Editorial Page of The Birmingham Eccentric

A free, responsible and aggressive Press is democracy's first line of defense

Knocking on Wood

with JOHN H. HARWOOD

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE PORPOISES?

This column arises from the curiosity of the writer over the business of William F. Nye, or his successors, who make clock oil in a quaint New England town, New Bedford, once the center of the whaling industry. We wonder what Mr. Nye is doing for porpoises from which he manufactures his celebrated watch and clock oil now that submarines and depth bombs have been making life miserable for porpoises and humans alike.

That's about as close as this column is likely to get to war—that mention of submarines. Today the writer feels more inclined to discuss porpoises, clock oil and old clocks. It is a subject of which we are exceedingly fond.

* * *

There's a Limit

"You know it!" will be the good wife's rejoiner to the above statement when she reads it, for she is at her wit's end to know where to place any more ancient timepieces in the modest apartment which the Harwoods call home. Two or three clocks per room should be the limit, she says, and no doubt she is right insofar as her perpetual anti-dust campaign is concerned. Old clocks do collect dust. But on the other hand, what a feeling of security and peace the writer can derive from sinking into a chair and listening to not one clock but several beating off their slow tick-tocks, proving that no matter what happens, life—and a little piece of machinery—if kept atuned to the just laws of God and man, will function serenely for a long, long time.

* * *

The writer's interest in old clocks came a few years ago when Great Uncle Robert Smith passed on, leaving his venerable timepiece to yours truly. Uncle Rob was likely to do something of the sort, for beneficence was much a part of him. We remember how he always carried peanuts or peppermint "humbugs" candies in his pockets, ready for the children. He kept old Flora, a skittish mare, for 20 years; she was almost never driven, although my grandfather took her out with the buggy every spring when making his rounds of the township as assessor. Another uncle supplied hay and grain, and Uncle Rob made old Flora comfortable in her stable for sentiment's sake until she finally breathed her last. Uncle Rob had a specially-made Morris chair which he kept by the window, while overhead stood his big clock, ticking away the minutes, hours and g o i n g d a y s. Using iron weights instead of springs, the timepiece today must be at least 100 years old.

Anyway, the writer now has the clock and it's in better shape than at any time in the last 50 years, for we took some varnish remover and applied it heavily, and to our amazement, the chemical revealed a beautiful veneer of cherry wood. Sandpapering and a half a dozen coats of shellac, topped with a polish of wax, made it really a beauty.

* * *

Must Be Usable

That started us off on clock collecting—or should we say, clock rehabilitation? The mere collection of antiquities has little lure for the writer, unless something is made usable, we don't want it. That's the fascination in clock collecting, for each one presents a challenge to one's mechanical ingenuity. Parts are missing, wheels are bent, bearings are worn out, and grime usually exists everywhere, but usually, a clock is not so badly run down that it can't be started again. In fact, it's darn hard to wear a clock out.

Since developing a taste for horology, we have noticed that nearly every household has at least one clock that doesn't run, and nine times out of ten, all that is wrong is the fact that the works are full of dirt and lacking in oil, and very often, in pendulum clocks, the works are off-perpendicular so that the pendulum can not swing evenly. Given proper care, a good clock will last several hundred years, and even a cheap clock should last 50 or more. Electric clocks are something else; true, they keep marvelous time, but the average one burns out in 10 years or so, a span of time in which a pendulum clock is just getting nicely broken in.

* * *

Aided by Cat

Old clocks sometimes take a long time to get into shape; I worked six months—on and off—on one timepiece without a great deal of success. Finally, the cat, in our absence, knocked the clock over. When restored to its original position, we'll be doggoned if the clock didn't run properly, continuing to do so to this day! Apparently, some obscure but vital part was binding, and the shock set it straight.

* * *

We almost forgot Mr. William F. Nye, the New Bedford oil maker who will use nothing but porpoises for his oil. In Detroit the other day, we stopped in at the Metropolitan Building on John R, near Woodward, and purchased (or 50 cents a tiny bottle of his famous product. (The Metropolitan Building, incidentally, is a curious place, for almost all of its tenants are jewelers and watch people.)

Inside the package there is a sheet of paper telling why this is the only and best oil, pointing out that ordinary lubricant made from petroleum evaporates, while oil of the neatsfoot type spreads all over the place, and besides hat, these other inferior products gum up at cold temperatures.

