

The Perth Courier

UNFOLDING SINCE 1834

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Honourable Malcolm Cameron

Member of the Baldwin-La Fontaine cabinet, leader of the Clear Grit movement, champion of temperance and founder of The Courier.

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Liberal Secrecy

The provincial Liberal government is doing itself no favours by holding secret meetings such as the one held last Friday between the Minister of Health and the Lanark-Leeds-Grenville Health Council.

If this is an example of Premier David Peterson's "open government" then it leaves a lot to be desired.

Meetings of public bodies should be open unless topics under discussion are personnel matters, property acquisition topics or contract negotiations. We don't know if these matters were discussed since the press was not invited to the meeting.

In fact, the provincial representative for Lanark, Doug Wiseman, was not allowed to attend this secret meeting and members of the local media were not informed that the Minister of Health would be in Smiths Falls on Friday.

What does the Minister of Health have to say to the local health council that is so important it must be said behind closed doors?

The cloak of secrecy only creates speculation in the mind of the public. It was believed the Peterson government would attempt to cut out secret meetings involving public bodies. Obviously this is not the case.

This newspaper has been particularly kind to Premier Peterson over the past few years, believing he was a breath of fresh air on the provincial scene.

When he was in opposition, Premier Peterson came to this riding and spoke openly and candidly to the people here. Now his Health Minister slinks into the riding with nary a word to the local media and holds a secret meeting with the health council.

The ejection of Doug Wiseman from the meeting was a mistake. Mr. Wiseman is known to keep a secret and if there is something of major importance to be said by the Minister of Health to the health council, surely our elected representative should be kept in the picture.

Obviously Mr. Wiseman is going to make political hay out of the incident. After all, he's an opposition member now and he's learning quickly how to play the opposition game.

The entire incident was co-ordinated poorly. The Liberals at Queen's Park need some lessons in tact and diplomacy, not to mention a few qualified information service officers and some ministerial aides who know better than to dump on Doug Wiseman on his home turf.

Perth Fair

The historic Perth Fair is only two weeks away and the general populace in this region is waiting with eager anticipation for the annual event.

There is no doubt the Perth Fair is one of the best of its kind in Eastern Ontario and the emphasis of the local fair is definitely agriculturally related.

And that's how it should be. Small town fall fairs across Ontario are a celebration of agriculture in the province and a meaningful venue for the agricultural community to strut its stuff.

At first glance fall fairs sparkle with the dazzle of the midway. The sound, at first listen, is the hubbub of the barkers and music pulsating from the rides.

But beyond all the midway madness there is the firm foundation of the fall fair — the agricultural competitions, the cattle and horse shows, the 4-H Club involvement, baking contests, agricultural equipment displays.

Historically, fall fairs gave farmers an opportunity to meet and discuss crops, to display the latest hybrid seed and show off an animal that is the cream of its breed.

The basic essence of the fall fair is still the same after a hundred years. While the midway lights up the sky, it is only icing on the cake.

The heart and soul of the Perth Fair is agriculture. It's a tradition built on excellence and we wouldn't have it any other way. See you at the fair!

18 years and running

Glen Tay Block race originated in 1907

By Jill Armstrong
For the past 18 years the Glen Tay Block Race has been an annual event in Perth, but prior to the revitalization of the competition in 1967, the race suffered a few false starts.

The first bona fide 10 Mile Glen Tay Road Race, the actual title of the competition, was organized in 1907 and became a yearly event until WWI caused its cancellation. In 1925, the race was re-introduced to the Perth public as a key event during the anniversary of the town, but lagging interest prompted the demise of the race a few years later.

In 1967, three local men, Tom Graham, Peter Code and Bill Wilson, decided once again to re-introduce the race in conjunction with Old Home Week and Centennial celebrations.

The organizers chose to run the race on a course that most closely followed the layout of the 1907 competition and the present day race was born.

In 1907, runners left the starting gate in front of Nichol's Hardware store, raced to Dufferin Street and continued onto the Christie Lake Road. Dufferin Street used to connect directly with the Christie Lake Road.

Since 1967, the race has been four-tenths of a mile shorter than the 1907 race because of the construction of Highway No. 7. Runners now loop down Sunset Boulevard onto Christie Lake Road.

The rest of the course has remained unchanged over the past 78 years. Athletes still run from the Christie-Lake Road, along the Glen Tay Side Road to the Scotch Line and back into town via Gore Street.

