

The Rattler's Den



By Rathburn Rattler

Remember the youngster the other kids envied in school? You know, the one whose father owned a candy store.

Well...

Ran into Fred Schermer who runs the Rheingold restaurant in Clarkson, the other day. He had his small daughter, Diane, in tow, or

vice versa. And Daddy was not happy at all.

"Look," he said, digging in his heels to stop and talk for a minute. "Right here..." he waved his free hand in the direction of his adjoining delicatessen.

"I've got a store full of candy."

"So she wants some candy. So what does she do? Gets some money from me and now she's off to buy it..." at the Village Variety store, next door!

Exit father, scowling.

End of a boy's illusions.

FRANKLY SPEAKING

By MARY McGRATH

A honeymoon is the state of oblivion that carries a couple from the state of confusion of the wedding to the married estate.

Some couples insist that the honeymoon can last forever. Other couples grow up

Men, being incurably romantic, try to create the illusion of the honeymoon condition long after reality has set in.

For those poor dears who wonder what is happening, I have a list of little hints by which they can tell.

The honeymoon is over: —when she buys you an electric carving knife for your birthday instead of the new putter you really expected

—when she doesn't think your newest joke is funny, and says so.

—when she stops worrying that you don't eat enough and grabs her 40 extra winks while you gulp down your coffee alone in the kitchen

—when she knows how you love to run your fingers through her wavy hair and she gets a Mia Farrow fringe cut, anyway.

—when the baby breaks your favorite pipe and, instead of worrying about it, she reminds you of how often she told you to put it out of reach.

—when she falls asleep during your intimate midnight philosophizing. She knows the sun always rises — and so do the kids!

—when she stops watching you shave in the morning and switches to yelling, "Hurry up, you'll be late for work."

—when she understands exactly how you feel about presenting a family front, politically, but she'd vote for Bobby tomorrow if she had the chance, anyway.

—when the other girls tell her what a gem she married and she just laughs and laughs!

Oh, yeah, the honeymoon is definitely over, old boy, but count your blessings. The marriage is about to begin.

Reeve Bob Speck of Toronto Township is no slouch when it comes to politics or high finance. Last week end, he displayed yet another facet of his personality... a set of twinkling toes.

While nimble footwork is undoubtedly an asset to the working politician, Reeve Speck may have had cause to regret his dexterity Saturday at the Clarkson-Lorne Park Chamber of Commerce's annual ladies' night in the Rockway Motel.

The ladies just about wore out his dancing shoes. And when he was finally allowed to collapse in his seat, he was so exhausted President Gus Hendriks sold him a surplus jar of jellied salad before you could say Thomas J. Plunkett.

Watch it Bob. Don't accept any dancing invitations from Mayor Brydon in Brampton!

Add to cold weather notes:

There's this chap on our staff who arose manfully in the frigid hours before dawn twice to take an outdoor picture.

He was on the scene in plenty of time Friday, but his eyes were watering so badly from the cold he couldn't see to focus his camera.

Monday, he tried once more.

The weather was positively balmy... and his car promptly became stuck.

By the time he'd dug out, he'd missed his job again. Florida, anyone?



The Credit River near Cheltenham

SUGAR and SPICE

Goodbye Old Friend

By BILL SMILEY

It was quite a blow to me to read recently that the Warton Town Hall had been destroyed by fire. Admittedly, the catastrophe didn't rank with Hiroshima, or the San Francisco earthquake, or even Hurricane Hazel, but it hit me pretty hard.

It was rather like reading of the sudden death of an old girl friend. You knew she had gone to fat and drink. But you could remember when, at her best, she was the heart of your life.

A lot of personal memories came crowding back when I read about it. The ugly old building with the shaky bell tower on top was one of the hubs of my existence for more than a decade at a special time in my life.

It was when I was young and my family was young and I was learning the newspaper business. I didn't have a mistress. I didn't hang around the pubs. I didn't take part in all-night poker sessions. I just went to the town hall. I spent more nights in its council chamber, crouched over the rickety press table, than I did with my family.

