

**SIMCOE-YORK
PRINTING &
PUBLISHING
LIMITED**

**Publisher of the
King Township
Sentinel**

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Subscription rates:

Within 65 km except towns with
letter carriers – \$37.50 + G.S.T.
Beyond 65 km and towns with
letter carriers – \$54.00 + G.S.T.
Single copies 94¢ + G.S.T.
or \$1.00 (includes G.S.T.)
Published every Wednesday
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Sentinel 2007

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*Bill's
Bulletin
Board*

By Bill Rea

I seldom read the comics in the newspaper.

It's relatively easy for me to put such a comment on the record, secure in the knowledge that the Sentinel doesn't run comic strips. We don't even have editorial cartoons. Things would be a lot different if I could draw worth a damn. Alas, I cannot.

I stopped perusing the comics shortly after my favourite was discontinued. It was arguably one of the most brilliant and entertaining creations of the late 20th century; Calvin and Hobbes.

One of the very earliest offerings of the genius of the comic strip's creator Bill Watterson depicted Calvin in bed with a thermometer stuck in his kisser. Obviously, he is home sick from school, and in the time-honoured tradition of kids who are home sick (before they invented working moms), this little boy has his eyes glued to the TV. No, he is not getting Bugs Bunny. He's getting a soap opera, and the input he's receiving from that is nothing short of impressive.

There are references to skimpy negligees, extra-marital relationships, bumping off of spouses and other little occurrences that are

the life blood of supermarket tabloids and other examples of ink-covered toilet paper.

In the end, Calvin sums up the whole situation quite neatly; "Sometimes, I think I learn more when I stay home from school," he says.

We all know that soap operas exist, and they are shown on network TV in the afternoons, meaning anyone with access to a TV during these hours has access to them.

Such has been the case ever since I was a little kid before I even started school. I remember my mother timing her daily ironing to coincide with *As the World Turns*. This was a program that was transmitted north from the United States, during a period of history when some guy named Kennedy seemed to have some clout. It was also before my mother discovered *Let's Make a Deal*.

These soap operas are still bubbly to this day. I know that because my wife peruses *General Hospital* regularly.

I don't mean that to be critical, mainly because I don't need to have a wife who's mad at me. Besides, there was a time in my youth that I used to watch

GH (as it's known around my house) fairly regularly. When I was in university in the late '70s, people on my floor used to have something of an addiction to *The Guiding Light*, and I sometimes watched it with them. This was around the time when it was just becoming acceptable for women to have their husbands charged with raping them, and that was one of the last key plot lines I watched before things like work started occupying my time in the afternoons.

Incidentally, I subsequently found out the husband in the story line was acquitted, the wife killed him and went to prison and they eventually revealed the killing had been faked and they brought the character back to life. And here I thought that only happened on *Star Trek*.

So no, I have no particular problem with Beth watching GH. In fact, I think she'll agree I'm more easy going about her watching GH than she is when it comes to me watching the *Simpsons*.

She doesn't watch her soap in the afternoon. Her mother does and tapes them, and Beth brings them home to watch, usually when there's nothing else that she wants to see and I'm not putting in dibs for anything. I think she gets through some tapes Monday nights while I'm sitting in council meeting.

Also, for reasons I don't completely understand, Beth is constantly about six months behind in her watching, so the shows she's viewing these days actually aired in the winter.

The situation one evening last week had Beth contently watching her soap while I sat at the dining room table with financial material, trying to determine exactly how broke I really am. Beth was watching and I was sort of half listening to the insipid dialogue, involving beautiful women and macho guys who have lives that are so rotten. It sometimes makes me realize what a thoroughly uninteresting person I am. I have only been marled once, never divorced, never been named in a paternity suit, I have no criminal record, I've never been in rehab or detox, and I have no connections with organized crime. In the world of *General Hospital*, guys like me don't exist.

Also, considering the name of the series, there seems to be very little action involving medical science.

