hundred year old world and was completely content.

July 5, 1995

What ever happened to romance?

It's hard to be romantic in the nineties. I don't mean simply a walk in the "slightly hazy" moonlight. I'm talking about the romance of sports, of sacrifice, of a slow sultry summer, of homemade summer wind and cold strawberries smothered in cream in a warm evening. I remember waking up at 8 am to get the milk off the step before it got warm. I remember sitting in the afternoon sun.

Today a husband calls a wife to say his 5:15 has gone over schedule and she'll have to take the kids to soccer herself. He then proceeds to drive home at 10:30, falls exhausted into bed, only to rise again at 6 am to beat morning traffic into the office. Before he knows he has three kids (that he doesn't know) in university, a dog at obedience school and a wife at a fat farm. He sees a therapist twice a week and has high cholesterol and high blood pressure and he is a stroke waiting for a place to happen. This is the romance of the nineties.

Where did the sizzling summer days go, when we swung from the tree swing into the Sydenham River? I long for those times when we put on white cotton baseball uniforms with black socks and spikes and played baseball... real baseball at the park. I remember a trip to Tiger Stadium to watch Al Kaline. I want to take the trip on the Bothwell Athletic bus to Thamseville for a swim or to Glencoe to the old arena for Sunday skating. We scraped the ice with snow shovels by hand and flooded the ice using 50 gallon drums mounted to wheels with potato sacks stretched over steel rails to spread the water. Winters were worse then.

We picked gooseberries and raspberries and green and red grapes. We made black currant jam and our own horse radish. Lilies of the Valley grew at my grandfathers house and we used to lay on our backs smelling them and staring at the sky.

We'd go to the park on a stifling summer nights when we watched the Cougars play ball and then we'd stop into the Blue Jay Variety or Irene's Restaurant (then located at the Central Tavern) or across the tracks for a treat.

We had time then. There wasn't hockey, baseball, soccer, three meetings and a must see television show all on one night.

Life seemed slower ... lazier. .. easier to live. Sure we didn't have microwaves. VCR's, CD's, video games, pools and the internet. Those are replacements for Coke floats, a game of snooker, or a cold lemonade following a long long walk. I liked nickel chips and dime chocolate bars, little cokes, m go-kart races and cucumber season.

A tin necklace for your girl at the Florence Fair, meant as much as real diamonds and gold today. The maturity I had following my first kiss (behind the beer store), shadows all I have learned in 39 years of living.

I remember a moonlight walk with a special girl at the Shetland Picnic. We held hands and walked with our arms around each other's back. I went home with my heart singing.

We watched Walter and Pierre Burton on our black and whites, instead of Sam Donaldson and Sharon Stone in surround sound. I guess we were cheaper to entertain then. Today we'd be considered naive. TV wasn't so great then ... no wonder we didn't live in front of it! Prom night meant shining up Dad's car and putting on my own suit and getting Mom to buy a corsage. There were no dinner reservations, rented tuxedos or chauffeur driven limos. Booze wasn't even a consideration. I picked up my date and returned to the house for a couple of pictures and sped off to the high school gym which was tastelessly decorated in the land of Atlantis or some other obscure fantasy. My girl's prom dress was powder blue, ankle length, high necked, sleeveless dress, that fit well. She and her mother had made it themselves. She was stunning. Music was provided by a four piece orchestra. I think they were called the "Satin Highlights." This was a quiet time, for slow dancing. Rock and Roll was king, but not on this special night. I never felt more grown up. It was truly a night I shall not forget.

Perhaps for those who are young or as the song says, "young at heart", that first kiss is still very reminisce and exciting. Perhaps the first time our kids hold hands with their first boy or girl friend their hearts still sing the way mine did.

But I can't help but sigh sadly for them. Their romance will be watching movie together, going to the prom in a rented limo, rented tux, and a three hundred dollar dress. Fond times for them may become a Green Day concert or hanging out in the mall.

Today I'm 39, yesterday I was 17 and tomorrow I'll probably be 61. Life has sped by and left me waiting on the sidelines wishing for, hoping for, a return to, may even expecting... summer romance.

July 12, 1995

The Boomtown Players Are Back

I don't often get excited but I'm afraid that if I don't tell you this I'm going burst and considering my size, that could make a heck of a mess. The players are back. You know ... The Boomtown Players. The same local gang that entertained us back in the mid 1980's. Going to a Boomtown play was like stepping back into another era. It seemed no different than when the Clachan Jr. Farmers or the Walkerville Drama club performed. The Players have staged a Christmas play, a three act comedy mystery murder, and three one act plays. All of these plays were sell outs and we had a truly wonderful drama club forming. People would stop members in the street and ask when the next play would be stage.

I love the community theatre. I love community theatre even more than Stratford or the big shows in Toronto. I look at community theatre, not as a critic, but as a fun thing. Drama groups do the best they can in every show, but don't then to lose themselves in acting the perfect role. Perhaps that is part of the appeal. Our lives are not played out line for line so why should a play be line perfect? If one has to ad-lib a bit to make it through a tough scene, then it is usually laughed off and becomes part of the fun. It is often as fun to reminisce about the night George pulled the door knob off the set and could barely make it off stage or the night it appeared the entire back drop set would collapse forward on the players. The humour was made even more fun, by the fact that we laughed with each other and not at each other. The Boomtown

Players are now talking a major three act play, sometime late in 1995. There are several titles being considered, but nothing had been settled or cast in concrete yet. About the only thing we have promised ourselves is that will not become as serious as we once were.

The club fell into a disagreement with the town council that closed the theatre due to a lack of emergency fire lights and a fire escape. The group also wanted to add a stage extension and paint and wallpaper the stage, but received a firm "no" from council. There were problems brewing internally. Different people had different agendas and there was quarrelling amongst the ranks. Finally, we were evicted from the town-hall auditorium, with only two weeks to opening night. Finding ourselves with no play house and at odds with council we finished our last set of three one act plays at the public school stage and then disbanded with a foul taste in our mouths. The old town hall auditorium was not used on a regular basis, since then. It sat cold, empty, dusty and only being used two or three times a year, it fell into disrepair. It now needs electrical work on stage lights. The wall paper on the stage is torn and full of thumb tack holes and will have to be replaced before it can be used again. It is amazing how things fall apart when they are not used. We promised ourselves that when we were again allowed back into the auditorium, we would regroup.

We tried again last year and the same town council refused us again, this time we would have to obtain insurance and name the town in the policy. This, of course was out of the question and once again we fell quiet.

But council was not our only problem. We had lost the true meaning of amateur theatre. We had lost the fun. We decided to become structured. There were reading groups and selection committees. There were no less than two very different trains of thought. We had delegated jobs to various parties and then ignored their recommendations. We wanted the structure of a big group, but lacked the foundation needed to allow for a logical growth to such an organization. We were about fun and not business.

We had become careless and self serving. I hope never to see this among friends again. I hope that we will not allow ourselves to be ruled by play profits. If we can stage a few plays and not lose our shirts doing it we should be happy in that.

I produced the very first Boomtown Christmas play and vowed that never again would I take on that much responsibility alone again. A producer is completely responsible for all aspects of the the play. He must oversee the play itself, budgeting, advertising, ticket sales, costume and property acquisition and at the same time, smooth out and pacify all of the problems that occur between any person, as the play takes shape. I decided to help produce this new, most recent play. I figured a one act play, 30 minutes in duration with no lighting, set and a cast of 5 would be rather easy. But then I was harnessed into taking the lead male role in this play. Why don't men want to act? We found ourselves short on male leads and in order that we get a rehearsal schedule started I decided to read for the role.

The schedule is now set, and the stage manager Eileen Smith is looking for talented individuals, or otherwise interested individuals, to help with the simple properties and set design. We need painters, wallpapers, ticket sellers and a host of other helpers.

This is great community fun. We will become a gang. We will have a wonderful production party at the end of it all and make new friends along the way.

Why not come and make some new acquaintances? Everyone is welcome and we can find something you are good at. Just call Eileen Smith at 695-2215 after 4 pm for dates and times. See you on stage.