* * *

Quaint Testimonial

You'll get a kick out of this quaint testimonial, which we reprint herewith. Unfortunately, they do not mention what submarines have done to their business.

"Ninety years ago it became known that the very finest lubrication of a watch, clock or chronometer, was that which was obtained from the jaw of a sea mammal known as the Porpoise. This oil was obtained in small quantities by the whaleships, which sailed out of New Bedford, and for half a century this source of supply was adequate to the needs of the trade. In more recent years, however, there has not only been an enormous increase in the demand for such Oil, but the whaling industry has rapidly declined, so that at present oil has reached the market which was not thoroughly reliable.

Use Own Fishermen

"Realizing that unless something was done, the only Oil in the world which was absolutely reliable for oiling a watch or clock, would disappear from the market—this firm started, at a heavy expense, to do something which never before in the history of the world had been tried: i. e., establish a system of independent fishing stations for the sole purpose of catching porpoise and refining the oil from the fish to finish. For thirty-two years this purpose has been carried out, until there are seventy men on the Atlantic Coast, whose sole business it is to capture porpoise, the oil from which is removed and shipped to this factory, and passed through a long period of most careful, delicate refinement, and enables us today, to put on the market, an article of quality and reliability never before attained.

Won't Oxidize

"During the period of scarcity of jaw oil, a number of other oils appeared on the market, but in every case they were either of mineral or of the neatsfoot type. These oils are possibly lubricators, but as every watchmaker knows, who tried them long enough—the former will evaporate rapidly, leaving the pivots dry, while the latter will creep all over the inside of a movement, and has the faculty of oxidizing very readily. All of these are faults the porpoise jaw oil is absolutely free from. It will not evaporate—it will not oxidize—it will stand the lowest and highest degrees of temperature of any known oil, and is perfectly neutral in its action upon steel, brass or other metal. Every watchmaker will learn (who does not already know) that pure porpoise jaw oil, properly refined, is the best oil in the world for horological purposes, provided he is sure of its reliability. We invite the severest tests."

Sorry Misadventure

Heck—Have you ever had a motor mishap?

Peck—Yes. I met my wife in a garage.

PECK'S
Cash and Carry
Suits, Topcoats, Plain Dresses $1.09
CLEANED and PRESSED
For Delivery Service Phone 230
WOODWARD—NEAR MAPLE

SALVAGE MEMO

TIN CANS—Rinse after using, remove label, open bottom end and flatten with foot. Place at curb for last City collection day of the month. Keep dry; keep separate from rubbish.

WASTE FATS—Strain and keen cool. Turn in to your meat market when you have a few pounds. Rancid fats not wanted.

SCRAP METALS, GLASS, RUBBER—Leave in bin near Post Office or put at curb on your last City collection day of the month. Copper engraver's plates and old keys may be left at the library.

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES—You can donate these to Salvation Army, which will call for them. Phone 4014. Scrap paper not wanted.

"A FRIENDLY BANK"
WABEEK STATE BANK OF DETROIT
Bank By Mail!
Save tires, save gasoline, save time. Make your checking account deposits by mail. Special deposit envelopes and instructions on their use are available at the Wabeek State Bank office that carries your account.
WABEEK STATE BANK OF DETROIT
BIRMINGHAM OFFICE—WABEEK BUILDING

Teaching History

The State of Illinois, by legislation, requires all public schools and other educational institutions, supported by public funds, to teach United States history and the principles of representative government.

It also requires that pupils receive an understanding of the Australian ballot system and the counting of votes.

While it is perfectly obvious that the teaching of history varies in many respects, dependent upon the attitude of the teacher, there is much to be said in favor of the legislation, recently approved by Governor Green. Certainly, Americans should know the history of their country and understand the voting system that enables them to elect leaders.

The purpose of instructing pupils in the history of this country is to enable them to be effective and intelligent citizens. This means that they should be taught both sides of controversial issues, whether they affect economics, politics, or society.

We believe that the pupils of our schools should have a knowledge of our country's "glorious" history, but we believe, just as strongly, that they should have a thorough understanding of the episodes which are not quite so glorious.

Like every other nation, we have some mistakes on our record and it is important that they be studied and understood.

Little Sabotage

"Not a single successful act of foreign-directed sabotage has occurred to hinder our war efforts," declares J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the F. B. I.