On more than one occasion, my spouse, a tender young wife and mother, displayed psychoneurotic tendencies toward the old town hall. At least twice she suggested I move a cot into the council chambers, and not bother darkening her bedroom door.

I'll bet I attended more than a thousand meetings in

that town hall. It was the only non-denominational meeting-place in town, and it was there that great causes were launched and collapsed; that political careers were begun and ended; that human triumphs and tragedies were recorded. And I was in on all of it.

It was a regular breeding-ground for lost causes and last-ditch battles. We fought such behemoths as the CNR and the government; we lost. We battled to salvage moribund industries with heavy transfusions of local cash; and some of us are still anemic.

But a lot of good, positive work was done there, too. The commercial fishermen, the farmers, the resort owners and the merchants met there, fought with each other, but emerged united in each case, to fight for their existence, and the betterment of the area.

Another function of the council chamber was that of court-room. This was one that I didn't mind seeing go up in smoke. It's the only time the council chamber smelled bad — on court day. Most of the time it smelled dusty, waxy, and cigar-smokey and just plain old. But on court days it stank: hangovers, puke, fear, shame, curiosity and the law.

But that was only one part of the old town hall. Across from the council chamber was the auditorium. And what memories that brings back. Concerts, plays, recitals, dances and

political meetings. It even had a balcony where elderly ladies could watch the Sailors Farewell Dance in comparative safety.

Our children made their public debuts there. I'll never forget the night Kim, age three, dressed in a bunny costume, spotted me in the audience, burst out of the dance line, and hurled herself into my arms.

Or the night Hugh, about nine, won the grand prize in the music festival, even though two of the notes on the piano did not sound.

Or the night I was an unwitting sucker in an elaborate practical joke, at a concert. I was to pretend I was playing a trumpet solo, while a real trumpeter played the piece off-stage. He double-crossed me. Warned the audience what was going to happen, and when I went into my routine, no sound. Felt a fool.

Or the nights the old girl and I stumbled through our lines with the local little-theatre group. Or the great New Year's Eve dances, when the whole town was out, flying. Got a sock in the eye at one of them when I Auld-Lang-Syned a pretty young matron in the usual fashion. Not from her. From my wife.

Town halls, those great, ugly, draughty chapters in our history, are burning down, falling down or being torn down. They are being replaced by modern, efficient "municipal offices," which have about as much tradition, humanity and warmth as a filing cabinet.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Status Symbol?

Sir,

Permit me to compliment you on your splendid weekly paper. Somehow you have been able to retain a little rural flavour which is a pleasant relief from the impersonal, colourless style of writing common to the big city newspapers.

I should also like to compliment you on the courtesy received during two different telephone calls to your office for information on local matters.

A few months ago I moved with my family into this area and marvelled at the changes since the time I first passed through many years ago. Coming from the more relaxed way of living in Northern Ontario, we have naturally had some adjustments to make. Some were easy, some not quite so easy, but most, of necessity, have been made. To make them we have had to observe, and where possible adopt, the customs of the people native to this latitude.

One custom has intrigued us but before buying the necessary dog to go with it, we decided on some discreet enquiry.

We have noticed that many of the people have dogs — all sorts of dogs, from the half-pint, squeaking ball of fuzz for milady's lap to the 4 gallon-mongrel that leaves his mark of contempt on the snow around my newly planted blue spruce.

The owners of some of the beasts wisely keep them chained up. Rover then gets his daily exercise at the end of a chain on the opposite end of which is his loving master (or mistress). The custom in question appears to be to get Rover out of the house in the early morning or the late evening (hours of darkness are favoured), rapidly get him up the block to the neighbour's lot and wait while the straining beast empties himself. It is obviously against the rules to use one's own property. Rover then kicks up a little snow or turf with his hind paws, sniffs a hydrant or a shrub, or a tire. He then strains to go home, presumably to load up again. The species most accomplished at this, I'm told, is known as the Sprinkler Spaniel.

We are naturally wondering if this custom is a status symbol which would help us to integrate with local society or something we would not see if we had the good sense to stay in bed a little longer in the morning.

Possibly some other readers have the answer.

W. G. B. T.