August 2, 1995

Hello, my name is Jim. I am a free lance columnist who writes this weekly column for free because, my wife, the publisher makes me. I have lived in Bothwell all of my life and have come to love the people and the town not only for what we are, but for what we have been in the past and for what I hope we will be in the future.

Let me tell you a little about my town.

Bothwell was incorporated as a town in 1867, the same year Canada became a country. Our original claim to fame was crude oil. We grew as a result of a late 1800's oil boom. Our town is rich in history and many of the older homes and buildings are recognized by what they once were, not by what they are now.

The oil boom ended rather abruptly and several disastrous fires destroyed much of the business section of town and others have destroyed other portions one or two at a time.

We are fortunate to have a couple of local historians in Audrey Kelly and Gwen Jones who researched and wrote a book called, "Black Gold Built Bothwell" which is available at the newspaper office downtown or just ask anyone where you can get a copy.

I have been here for nearly 40 years and can still remember when the Main street supported two grocers, three barber shops, two meat markets, a theatre, a couple of hairdressers, two shoemakers, two hardwares, a billiard hall, several dry goods stores, and of course a fine furniture store. Not long ago we had a lumber yard, a pallet factory, a basket factory, a candy factory, a furniture factory, six gas stations, seven churches, and even today many men in our area are supported by the oil industry.

The people of my town are good people. We have our own little problems but generally they are few and small when compared to other communities.

Please excuse our streets this year. We are installing public water and I'm afraid most of the streets are quite a mess. They will however, be back to normal for next year, so please bear with us.

While you are here feel free to walk the town and view some of our stately old homes and ask questions of anyone you meet. Our stores are generally well stocked and the merchants are very friendly. Many of the stores have sales on during the car show.

This celebration originated several years ago, when our Optimist Club decided to stage a weekend for the townspeople. It was originally called the "Optifest Weekend". During our 125th birthday, a group called "Carry On Gala", was formed and they have added many attractions to the weekend which is now actually two weekends, one on August 6th & 7th, and the other from August 11th - 13th. "Carry On Gala", is responsible for, among other things, the free hourly entertainment that is provided at Victoria Parks basketball court and the organization of the kids carnival. The children of the town run games of chance at this carnival with prizes being sponsored by "Carry On Gala". Both kid vendors and kid players have a lot of fun with it. When you visit Bothwell, please keep this copy of the paper handy. It will provide a great reference for the events of both weekends. Take a look at the ads in this paper also. They show a wide range of specialty businesses that draw clientele from far and wide.

I hope your visit to Bothwell is pleasant and you will come again soon. On behalf of the Spirit of Bothwell I bid you welcome.

August 9, 1995

It's Sunday morning and I have just finished eating a fine breakfast at the fire hall. Last night marked the official beginning of the 1995 Optifest and Black Gold Festival.

I was given the honour of announcing the King and Queen and their court. This is something I have done in the past and thoroughly enjoy the task, although last night proved to be a bit of a challenge when one girl's first and another girl's first last name were written on the 1st runnerup envelope.

The family dance followed, as as usual, was a great hit both kids and adults. These two weekends are somewhat like New Years to me. They mark the start and finish of a very busy time. When next week's paper is out we usually take a week off to recuperate.

During the weekends I can often be found touring streets of town on the moped or "Spirit Express" . The "Express" now resides in a camp-ground and is the faithful mode of transport for another couple, but it was great while we had it.

The newest edition to the Spirit corporate fleet is our "Gimmy" . This short, short, box truck is not really a pickup truck, but a modified version of a 4x4 GMC Gimmy. The top was removed and the back end of a pickup was welded in, to close in the cab. It is a brilliant green and will be about town all weekend.

If you have an event that you would like coverage on, call the truck during the weekend at 358-9058 and we'll make very attempt to accommodate you.

Don't forget to give all of our special visitors the royal treatment. They will need directions, information and of course, everyone likes a smile attached to these things.

Try to make plans to attend as many events as you can. The service groups that are staging events depend on this weekend to get them through the next year. Many have spent countless hours planning their event and truly appreciate your patronage.

This year an umbrella would be a terrific idea because of the intense heat we have had this year. (they are also handy during a quick shower.) If the weather is very warm, drink tons of fluids and rest often. Victoria park has great shade and with Carry On Gala's "entertain on the hour", a short stop in the park will be most entertaining.

I have to put in a 4 pm plug for my own Boomtown Players. Please come to the play. It is a comedy that was great fun to do. A free will offering plate will be available, but we would far prefer that you join the group instead.

This weekend can be much or as little as you decide to make it. It is an ideal time to renew old friendships, as well as a great opportunity to make new ones. With all of the events so close to town it might be wise to walk to the park and leave some parking for our visitors. The other advantage of walking is that if you "over-medicate" at the Optimist refreshment area you won't have to worry about driving home. So let's get to it, friends. We work hard to stage this, now lets play hard and enjoy it. Have a great weekend.

August 16, 1995

There is a certain comradery that comes with the staging of a play. The final curtain call brings a sigh of relief as the cast is usually relieved that the pressure is finally gone. But suddenly there are a zillion feelings that spring forward unexpectedly. We are happy that the play was a success. We are definitely relieved that it will be some time before our hearts again go to our throats, just prior to the entrance on stage. But we are also sad because the play is over. Our work for this show is done and it can be a little depressing. It marks a finished chapter in our book of lives. We reminisce about dropping lines and missing queues when we get to the cast party.

Cast and crew get close during a production. The men "eventually" get used to having make-up applied in the presence of others. The cast learns to laugh at each other's mistakes and learn each others lines in case someone stalls out on stage.

The cast shares a common bond, in the possibility of messing up during a performance. This bond creates a feeling of trust among the members. "If you screw up, I promise to forgive you, but if I screw up please forgive me too." Very often the actor playing opposite you, prompts you at the crucial moment. When the panic strikes and you feel darkness coming down on you and your mind draws a blank. Your heart surges upwards to your throat and the sound of your own heart-beat deafens you. Nothing but the actual line that you have forgotten will allow you to go on. Then you look at the actor or actress that you are talking to and they softly speak the magic line you have forgotten and you continue on. The feeling

that you have for this person cannot be compared to any other I can think of. This person has saved you from total humiliation. You are forever indebted to them. You would do anything for them without question. They saved you.

One of the other great inequities of the theatre comes when the cast stands at the end of the play bowing to the applause, but as a cast member I can't help but think about stage hands, prop handlers and set creators who made a million modifications to sets as we went, just to ensure that everything went off smoothly and then did it all again on the float for the park performance. I want those people to come to the stage and bow with me. They worked as hard as I did and received no acknowledgement.

We will talk about this play again and again. We will use parts of it as reference when we stage our next show. We will hear "we could do that but remember in, when ..." We have learned from it.

The people who were involved in this production all made new friends. We also learned things about friends that we already knew. During a play one doesn't usually make casual acquaintance, but more often a close friend.

"Humphrey Pumphrey Had A Great Fall" , was what is termed a minor production. It shouldn't have meant much to anyone. But to seven cast members, the director, producer, managers and stage hands, "Pumphrey" , represented almost two hundred man hours of free labour. And to us. "Pumphrey", was a wonderful show.

The English accents were hard to do at first. We all struggled with them. We laughed at them at first. But they grew on us and soon we felt comfortable with them. We had sets fall off the wall. We dove for cover during the "Night of the Bird" (a barn swallow flew into the auditorium through the back door). Jackie often visited Laura for a tin of salmon but left without it and when she did take the salmon she usually left her purse.

I'm often proclaimed to be a "cheap fly by night philanderer and not a highly respected funeral director" and often asked for a couple of tables and a chair out here, instead of a couple chairs and a table. Our stage manager came in sick too often and worked feeling very ill with a virus.

The cast and directors cleaned the auditorium. They scrubbed seats, mopped the floors, dusted the window sills and took our garbage. A lot of dirt accumulates in a theatre that gets used twice a year. The theatre was never comfortable. It was hot and stuffy. We sweated under hot lights and hoped our makeup didn't smear. We tried a cooling fan but were afraid that it would blow the sets over. All of the windows in the theatre are painted shut so they had to remain closed. We shared make-up rooms and waited in line to dress in the downstairs washroom and then stumbled up the unlit stairs back of the stage often banging our shins on the uneven staircase .