But the characters are too busy worrying about how to end the latest of their multiple marriages to have time to devote to such things as work.

Then it occurred to me that this type of material is available to pre-school children who might have access to TV during the day, not to mention the older kids who are home for the summer. And what about the kids who are home from school who are home from school sick, and learn some of the things Calvin would have learned. Beth and I have a four-year-old nephew, and I pointed out to her that he's just a couple of years away from watching some of this stuff when he's not in school. I wonder what kind of impression it leaves with

today's youth.

I can understand why this garbage is so addictive, however. It offers continuing story lines, attractive looking people, and plots that closely resemble smut.

It's almost like professional wrestling, except with that, you get the commentary so you can actually figure out what's going on, assuming it's not obvious.

I used to watch wrestling every Saturday. There was even a time when I looked forward to having Saturday Night Live pre-empted by Saturday Night Main Event. It provided some of the best side-splitting comedy I think I've ever seen.

But eventually even amusement can lose its value. I started finding other ways to spend my time when I realized the story lines were beginning to insult even my intelligence.

I turn the wrestling on occasionally, curious if my interest could ever be rekindled, but it only takes a couple of stomps on the head being depicted to make me realize I couldn't care less. The only advantage of watching the wrestling is I think it make Beth appreciate the *Simpsons* a little more. I don't think there's anything Beth could offer that would make me appreciate GH.

I would appreciate seeing Watterson bring back Calvin and Hobbes, though.

Here's a foot note: Beth was watching her GH tape Sunday night, and onw of the story lines involved a large hostage taking that actually drew my interest.

Is my wife on the verge of converting me?

Editorial

**There's no such thing
as the perfect speed limit**

There were a number of conflicting points made around the Township council table last Monday night concerning what the appropriate speed limits are for the 11th Concession.

But most of the comments, regardless of which side of the issue they were coming from, made a lot of sense. That points to the real problem of an issue like this, namely how does one arrive at a speed limit that's appropriate?

One of the problems, of course is the road is an attractive one to drive since it received its paved surface a couple of years ago. That means it's not a bad alterna-

tive to Highway 27 or even Highway 400. That is naturally going to increase traffic volumes, and speeds are likely to follow the trend.

Despit that, we would be surprised to hear any calls to get rid of the hard surface.

Mayor Margaret Black advocated referring the issue to the Operations department, which is working on a comprehensive report on speeds on roads throughout King. Operations staff was suggesting a speed limit along the 11th between King Road and Highway 9 of 70 km-h (with the exception of a small curvy portion just south of the 15th Sideroad). Black expressed

reservations about setting the limit at 60 (which is what eventually happened). "It's not going to be enforceable," she declared.

Councillor Linda Pabst was of a different (and equally reasonable) view, as she stuck up for the requests of constituents and urged the limit be set at 60. She even offered to consume an unusual repast if her position was proven wrong. "These people have waited a long time for this," she said.

Councillor Jeff Laidlaw didn't lean to any one side, evidently prepared to go along with what the prevailing mood was. But he did indicate that he didn't want

to see a limit set and then changed again in the near future. "I hate playing this flip-flop game with the speed limits," he remarked.

The problem with this discussion is that while there was a lot of right thinking coming from people their hearts clearly in the right place, it's next to impossible to come up with the right limit, especially one that will take in the bulk of a roughly 13-kilometres stretch, complete with flat portions and hilly terrain. And while Laidlaw's position was understandable, we believe his fears are going to be realized.

A limit of 60 km-h on the

11th is going to satisfy a number of people, including some local residents who requested it. But we anticipate there are eventually going to be people who grumble that it's too low, and there will be more violations, followed by demands for more enforcement from a police service that only has so much time to devote to one rural road in the eastern portion of York Region. Eventually, there will be some motorists who want it increased.

The reality is that without enforcement, people are likely to set their own speed limits. We have to hope they are appropriate.