The original starting line, used in 1907, has been preserved by organizers, although by coincidence rather than by design.

In 1967, organizers lined up race participants at a crack in the road surface in front of Stedman's, previously the site of the Nichol's Hardware.

Today racers are lined up with a light standard that corresponds with the crack in the road.

Over the years, the race has been held in conjunction with several events in the town and according to Mr. Graham, the race was first billed as a Thanksgiving Day Race. The event was also held as part of the Perth Summer Festival.

Now it has become tradition for the race to be held on the first Thursday in August.

Peter Code, a local historian and the son of the winner of the 1907 contest, said the race is held during the week, instead of on the weekend, for two reasons.

"In the first place, if the race was held on Saturday we'd get entries into the thousands and that would require a fantastic amount of manpower. Secondly, if that many runners were involved, it would lose the aspect of being a friendly, neighbourhood race," he said.

According to Mr. Code the race has drawn both top flight regional runners as well as local athletes to compete and he sees the race as being an excellent competitive race with the flavour of a neighbourhood run.

"Keeping it small helps the race keep that hometown flavour," he commented.

The competitiveness of the block race has, over the years, attracted a number of notable runners from across the province.

Mr. Code recalled the constant participation of Canadian Commonwealth runner, Ron Wallingford, in at least seven of the races held during the 1970's, while Mr. Graham pointed out that Perth native, Doug Scorrar, one of the top distance runners in North America, also participates in the event on a regular basis. Mr. Scorrar set the present record for the race in 1976.

Whether or not the race draws runners from across Ontario or from around the corner, the number of entries in the race has increased markedly since 1967.

In the 1960's the race had about 50 entries while in more recent years, close to 125 people lined up at the starting line.

One of the reasons for the increase in the number of entries can be attributed to the sanctioning of the race by the Ontario Track and Field Association in 1967.

"The sanction serves a two fold purpose; it allows track clubs to be aware of the race and it adds a bit of prestige," said Mr. Code.

Another reason for the increase in competitors is the involvement of female athletes in the race.

Women first became involved in the race in the late 1960's and have recorded some outstanding times since their inclusion in the competition. Mr. Code said women finishers are normally within the top 20, if not the top 10 at the end of the race.

The competitiveness of the



Ottawa resident Doug Scorrar has stormed across the finish line many times since the Glen Tay Block Race was revitalized in 1967. Mr. Scorrar, a Perth

native, is the holder of the record time of the race. His time of 45:30, set in 1976, has yet to be defeated by any runner involved in the race.

race is the biggest draw of the speed contest and although the laymen may not see the layout of the course as being difficult, Mr. Code pointed out that certain segments of the race, "separate the men from the boys."

"The Scotch Line is the real killer. Nine out of 10 days you get a three to five mile an hour wind on that stretch. Often it's at the runners' backs. This creates dead air in front of the runner and it makes it hard for them to breathe," he explained.

Since its introduction the race has never been deferred or delayed because of the weather.

"Runners don't care about the weather. They're up for the race," he said.

Even though runners have had to deal with extreme heat

and dead air there has never been a hospitalization because of the race.

The race was first sponsored by the organizers and prizes were donated by the same men. After the competition had been run a few years, the Perth Legion stepped in and began sponsoring the race along with the Perth Runners.

Both Mr. Graham and Mr. Code agreed that most of the runners enter the competition for the sake of performance and to participate in a friendly race.

Mr. Code finds the only serious problems for the runners are caused by motorists and pedestrians.

"Motorists don't seem to realize that runners can't veer. They're often running so fast that they don't have the mobility to turn quickly.

They're on a line when they're running and can't break or check their stride. I think motorists and pedestrians should show more care and consideration," he emphasized.

Even though motorists, weather and unco-operative winds can take their toll on athletes, the race is often completed in under 50 minutes and more often in recent years, closer to the 40 minute mark. Mr. Scorrar's record in 1976 was 45:30. It has yet to be bettered.

The race may have been slow to get away from the starting line over the years, but as the 20th anniversary of the race looms on the horizon, organizers have proved that perseverance works as well on the sidelines as it does on the race course.

Roughing it in the bush

Little old Susannah Moodie, the gentle, iron-hearted, misplaced English-woman, whose diaries have become the touchstone of Canadian Literature, the archetype of survival in the Canadian wilderness. She wrote the title of this piece.