After all of this hard work, self abuse, studying, scrubbing and sweating, someone might ask if we would ever try something like this again. The answer you would receive would be a resounding chorus "when can we start"?

I guess you have to try it to really know why. One of those "you have to be there" phenomenons. I've never done a play yet that wasn't worth all of the time and energy required to stage it. Why not give it a try?

August 30, 1995

I'm thinking. .. I'm thinking ...

September 6, 1995

I must be getting old. There was once a point in my life when a simple modification in my diet caused me to lose weight. There was a time when I would rather go to a party than sit quietly with 3 or 4 friends on the deck. I remember when the fall marked the end of summer and I was happy to see the beautiful tree colours and anxiously awaited the first snow fall. Now I wish summer would last forever.

Autumn used to mark the start of fall fairs and a return to hockey season. Now it marks the start of cold mornings and the task of preparing for 6 months of freezing weather. I don't want to shovel snow, I want to lay in my hammock by the pool and be too hot in the afternoon sun. I want to sip Margarites on the deck and eat salt and vinegar chips stopping only to take a quick dip in the 85 degree water.

I want 15 hours of daylight and to have to turn on the air conditioner to sleep comfortably at night. I don't want school to start again, but instead let my kids run for another couple of months in summer rags. I hate buying school clothes.

And speaking of school, have you ever wondered what happened to last year's pens, scissors, erasers, binders, knapsacks, and rulers? Each year every kid gets enough stationary and office supplies to last then for an eternity and each fall they replace it all. I mean, how do you wear out a pair of scissors? I'm almost 40 and I don't think I've ever worn out a pair.

How about all of the fall registrations? Hockey, cubs, scouts, figure skating, and dance classes. I've often thought about taking a night course at university, but after I get my kids all signed up for the fall, I can't afford the tuition.

What was wrong with last years hockey stick anyway? Did it break the last minute of the last game? Last week I bought my son a goalie stick and some tape and it set me back \$51.00 (don't ever let your kids become a goalie).

My eldest daughter is going to high school this year. After the paraphernalia I bought for this event I just can't wait for university. She paid \$24 for a t-shirt with the picture of some dead guy on it. (I mean this guy is dead... she'll never bump into him on the street and get his autograph ... the guy is dead!) Fortunately, she did exercise some control in the purchase of her other clothes. We went for a shop in London last Sunday and I saw kids buying \$100 jeans, and I saw a skimpy blue jean vest (not even Levis) with a long sleeved white cotton mans shirt to match ... only \$80 ... the same thing goes for \$2.95 at the Sally Ann. When I was a kid (no really), when I was kid, poor kids used to wear these wrinkled plaid flannel dresses, not anymore ... those babies are \$95. If only I'd known, I'm sure I could have traded my lunch for one. Shoes! Have you seen what they call fashionable shoes? Remember those awful space boots the druggies wore in the early 70's. Well some idiot found a truck load of the heels and glued them to a bunch of black German army boots. He popped \$150 price tag on them and Voila! an instant fashion statement. Although I'm not sure what the statement says... it definitely tells me something about kid's parents .

The other day in Chatham, my wife pointed out three girls walking down St. Clair St. Two dressed in jeans and the third ... well ... just let me tell you a bit about this third 12 or 13 year old girl. She had brilliant red glossy lips, a full tube of mascara and half a can of hair spray on her head. She was dressed in a mini skirt... very mini! She had on a pair of black stockings that stopped about four inches over knees and were trimmed in black lace. There was another four inches of bare leg before her skirt hem started. She had a pair of those ridiculous army boots and judging by her appearance only, she looked as if she belonged either on the back of a chopped and raked Harley or swinging her hips down Young Street in Toronto. However she really should have been puffing furiously on a Players plain cigarette.

Now maybe I'm being a bit right wing, but this 13 year old girl had no ideal of the statement she was making... I hope.

Then I had to wonder if she had snuck out of the house in these threads or if she walked boldly by her Mom and Dad and when they asked her where she was going looking like that she quickly replied "out ... and don't try to stop me or I sue you for everything you own." Her parents would cower in fear and go back to whatever they were doing. Whoa baby, I am getting old... way too old.

September 13, 1995

Gee my head has been itchy the past two weeks! Head lice are like yawns. I remember in high school English classes one person in the class would yawn on purpose and presto ... twenty other students would all yawn and none of them was aware why. Just mention those wee little bugs that lay eggs in your hair and you have to scratch. Anyone in ear shot will

be scratching furiously inside of five minutes. Talk about them for ten minutes and you want to get home and into a shower. Bugs. Critters. Fleas. The Itch. These are all kid terms for head lice.

The sad fact is that the vast majority of the population is totally ignorant of just how these parasites spread, reproduce and feed. Many don't even know why they are bad. I personally don't care why they are bad. If a fly lands on my hamburger, I can't eat it, so a bug that lives off my blood makes me feel rather squeamish.

I'm itchy right now.

Only dirty people get head lice? Wrong! Head lice prefer clean healthy hair, free of sprays and a nice healthy scalp to live on ... in ... whatever.

Head lice won't hurt you right? Wrong again. (I feel like I'm back in high school). Head lice feed on blood! (I'm shuddering). So they bite us in the scalp. (I think I'm going to be sick.) The bites are not lethal, but like any bite, mosquito or otherwise, the bite can infect and an infection can eventually kill you. So if you don't kill off the lice they will multiply and and so will the bites. Get enough bites and and one is bound to infect and left untreated could lead to serious trouble.

Head lice are hatched and grow to adults in about 10 days and then adults reproduce. This makes it very easy to be absolutely lousy in a very short time. (I'll never use "lousy" as an adjective again.)

It is suspected that head lice are spread through sharing of hats, or bedding, or travel from clothing item to item when coats are hung together. But it is known that head lice need a nearly constant supply of fresh blood so they don't live long on pillows, hat or other cloth items. Vets say that our pets can get head lice from us but they don't normally carry lice. (I can somehow imagine, our dog Shakespeare muttering soft curses about his "lousy" owners infecting him.) It is generally recommended that pillows be thrown in the dryer at high heat for a short time just to make sure that any louse or egg that has fallen from an infected head is shaken loose. Bedding should be laundered but when our child was infected, my wife wanted sanitize the entire house from the ground up. It would have probably been less work to burn the house down and rebuild. I never mentioned that to her in case it was something that hadn't occurred to her.

Lice can't jump or fly. Lice can't go from one kid to another easily unless the kids hair actually comes in contact. Sounds like a pretty remote possibility doesn't it? But just watch kids. They are constantly in touch with each other. Wrestling, "bonking heads" , cuddling or reading books together. Kids, unlike adults, don't seem to have a "comfort space" . A comfort space is a distance around most adults where they prefer to keep as their own. Don't you feel uncomfortable when someone invades your space? They come within inches of your face or stand very close to you. Most adults simply step back. I don't know why but adults seem to require this space and kids don't. That is why kids are prime carriers of head lice.

Bothwell has had a head lice problem since last year. This problem in not merely the fact that there has been head lice at schools but more that people don't want to discuss the problem. I was astounded that even our educators consider the topic "top secret" , and the name of infested children are kept a "deep dark secret." Probably if a parent knew what kids were sent home with lice, they would realize that a child was a friend of their children or possibly slept over last week or had contact in some other way and then would know to thoroughly inspect their own children for the next seven days. But if parents don't know and their kids don't know who was sent home with head lice, then probably the problem will proliferate and continue on through out this school year.

There are a concerned group of mothers that are doing head checks at Zone School. I must say that these mothers deserve special commendation for their efforts. They have prepared pamphlets and are willing to help any family that needs information or confirmation. It is only with a continuing program that we will rid our schools of this potentially dangerous problem. If you have questions feel free to call the Kent County Health Unit or your school.

Right now I think I'll just go home and shower. I seem to have developed this uncontrollable itch. How about you?!

September 27, 1995

It's not my job ... I don't think that I have ever been so sick of a term as I was of that one on Friday of last week.

Bank loan officers and civil servants must attend the same college. The political parties may come and go, but the system remains the same. Government jobs should be contracted out every election. I know that it would mean retraining the new help, but somehow I can't imagine even a new employee being less useless than some of the folks I came in contact with. At least a new employee might be cordial or show a remote sense of telephone etiquette.

At times on Friday I wondered if that work Fridays are the switchboards. "I'm sorry but I'm not at my desk to take your call please leave a short message and your phone number and I'll get right back to you." This standard bureaucrat phone message really means. "haw, haw, you missed me again, enjoy the false sense of security that I really care and leave me your number, I'll get back to you when Hell freezes over," or in other words leaving a message will be a complete waste of time. No one at the seven offices I phoned Friday had returned my call by Monday at 4pm.

I finally got most of the information I needed by calling a local, "lowly" municipal utility.

It quickly becomes apparent that many of these provincial and federal positions have been filled by the same person for the past 20 years and that employee has tested most situations very well. They know exactly what they can get away with. They verbally push you around and when you finally blow your stack ... they hang up. They have no right to hang up on me ... I am paying good taxes for them to take my abuse. What upsets me is that they have all of the control. If I ask to speak to their supervisors, they know good and well I'm going to tell him about the lack of respect I received from their help so I am told that Mr. So & So is in a meeting can't be disturbed. Mr. S. & So is not at meeting. How do I know this? Because no meeting can last for the number of hours I have been calling. Marathon bargaining sessions are short in comparison.

About the only persons who are less helpful than civil servants, are some the bank loan officers I've run into. Unlike their counterparts in the government, bank officers have you over barrel. They have the money you need to survive and you will be polite and even patronizing to them or get the old - "I'm so sorry but our formulas indicate that you just can't service this kind of debt load." Never mind the fact that you are and have been doing so with four credit cards and six commercial accounts for the last six months only with then different, but equally outrageous interest rates. Your current total payments are nearly twice what consolidation payments would be. Yes, you have serviceability problem but not so much you servicing the loan as it is getting service from the bank.

The other one that is a favourite of mine is, "we're really sorry but we just can't loan you the money you are asking for, however we can provide you with an overdraft protection plan that will take care of most of your needs." What this means is "we won't give you the money up front but we will give it to you, one cheque at a time, at nearly 3 times that interest rate of a loan."

Perhaps banks are getting a bad rap. I suppose considering the number of deadbeats that they must deal with, that they exercise caution with any 'iffy' accounts. But thanks just the same I don't feel 'iffy' I mean I am a newspaper, for Petes sake. We are supposed to be the most stable business in the world. We are supposed to be the recession proof business.

I have a dream, that the day I turn 65, I will make the last payment on my bank debts. Then, I can laugh at the bank and collect my old age security cheque from the government. Then and only then will I feel even with the world.

October 4, 1995

It's started ... that incessant ... agitation, whining, complaining and ridicule that seems to accompany minor hockey in virtually every town. Each year there is a crew of dedicated people who, for a reason that is unknown to me, forget the mistakes, and the hassles of the previous year and step forward and volunteer to coach, train or manage a minor hockey team.

Fortunately, for our kids, these people are dedicated to the sport and are somehow able to forgive and forget last year and start anew each September.

There is, of course, the minor hockey executive. This is a group of individuals that books the ice time; set the game schedules for all teams; books referees; sets allowances for tournaments; handles and tracks all monies; raises funds to assist in keeping the association liquid and otherwise do virtually everything; from pacifying parents; to picking coaches; and packing first aid kits. They meet once or twice a month to carry out regular business, but more often to settle disputes. Some of them don't even have kids in the system.

Each year, all of the kids who are registered come out for two or three practices to "tryout" , for the "select" or "A" team. People have been trying for years to come up with a less conspicuous name, one that is less demeaning to the kids, who don't make it, but the very nature of the game of hockey evolves around the competitive edge. Who is the best at the sport. What kid will make it and what kid won't. Someday I hope to coach an "A" them and I only hope that I have what it takes, to look into the sweet face of a young boy who has given his all and it wasn't enough, and to say, "sorry, but you be on the house league team." I see coaches wrestle with this each year and I have never met one coach who doesn't hate the job.

This year I watched as some boys who played "A" last year and assumed they would inherit their position on that team again, being told that this year they would be house leaguers. These boys were all brave. They smiles and brushed it off. "no big deal" , they said. "Not a problem" ,"I just want to play hockey" . But I know that many of them went home and after they went to bed, while Mom and Dad were not there to see ... they wept at their failure.

What had happened to them that night in the dressing room would haunt them for quite a while. It was a necessary lesson in life that their may be many times when we try for all we are worth and just don't have what it takes to make the team. This lesson, although today will destroy their inner self, will build their character for a time in life when this will happen again. Only the next time it happens they will realize, "hey I've been down this road ... I weathered this storm before and it didn't destroy me ... I can handle this problem ... I'm not any less a person because of it." A hard lesson indeed but one that nearly every man in the world has had to learn and most have felt the sting of tears during their first lesson.

I have found it amazing to see just how these boys very quickly bond with their new teammates in the house league and soon forget that they were on "A" team and begin to play as a unit with as much enthusiasm as ever before.

It sometimes appears that parents are often more upset that their son or daughter didn't make the "A" team than the kid was. Some parents feel that their child has let them down, performed less than what their expectations were. Some parents feel that there is shame in playing for the house league team.

I have coached the house league team for two years and one thing that I have learned is that the boys in the house leaguers perhaps represent most of all the true meaning of the sport ..."to play hard, to have fun and to be able to accept the losses with the wins.

The boys in hockey seem to understand this fundamental principal of hockey, now if only we could make the parents understand. They need to understand that their sons want to play this game for pleasure, to be accepted by their parents, not for their hockey skills but for being little boys with dreams and heroes.

If you are a hockey parent, why not make yourself a promise this year ? Say this: "I promise to go to my son's hockey game to watch him enjoy himself. I promise not to scream instructions or criticize him from the sidelines. I promise to reel with him in his victories and to help him accept his defeats. I promise to give him honest and sincere praise for his attributes and to understand that his mistakes are only part of his learning process. I promise not to fault his coach or trainer or manager for my son's shortcomings. These people don't need my two cents worth. Finally, I promise to share my son's hockey experience with him and to nurture it into a time we will both be happy for."

Some years up the road your son will remember his minor hockey, either as a time of pressure to win, a time when you pushed too hard, a time when you expected more than he had to give or happy time, when his Mom and Dad made him feel special by taking the time to watch him play.

The choice of how your son will feel about his minor hockey is essentially your decision.

As the commercials say, "this is a time limited offer and quantities are limited. Do it now and avoid disappointment."

October 11, 1995

A friend of ours recently moved from a very large city to this wee town. I can't imagine her not having some questions and apprehensions about small town living.

It must seem strange to see people climb from their car on Main Street and walk from them without locking the doors and engaging the alarm systems.

We don't "give the bird" to someone who steals our parking place, the next one is 2 only cars ahead.

We saunter (is that a word), across the streets without waiting for lights turn or cops to wave us through.

When we are in a hurry, what usually slows us down is not traffic jams or the fact that a show just got out, but more often the fact that we met too many friends and stopped to chat along the way or someone we hadn't seen for a day or so invited us into the doughnut shop for a coffee. In the nice weather we talk too long outside the post office, If it's not so nice we visit inside.

Just in case you are not yet prepared, don't forget that Halloween is just around the corner and you may be visited by one or two hundred kids that night. Most of them will be escorted by parents but that doesn't mean you will know them. Out here in the sticks we hit every house. Oh, by the way, you may not know all of those who say "hello" and furthermore, they probably only know you by affiliation. You may be referred to as Walter Millbrook's uncle's daughter or something like that, however even these people will learn your name before you know theirs. Not to worry, there are few Charles Manson types here and so you are probably still quite safe.

If you lose your keys someone will probably see you mislay them and chase you down to return them and if they don't no one will stop you from breaking into your own home... worse yet they may help you break in.

Forget your wallet at home? No problem ... simply tell the local merchant that you'll stop in later that day to straighten up with them and chances are he won't bat an eye. If that doesn't work, stop nearly anyone and borrow a twenty, we aren't wealthy here, but nearly anyone is good for 20 bucks.