She was about as Canadian as my great-great-grandfather, who was digging peat and potatoes about the time she composed her literary masterpieces. And about as Canadian as Frederick Philip Grove, a Finn, Swede, German — take your pick — who wrote interminable stories about snow, after he moved — or escaped — to Canada.

Everyone, except me, begins his/her CanLit course with those two. They're dull, after a taste or two.

But poor little old Susie's scenario would have crumpled into wept-over ashes if she'd gone along with me on a recent "roughing it" weekend.

True, there was bush. True, there were some weird characters about. True, the flies and skeeters were hostile. But roughing it? She'd have torn up her manuscripts and got on with making bread or maple syrup or digging a new backhouse, or whatever turned her crank.

The roughest part of the trip was fighting the holiday traffic. The second roughest part was listening to non-stop stories about deer that were shot at 600 yards, bear that were 12 feet tall, and giant fish that required three men and a block and tackle to get them aboard.

Yes, I went on a fishing weekend, as I threatened in an earlier column. Boys oh boys, it was rough.

Drove 60 miles. Flew 20 minutes. Camp had a fridge with ice cubes, hot and cot running water, a propane cook stove, and — you won't believe this — a carpet sweeper. The only concession to the primitive was an outdoors john, and even this had a touch of the exotic: a wild rose growing between the two seats.

Night before I left, one of "the boys" phoned and told me to bring some heavy line, because the muskies were moving in and gobbling up those five-pound bass. I might as well have taken a piece of cotton thread from a sewing machine.

Now, I'm not knocking it. I had a fine weekend. But it's a bit much when you have to keep moving your feet because someone wants to clean the carpet under them. And it's entirely too much

when you see guys washing their armpits, at a hunting camp, in hot water.

Last time I was at a hunt camp, the only thing we ever washed were our hands, and sometimes our feet, when we fell in the lake.

I was expecting to rough it, and contemplated that the food would be camp food, mostly canned stew and stuff. Expected to eat some fish.

Know what we had for dinner, first night? Young, tender leg of lamb, and not that frozen stuff. With mint sauce naturally. Fresh young carrots and potatoes. Dessert. Wine with dinner. Second night was pretty ordinary. Just two pork chops each, with apple sauce, and again, fresh vegetables. And wine.

And it wasn't just thrown on the table. The cooks served you at your place. All you had to do was push your wine glass or coffee cup past a big, hairy arm, and it was filled immediately. Roughing it!

Lunches were pretty rudimentary, though, and by the second day I was getting sore that I had to make my own. There was nothing but sardines, tuna, cold lamb, ham, and eight pounds of salad, plus Campbell's soup du jour and fruit salad, with a bit of old cheese to top off. Breakfasts were sparse,

Bill Smiley

however. A mere four cups of coffee, three eggs, half a pound of bacon, and a big portion of fried spuds, plus toast and the best homemade marmalade in North America. Nobody was able to fish until mid-day, by which time the bass had also eaten and were sulking in the depths.

Certainly didn't get sick of eating fish. Seven of us caught two smallish bass, just before the plane arrived to fly us out.

I know it sounds like a weekend at a big, rich resort. But it wasn't. The moment I arrived, I began to feel uneasy. And my feelings grew. These other guys weren't there to fish. They were there to work getting the camp ready for the fall hunting season. To the great dismay of myself and another guest, the regulars pulled out paint brushes, lawn mowers and other such horrors of civilization, and went to work.

They painted and piled wood and slashed underbrush, and generally did so much manual labor they'd have all been on strike if asked to do so at home. The other old fighter pilot and I retreated into the kitchen and did the dishes. My hands are still all shrivelled up from doing dishes.

Aside from that, I came home in pretty good shape. I thought I'd gained at least eight pounds, but the deer flies and skeeters took care of that. I lost two. My arthritic foot is destroyed for the summer. I've lost the hearing in my right ear from trying to clout a mosquito with my left hand, while holding a five-gallon can of gas in it, and my fishing tackle in my right hand.

But that was nothing, compared to the evening poker games, in which everything is wild except the joker.

With your support cancer can be beaten.



Perth People

For the past six years Stephen Hillier, 29, of Perth, has been actively involved as a volunteer for the Arthritis Society. Last year, Mr. Hillier was the president and chief fund raiser for the society in Perth. He has also been a member of the Knights of Columbus for a number of years and is active in their other fund-raisers and community involvement projects.