The pace here is probably somewhat slower than what you're used to but it is easy to get used to. If you see someone sitting on the sidewalk they are not panhandlers as in the cities but have probably 'fallen and can't get up.'

The philosophy we live by is basically that "if you don't get it done today, there is always the next day or the next or the next ...". It is not an overly productive philosophy but it has never killed anyone either.

Anyway, welcome to Bothwell. Feel free to bother us on Sunday morning for a couple of eggs or some pancake mix. A cup of flour isn't out of the question at 9:30 or 10:00, after the variety is closed and a boost is never out of the question.

We welcome you here. Enjoy your stay... we hope it is long and pleasant for you.

October 25, 1995

Perspective... what a complex word. It generally means your view point, or vantage point. But perspective is far more than that. It is not only how you see something in relation to yourself but even how you feel towards that thing. I probably spend too much time in the town hall, I probably spend too much time in the council chambers. I watch as ratepayers or as I call

them 'irratepayers' make verbal attacks on both council members and town employees. True, there are some inadequacies in a system like our municipality. True, some may not tow their share of the line. It's that way in any system, maybe more so in some than others, but I don't feel it is excessive in our town.

Still it bothers me to a great extent when persons verbally attack councillors for projects and problems that were not their doing. It bothers me even worse when some "irratepayer" attacks the clerk or deputy clerk, demanding answers to rapid fire questions with no advance notice.

It is seldom that someone comes into that clerks office and says, "this really cheeses me off and although I realize its not your fault, I would appreciate if you could find me an answer over the next day or so" and then finishes with "well, good luck and I'll talk to you in a couple of days, thanks," and walks out the door.

I have seen persons go to the clerks office and verbally abuse the workers expecting to get full cooperation and satisfaction regardless, of what it will cost, whether it is legal or most of all if it is fair to all concerned. They come in screaming and then are surprised when the they're treated coolly and don't get immediate service.

Imagine how you would feel if two different parties came to you, one came and patiently, politely ask you to help them with a problem and the other demanded that you drop what you are doing, put your life on hold and give them immediate satisfaction. What would your response be ? Dale Carnegie teaches "you'll draw more flies with honey than vinegar." Although I can't think anything worse than drawing flies, I think what he means is that you will be more attractive with a sweet disposition than a sour one.

Now to perspective. I often wonder how some of the abusive "irratepayers", (often men) would act with the same problem only the clerk that is six foot three inches, a man with a five o'clock shadow by 10 am and rounded off with a reputation of having a real bad disposition. Something tells me that perspective would become the operative word.

The reason I am writing this is because this week, I passed by the clerk's new office and overheard a man giving Ms. deWit, "a piece of his mind." As he spoke, I thought "now if that was my wife he was talking to, I'd go down there and punch him right in the nose."

So the next time some political policy, bylaw, or tax mistake has made you very angry try to remember the people who work in the offices are being paid to administrate the town or to scrape the roads and repair drains and nowhere in their job description does it say they will also suffer the abuse of the public, on an as needed basis.

I have found that before I storm into an office ready for a fight, the best thing to do is to rehearse on paper what I will say and how I will say it. I write down what it is that I am angry over and who I want to know about it. Very often I will finish the letter and toss it in the garbage realizing that I simply over reacted to a situation I was overly sensitive to. I realize that going to the town office and screaming bloody murder will not only later embarrass me but will not probably accomplish any change I wish to see implemented.

So today's word was" perspective" ... what's yours?

November 1, 1995

Let them go ... for the last several months we have been bombarded with the whinings of those not satisfied with being Canadians. Many want special rights and privileges because of their heritage or colour or language or customs.

Hey folks, I'm real sorry but not from this guy. If you want special treatment, go do something to merit that treatment. Something besides being born here or having an interesting background. (I was born here and I don't receive any special treatment for that.)

I cannot for the life of me understand, how the rest of us Canadians can sit back and not only allow these groups to commit a form of treason, but furthermore we fund their efforts.

Perhaps, it is time that we allow what seems like the inevitable breakup of this country to occur. I would rather live in the content country of Ontario or Manitoba, than to have to continue to patronize these special interest groups by listening to how we ignore their culture and languages. Let Quebec become a separate country. Let them raise their own taxes and fund their own social programs. Let them set up their own medicaid. Let them form their own armies, police, fire departments and ambulance systems. Let them mint their own currency. Let them start from scratch and build a country with the freedom, power, versatility and free enterprise systems of Canada. Let them do it themselves .

Win or lose though, I want this thing to be a done deal. Finished ... no turning back ... complete and never to be spoke of again. I, as a normal lower-middle class Canadian who make up the majority of our country's population, want to be rid of the constant bickering forever.

I realize that a country the size of Canada will undergo many great trials when portions of it begin to separate. We will become a poor global credit risk. Our dollar will fall drastically and the price of imports will in turn rise for us. The things we enjoy on a daily basis will become luxuries. Things like bananas, oranges and orange juice, will sky rocket in price. With a large portion of our tax base separating, our taxes will no doubt increase some. This however, will be offset by the removal off some of the service load separating also. We will suffer for something that we have no control over.

But take heart my fellow "remaining" Canadians, our pain and suffering will only be a fraction of what the separatist will be. They will know far greater hardships. While our reputation as a stable country will be tarnished, they will have no reputation. They will be untried as a global trading partner. They will have to earn their stripes and those stripes will not come easy in the cash hungry world we now live in. Few industries sell on credit, most demand prepayment or at least C.O.D. This new country of Quebec will have to reckon with the Cree Indian Tribes and the Inuit, both who lay claim to vast amounts of land in what is called Quebec.

I long for the day when I no longer have to turn the pancake mix box several times, before I find the instructions in English. I am eager to hear the end of my children's complaints about "why do we have to learn French, no one here speaks it?" I can't wait for my tax dollar to stop funding "french immersion school systems" . I want to call a government phone number and not hear "hello / bonjour" . And I can't wait for the next federal election. Have you ever thought of the number of French Canadian Prime Ministers we've had in the past 20 years? Just think back.

I am a true Canadian. In time of war I would not have to even think about defending my country or our freedom. I remove my hat, face the flag and put my hand over my heart, as a sign of fidelity when my national anthem is played. I hold my head proudly erect and feel great pride for my country and its people when I hear "Oh Canada" . But recently, I am ashamed of my nation. We have become a nation of special interests. We have traded in our national pride for a wishy-washy group of spineless countrymen who will not deal with traitors, who are bent on destroying our national unity.

If the referendum vote is to separate or not to separate, then let that be the end of it. But let's put this thorn in our side behind us. Let's hope for laws that deal with traitors with harsh punishment and to the fullest extent of the law. If the separation movement has lost at the time you read this, then let us not hear of it again either.

Let us attempt to heal the wounds of this political battlefield and make our country strong and unified. Let us work together to make Canada one again. Let us truly be "sea to shining sea". Let us come to an understanding with the realization that part of what makes our country unique is the blend of cultures that we are composed of. From my Hungarian ancestry to my wife's Swedish past and on to Quebec's French roots.

To borrow a quote from our United States neighbours, "we must all hang in together or surely we will all hang separately."

November 8, 1995

It's funny how as we go through life we pass through different phases of interest. Studying race cars or motorcycles as teenagers and then moving on to deeper topics like space or war or philosophy, as we mature. But what I find odd, is that not often we return to a phase to see just what has happened in it over the past ten or fifteen years, that we have been busy living our lives in some other world of interest.

I raced cars as a teenager and rode motorcycles. I had monstrous stereo speakers with amplifiers, that put out hundreds of watts of power. Then I grew up, got married and had babies. I still watch the odd drag race show and I listen to music on a quality, albeit less powerful stereo. But it has been many years since I have taken the time to go to the drags or made my ears ring from listening to hard rock music too loud.

I have not been as fortunate in another field of study. I have returned to the field of transplant technology twice, since 1989 and yes, the rumours are true. I am again studying this science.

When I was 33 years old I studied organ transplantation. At that time I learned a great deal about the statistics of it. I became aware of the mortality rates, the different levels of difficulties of transplanting various organs, the different diseases that were treated in this way, the average length of waiting lists and the criteria of just how one is made eligible for "the list".

When I turned 35, once again, I brushed up on the same stats. I was amazed at how rapidly this field of medicine had changed. It was hard to believe the great strides that were being made in this transplant field. It was even more amazing at how mortality rates had dropped. What was also amazing was the new length of the list.

During my 1989 transplant, I waited only about three months for my new liver. This wait at that time was considered average. In 1991, I waited about four months. That wait was considered short. In both instances transplants were given out based on a few factors. There are two stages to a liver transplant. The first is the determination of whether the patient needs a transplant and the second is when will his name be added to the list of those waiting.

A name is not added to the list, unless the patient is ill enough that if a donor organ became available immediately, the patient was considered sick enough to need it .

As far as the list is considered, the first factor on who goes first is - point blank - how critically ill the patient is. The sickest go first and that is that. The only other criteria is who has waited the longest. Two equally ill patients, one of whom has waited six months, the other six weeks, the six month patient goes first.

Determining whether a patient is a candidate for the list is far more subjective. There are a host of questions to be considered? Is the patient capable of following the strict regiment of drug, diet, and lifestyle therapy that might follow a transplant? The last thing the transplant team wants to do is to give someone like an active alcoholic, a three hundred thousand dollar liver, only to find out that he will destroy it in the next six months, with a combination of too much alcohol and a lack of attention to drug therapy.

The transplant team is in charge of making a three hundred thousand dollar decision and so they attempt to make it with a blend of economic sense, but a factor that weighs as heavily as your quality of life. Some patients have a pretty fair life quality even though they biologically have a sick liver. It appears that some patients can live well on a small amount of liver tissue. These people will be out on the list when their quality of life also indicates that they need to be transplanted.

It is now five years later. My 77 year old transplanted liver is in a chronic failure mode and I may be put on "the list" very soon. I am now starting to research into a science that I never expected again. The first thing that I have found is that the waiting list is now a year. But there are other changes also.

Dr. Gary Levy, Director of Toronto's Multi Organ Transplant Unit, feels that there are 5 major developments in transplant technology in the last five years. First the development of the "Wisconsin Solution" which is the liquid that organs are transplanted in. An organ can now be kept for 12-18 hours, which allows a Nova Scotia recipient to receive a British Columbia donor organ. Second, are the improvements in surgical techniques, especially beneficial for women and children

who need smaller organs. Third, the technology of removing a portion of a parents liver for grafting into an offspring. Again primarily for children. Fourth, using the liver as a tolerizing organ to compliment other organ transplants i.e. heart / liver or lung / liver. Fifth is the increased usage of older donor organs and sixth the introduction of FK506 as an anti rejection drug.

Your position on "the list" still depends on almost exclusively on how sick you are. The only secondary factor is how long a patient has been waiting.

Another facet of the science that is actively being explored is transplanting liver into people who have chronic viral liver diseases like Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C. Hep C has only been identifiable in the last five years. It is incurable, as of today. Hep C is carried by the blood and often works slowly and persistently on the liver, until it has destroyed the organ. At that point the patient will need to be re-transplanted. The problem is that it is very difficult to determine where the liver was damaged, by chronic rejection or by the Hep C. It appears that for right now they will re-transplant, unless they have undeniable proof that the liver was damaged by the Hepatitis and not rejection. What I really started out to write about is the need for donors. With a waiting list a year long, many people will die waiting for an organ. Perhaps I will be one of them.

Many persons would make perfect donors, but just never think about organ donation. They never consider the scenario that their whole family may be killed in a horrible car accident and the one child that might have lived, died because the parents didn't sign their organ cards and the child's injuries made a transplant necessary to live. Organ donation is a person's last chance to die a hero. With the stroke of a pen you may save the life of one, two, or maybe more persons. You may give sight to the blind or offer a crucial skin graft to a burn victim. It will cost you nothing. You can still be laid to rest in your coffin if you desire. Your body will receive the same dignified treatment that any live body would receive. Your incisions would be surgically closed in the same manner as the donor's incisions. There may be a slight delay in funeral arrangements due to the time it may take to remove the organs but this is generally under 10 hours.

How do you donate your organs? There are many ways but the most sure way is to make your family aware of your wishes. You may also sign your donor card but your survivors can veto that if you haven't made them aware of your wishes. For more information on organ donorships call MORE (Multi Organ Retrieval Exchange) Ontario at 1-800-263-2833.

You may also donate your body to a medical school. This requires the filling out of a form and the consent of your family. Following medical study, your remains will be either cremated and returned to your family or cremated and interred with others at a ceremony conducted annually by the medical school. The only cost is the transportation from your place of death to the medical school. About 95 % of all bodies offered to medical science are accepted. Persons who have autopsies are not eligible people or who died of certain infectious diseases may not be. For information on donating your body to medical science call (519) 661-3014 at the University of Western Ontario.

Each year more and more people are making the logical decision to donate. It is a final gift of love and you will be a hero to those you save. It only takes about 5 minutes to possibly save lives and keep families together. Remember, "don't take your organs to heaven, heaven knows we need them here."

November 15, 1995

Anyone who knows me, will know that one of my personality traits is my love for "ge-gaws". Things like "velcro", "slinkys", "underwater cameras" and "car phones." The "ge-gaw" disease is hereditary and runs mainly from father to son in successive generations. My father has it and so does my son. Our leader is "Tool Times" Tim Allen.

The disease is incurable. It is highly addictive and "common ge gawwism" has been proven to lead to "hard choice ge-gawism" and eventually to more expensive "ge-gawism" later in life. Men have been known to forego food and drink for days when they go on a "ge-gaw" binge. Last week our family purchased a new vacuum cleaner. This was not your basic housecleaning device. This baby is loaded.

When I took it home, I called my son downstairs to show him some of the features. One must be very careful in exposing a young "ge-gawer" to something as sophisticated as our new vacuum. A youngster can easily over "ge-gaw" dose on a machine as highly "ge-gawed" as this one.

I first showed him the cord retraction feature, "you must be very careful with this son," I warn. "This baby will retract 30' of cord in less than a second and at speeds in excess of 80 miles per hour. ", " It will take off an arm or kill a pet if they get in the path of the retracting cord." Andrew strung the cord from the kitchen and depressed the retraction pedal. A high pitch whine is followed by a mechanical gulp and the cord has disappeared. Again he strings out the cord and again depresses the pedal. Again. And again. I leave the house and return three of four hours later and Andrew is still retracting.

"Andrew, it's time to see the rest of the machine" I announce. You are about to become a" ge-gaw" man.

Andrew is shaking in anticipation. His palms are sweating and his respiration is shallow and pulse is thready.

"Look, it has an eight foot hose, not a standard seven foot. It has a complete set of accessory tools on board and another complete set to store in a bag in the garage." (he looks at me in awe, the thought of someday having a garage is barely all he can comprehend.) "A full size power head with four carpet settings and a powerhead lock which allows the wand to stand upright. A six inch mini power head for cleaning of the family chariot." Oh ge-gaw heaven. A headlight with bright and dim (for those times when you meet an oncoming vacuum) feature. My son looks at the vacuum as if it were a '63 split window Corvette. His eyes are full on wonderment and he is beside himself with "ge-gaw" bliss.

I think I will give him the ultimate "ge-gaw" for Christmas. The big" kahoone" - a full size one inch thick Swiss Army knife. The one with a cork screw, scissors, tweezers, a plastic toothpick, a can opener, several screwdrivers, three blades and a bottle opener. I will leave him in his room with on Christmas morning. Along about May, I'll go get him for his spring bath and haircut. He should be nearly over it by then.

November 22, 1995

Just 28 days until you know what. Yes ladies and gents, 29 days from now, you will all be lot less wealthy and absolutely no wiser. If you are like 90% of the rest of this country.

Of course, the hottest items this year will once again be electronic gadgetry. Consumer monitors indicate the high dollar ticket items will be down this year. So depending on what you define as a high dollar ticket item, you won't be getting it.

Still there will be thousands and thousands of personal computers that will be opened Christmas morning. I have received phone calls on Christmas day, several times over the past 20 years from people who bought a computer for the kids and didn't buy software or plugged the printer into the mouse port some other simple mistake that brings the entire system to a halt.

The big decision will be Mac or IBM. Mac or "apple" computers, are very user friendly, and by all standards easier to get up and running than IBM's. However, once they are running and six months old, users soon find that Mac software (programs) are harder to find and generally more expensive. Macs, too are less versatile than IBM's. They don't offer near as many cost effective shareware programs. (Shareware or Public Domain) main software is usually programmed by amateurs and sells for \$5 to \$25 per program, and for an additional moderate user fee, the buyer can buy a full blown version, complete with manuals. Macs are the preferred machine of the newspaper industry. As a matter of fact, they have nearly become the industry standard. They offer superior software for the manufacturer and composition of publications. IBM is the industry standard for database operations, word processors, and accounting packages.

We don't use Apples in our office. We have considered using them but, they are very expensive and the cost of the new computers, in addition to the cost of all the software that we already have would be more than what we would save by the switch.

The other reason we don't use Macs is that they are not as easily upgraded as IBM's. When we want to add a hard drive, or more Random Access Memory, a tape backup or CD ROM, or a new "ge-gaw" . I simply lift off the cover of our machine and most times make the addition myself, with products usually bought right off the retail shelf. To perform upgrades to "apples", you must be more than just versed in "Macology", you must usually custom order your parts and most times purchase original Apple parts. Then IBM has a zillion aftermarked suppliers who sell far cheaper than original IBM materials.

Another factor is the general availability of parts for IBM's is better. IBM being a much larger corporation than Apple, obviously has more established of dealers.

So if it is a computer you will purchase for this years Noel, how do you determine what is best for you ?

It depends on your needs, and what you have to spend. Our com at the paper is worth approximately \$20,000 and to replace it with an Apple would be about \$5000 more. We use 486 technology and have no immediate plans to upgrade to the new "Pentium" technology. In the computer field I believe that RAM plays as big a part in a computer's speed as processors do. A Pentium chip with 8 of RAM will not out perform the older 486 processor with 64 megs of RAM. We do not feel that the Pentium has been in the field long enough to prove absolutely that it will never fail. It had always has some overheating problems. This is the same as Windows 95, we just don't think it has been tested by the public enough. Windows 95 already has some major anomalies (that's computer jargon for headaches) that must be fixed with upgrade.

A good family machine today will cost about \$2200 to \$2400 with a colour printer. That include all taxes and a turnkey computer with Windows and maybe a game or two.

The hardware that you should be able to purchase for this money will go as follows. A Pentium base 66 or faster processor with about 8 megs of RAM (don't buy less than 8 megs, they will run too slowly.) The machine should have at least one floppy drive, and a (double or triple speed) CD ROM. It should have a colour monitor and at least 300megs of hard storage. A mouse and possibly a sound card and speakers, should be in the package. The best type of printer for non-commercial use are the new bubble jets. They can print in colour and are good for most applications, unless you want to generate two or three part bills. You will then be married to dot matrix printers. The best thing to do is get the machine running before Christmas morning. If that is not feasible, then as you assemble your system, read the "getting started" chapter of the manual before you start. 99% of the time the problem that you are faced with, is handled in the book. One last piece of advice is, don't just buy a computer. Remember, computer is the hardware and you will have to have software to run on it. There are programs for kids age 3 to 103 that nearly every-one can afford and enjoy.

Only one other thing. I'm going away Christmas morning and I don't make house calls! Happy Shopping!

November 22, 1995

(This also appeared in "The Spirit" newspaper, in the People Column by Jodi Kish the same week. About it Jodi wrote: "It was an article I wrote to Jim and seeing how things turned out, it was one of the best things I ever did").

A wise man once told me, "if you admire someone, write them and tell them." So my column is dedicated to someone I admire.

Ever since I was a shy little girl, you have always been there and when I got older, I remember you helping me make a little wooden boat to sail in the creek. I remember, you as a teenager, yelling at an innocent little girl to leave your record player alone. I remember you ratting on me when I became a teenager. (I used to think it was to be mean, now I know you were just looking out for me.) I remember you letting me drive before I had a licence. I remember you telling you things, that I knew you would never repeat. You and I, we've been through a lot. You've been there when I needed you and even when I didn't.

November 29, 1995

(Jodi Kish writes about this "Fence" article: "This is the last writings on file, and it is with great sadness that I finish. It's been kind of strange and it's hard to explain, but it's like I got to spend some time with him and I guess I did")

I was really hoping to catch up on the books during the three days I spent in the hospital, but the day I went in I developed a miserable head cold and spent hours blowing my nose and watching the tube. I was amazed at how little is on during the course of the day, but probably nothing is as amazing as the tools mankind has developed to cure the body. Take something like the IV hep lock. This is a fairly large bore needle with a thread on the end of it. It is forced into a vein in the top of your hand, crudely taped down and left to catch on blankets and shirt- sleeves. If you catch it too often you will, "lose the sight" . This, in lay- man's terms, means "rip it out." This is how we get important fluids, drugs, etc. into the bloodstream. Excuse me, but I thought that was my mouth's job and I'll never lose sight of that.

I hope that someday my children will look back on our medicine of as archaic as we perceive medieval bloodletting with leeches. Star Trek style scanners will simply modify our cell structure and we'll be healed. There must be something better than those stupid finger pricks for a diabetic to test blood sugar with. The insulin needles I can live with but the "blood letting device" (it even sound archaic), is reminiscent of driving a power stapler into the tip of your finger.

The other thing I can't wait for is a replacement for a blood technician. I can't say that I will miss the thrill and anticipation of whether the one who is "doing me" will effortlessly and quickly slide the needle in and out with not even a hint of pain, or if she will come in at an 86 degree angle of attack and slowly ease the steel barrel into flesh, dragging out the pain over the maximum length of time. This procedure is topped off with a minuscule cotton ball being strapped to your hairy arm with surgical tape that is at least as sticky as good duct tape, only wider. I guess it is obvious that I am writing this from a hospital bed. The hospital that I am in is considered to be among the finest in the world, but even it has its quirks. Have you ever wondered what they do in the admitting department of the hospital that could take 30 minutes. I mean do they call every doctor and nurse in the hospital and tell them "he's here."

There appears to be a twelve hour delay in all that happens here. Order a diabetic diet and it comes regular or better yet both. Order clear fluids... in comes regular. What is a clear diet, you ask? Apple juice, tea, broth and a gallon of jello. Not our basic run of the mill, Bill Cosby stuff. No, this is hospital jello. It is made from a derivative of Indian rubber and super balls. Drop a blob of this stuff and it will ricochet around the room like a 22 shell fired into a titanium bullet. I would like to see the way they make it. I am sure there is a vulcanizing stage.

On leaving the hospital, you must be assisted into a wheelchair and escorted to the door. This is usually done by an aging volunteer worker who even though is a lovely person, they give you the feeling that you will never be as healthy as they are when you are their age. Anyway, I will go take a nap now. That is the only really fine thing about being hospitalized. You don't need a reason to take a nap!

December 20 1995

(Jodi Kish notes "Jim had a few columns stored for various reasons, one of them was for Christmas. Here it is.")

Alas, another year has past and with it we are all (hopefully) older and wiser.

This last year was a fine one by any standard for me. I often take a moment a this time of year to give thanks for my world.

This planet is full of wars, starvation, disease, corruption and despair, but my world, thank God, is nearly perfect. I may not have perfect health or a fat bank account, but I have a loving wife, 3 slightly less than perfect children and a host of fine loyal and true friends. I don't think a man could be better blessed than that.

Last year we were forced into increasing the cost of the paper and that caused us great concern, but you, our dedicated readers, sprang for the extra quarter and we suffered no loss in readership. It bothers us that has to increase the cost but we are glad you understand that it was not within our power to change it.

Last year we broke in a new council. While their achievements so far have not been monumental we must temper that fact with the host of problems that they had to finish for the predecessors. I wish them well in the new year.

Last summer was what a great summer should be. Stifling temperatures that forced us to sit a little longer and a little more often. To leave the grass long, just one more day and to forget weeding the flower bed for this week. What a truly classic summer 1995 was.

My 1995 was not without its trials but overall it was a good year. I should hope for more like it. I hope yours was as good.

At Christmas time, my thoughts usually turn to children and family. If I am ever outwardly religious, it is at this time of year. It is during this season that I seek to embrace old friendships and re-establish lost contacts. I find it appropriate that the celebration of a Holy Birth should bind old friendships. I find myself being optimistic that the greatest story ever told really happened. I also find myself in a forgiving mood come Christmas. I think it is a good time to patch up old wounds, bury the hatchet and start fresh. We should all do this or we will stagnate in unimportant issues.

To those of you who read me, I wish health and happiness. I bid you bid you good tidings during this good tidings time of year. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas holiday. I wish you prosperity (although not to the point are you are filthy rich) and finally I hope 1996 will be as great for you as '95 was for me.

Merry Christmas and May God Bless You.

Epilogue

Andrew Kish writes: The year is 2026 as I am digitizing these memories originally collected by "Aunt Jodi", printed into a booklet and given to me for Christmas in 2002. This year I am exactly one year older than the age Dad was when he passed. Many of these articles are mirrors to my own fond recollections, and I seem to have inherited not just his love for "ge-gaws" but his very writing style as well (too many parentheses like this adding context). Dad would be amazed at the state of technology and I wish he had written more about "the internet" (only mentioned once in all his "Fence" articles and only in passing). I am extremely proud to upload his writing to the internet so it will hopefully live on for many more years and provide wisdom to my family, the people of Bothwell (now sporting "The Jim Kish Memorial Theatre"), and others simply seeking an honest, pure view of years gone by in a rural Ontario town.

Jodi Kish writes: After Jim's passing, several folks tribute to Jim. I have included some articles that appeared the Spirit, as well as an article that appeared in "the competition" paper - the Bothwell Times. A special friend of the family had some very special words to say about Jim. Since I some pull with the paper I will give you the honour of reading it now:

December 13, 1995

A Friend Remembered ... By Reed Menzies

First of all, Jim loved his wife, Ann Marie and his children Sarah, Andrew and Kaitlin. Nothing, absolutely nothing, stood in the way of the care and nurturing of his family.

He did not come from the sun or the moon. His mother, Glenda, instilled in him a great love of people and things beautiful. His father, John, taught him to be serious about many things that sometimes Jim would discard too easily, without some fatherly admonitions.

And then there is his siblings, John, the eldest, who worked hard, played hard and has overcome many difficulties to become a distinguished member of the educational establishment in the city of London. Jim loved and respected his brother who unselfishly gave of his time and advice when asked.

And then there is the irrepressible, who works, plays and parents with vivacity and conviction rarely matched anywhere, let alone in our small community. Jim and Jodi had a communion of souls, not always heavenly, but always extremely intense.

And finally Melanie, named, I suspect, after our daughter Melanie. The youngest and no doubt a little spoiled by all the members of the family, is succeeding in making her way through the world in her own way. She had a special rapport with Jim and a special place in his heart.

I would like, at this time point, to declare my personal love and respect for this family, who have made a place in their hearts for my wife, Isabel and myself.

My involvement with family really started when Jim was successfully elected to a town council seat. John Sr., no doubt would contest this, as he was Mayor during part of my time as clerk of the town, but the clerk and the Mayor often don't have much of a social relationship.

Jim's first liver transplant brought me into the family, and we along with much of this community, lent our support to Ann in particular and to all the family as the occasion arose.

Jim, drove me a lot of places with me in the passenger seat. He drove, I listened and seemed to become a sounding board for the latest schemes that agile brain was hatching.

Everything he did intrigued him, he had worked at many things. He often mentioned welding, driving truck for Harold Marcus and moving trailers to the West with his best friend Brian Chambers. Brian could fill in some of gaps that are only to me by hearsay.

Jim is a Mason, an Optimist and lately, a member of the Legion. He was the moving force behind the "Boomtown Players", coach of a special goalie and, of course, a well-known local columnist. You may not have liked his point of view, but you got it all. This led to occasional retractions and explanations, but they too were forthcoming.

The tremendous enthusiasm he brought to all his undertakings, coupled with the ability to physically build things, houses, swimming pool decks and sets for plays. He loved electronic things: stereos, televisions or anything new in computers, cars or special tools. He also loved to help a ham-handed friend in difficulty with almost anything mechanical, usually fixing things in about three minutes after I spent hours of frustration labouring over something that just would not perform. We will all miss him.

(From "The People" column by Jodi Kish in the same Dec 13 1995 issue)

One of my favorite songs is Louie Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World". It is far from a perfect world, but still we have much to be thankful for. I am thankful for the wonderful memories of my brother Jim and how he made me laugh. I am thankful for my Mom and Dad and all they have done for me. I am thankful for having a sister-in-law like Ann and nieces like Sarah and Kaitlin and a nephew - Andrew. To my baby sister, Melanie who is always there when I need her and to my brother John for who I am proud of. To the lights of my life, Bobby, Derek and Bob. I am also thankful for our little community, who have shown us overwhelming love and support during this troubled time. So often we get caught up in our day to day lives, that we forget "What a Wonderful World It Is", So this Christmas, when you are gathered together with family and friends, take time to be thankful for all you have that is good. To Jim, wherever you are, thanks for the memories and for making me see the world is a wonderful place to be, even though you're gone.

December 13, 1995

(This article appeared in "The Bothwell Times", the competitor newspaper to Jim and Ann's "Spirit of Bothwell".)

Community pays tribute to Bothwell's biggest booster Bothwell said goodbye to a good friend last week.

Jim Kish, editor of the Spirit of Bothwell, and a long-time community booster, died at University Hospital in London on Thursday. He was 39. Many members of the community paid their respects to both Mr. Don Robinsons Funeral Home, and at the funeral held Sunday after Kish's family and to his memory on Saturday at a visitation at the noon, again at the funeral home.

The name of Mr. Kish's newspaper, launched in April of 1992, spoke as much about his journalism and his belief in his hometown as it did about him, he was heavily involved with the Bothwell community, his name associated at various times with everything from the Bothwell Minor Hockey Association, to the Boomtown Players theatre group, to the local United Way committee and to a dozen other organizations. He was also a former municipal councillor with the Bothwell town council and a member of the local Masonic Lodge.

His enthusiasm for the community, its resident and its aspirations knew no limit, and his newspaper was expression of this devotion. His weekly column delivered a wide range of subjects, his thoughts on the local municipal government, world views and his own personal adventures with family and friends .

Mr. Kish was especially interested in the production side of the newspaper industry, and his paper was one of the first in this area to "scan" photographs through a computer program. In recent months he had introduced an even better system, whereby new digital images caught by a new digital camera were transferred directly to his computer screen.

He wasn't always a newspaper man. Up until several years ago, Mr. Kish worked full-time as an automotive research technician at the Sieman plant in Chatham, and when he could, as a supply teacher for technical subjects for the public school boards in Kent, Elgin and Middlesex counties. For a brief period, he operated a computer store.

In an interview with the Bothwell Times in late 1990, Mr. Kish said his personal goals included enrolment at the University of Western Ontario for the eventual purpose of becoming a part-time teacher.

Unfortunately, that interview wasn't entirely devoted to Mr. Kish's goals, but was rather about a prolonged illness, from which he suffered. Due to the onslaught of hepatitis, a condition first diagnosed in 1982, Mr. Kish received a new liver in early 1990 and a second one in 1991. He was waiting for yet another liver transplant last week when he died quite suddenly.

At the time of the 1990 interview, Mr. Kish was characteristically optimistic about his prognosis and future, and told the Times reporter that he and his wife Ann had learned that "God watches out for you."

And despite an illness that frequently cast its shadow over him, Mr. Kish soldiered on. He launched the Spirit newspaper in 1992, that same year joined the United Way committee, coached a hockey team, and in 1993 attempted to launch a second publication, one devoted to minor hockey.

He and his wife Ann were particularly active with the Boomtown Players, and were instrumental in reviving the organization several years ago. The Players gave an excellent performance during the OptiFest this past August, and Mr. Kish was part of the cast.

If the poet and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson was alive today, he would likely have modelled his definition of success after Mr. Kish.