Mr. Hoover ought to know what he is talking about. His statement, it seems, should convince every American that silly rumors and reports, involving alleged sabotage by enemy agents, are not worth listening to.

However, it will be hard to convince some super-patriots. Regardless of what Mr. Hoover says they know better. Besides, they heard somebody say that somebody overheard somebody else say that so and so, etc., etc.

Federal, State or local agencies, cooperating in commendable fashion, have curbed the activities of foreign espionage agents. There has been no hysteria comparable to that which prevailed during the first World War and it is just as well.

A CLASSIC STATEMENT MADE BY THE LATE Norman Lyle, Jr., Air Forces 1st Lieutenant who lost his life in the Aleutians a few weeks ago, ought to be recorded as a typical Americanism. When asked why he didn't want to complete the last semester of his four years at Oberlin College before enlisting, this local youth said: "What good will a diploma be if the Germans and Japs win this war?"

BIRMINGHAM HOUSEWIVES TURNED IN 3,688 pounds of fats during June. Allowing for approximately 3,000 housewives in Birmingham, that means that each lady is at least one pound trimmer than . . . well, anyway, the salvage campaign got that much more with which to make dynamite to blast the Axis.

Concerning Ghosts

Every year or so the newspapers are entranced over some story about ghost-ridden houses and readers are thrilled with narratives, describing tables turning over, beds flipping, locks mysteriously picked and missiles coming through the air from nowhere.

This month such a story originated in Dallas, Texas, where deputy sheriffs were placed on guard in a house to see for themselves whether the furniture "moved." The householder, it is said, had already moved.

The credulity of people is one of the most amazing facts of an intelligent age. As Hitler has said, if you tell 'em a thing long enough, they will believe it, no matter how big a lie it happens to be.

We have not investigated the Dallas phenomena, but we are prepared to say, without fear of being wrong, that the story of a bed, occupied by a fifteen year old boy, raising itself off the floor and hanging in mid-air, is a fiction, regardless of the reputation of the story-tellers.

It is noticeable that these super-man narratives run their course in a few days and thereafter no more is heard about the mysterious forces and the alleged ghosts. The only thing that surprises us is that reputable newspapers and press associations waste their space on such junk, even if it does start people talking and sell newspapers.

LOCAL AND NEARBY FOLKS WHO RECENTLY received their U. S. citizenship papers from Circuit Judge Frank L. Doty, in Pontiac, must be mighty proud. It's worth something, these days, to belong to the grandest nation on earth!

YOU HAVE OBSERVED THE INCREASED "BLACK Market" activities of untold thousands of Americans these war days; this activity is caused by the inherent selfishness and acquisitiveness of human beings. It was the same way during prohibition; people would make, sell, and buy illegal liquor. You really can't, by legislation alone, make people obey the law.

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NOTE: The Eccentric is pleased to publish brief contributed material providing it has news value and suggestions are welcomed. Contributions are usually edited superficially so that they conform to general newspaper style. Any erroneous reflection upon the character, standing or reputation of any person, firm or corporation which may appear in the columns of The Eccentric will be gladly corrected upon being brought to the attention of the publisher.

Happenings of Long Ago

Fifty Years Ago
Aug. 17, 1893

"Albert W. Campbell and family have been enjoying the World's Fair. Bert says it is immense."

"If the party who walked into Manley Leach's shop and took away with him his rip saw will return it promptly they never will be sorry, if not Manley proposes to see what the law will do for him."

"Wes. Faint has neatly lettered the hose cart house with the words "Fire Department" and a very tasty job he has completed."

"One of the oldest residents in our vicinity, Mrs. Sheur, was buried last week Monday. She was 99 years, 6 mos, and 10 days old."

"Attention Students! The fall term of Birmingham High School opens Sept. 4, 1893."

Twenty Years Ago
Aug. 17, 1923

"Did you ever try to picture just what Birmingham would look like at night with boulevard lights in our business section? It takes a long stretch of the imagination to picture such a condition than it does for our Village Commission to make of it a reality."

"Motor cuddling is responsible for three-fourths of the auto accidents,' according to a deputy sherriff. 'Puppy Lovers' should do their 'cheek-to-cheek' driving off the main travelled roads, according to this deputy."

"Percival G. Burnett, of Southfield avenue, returned Sunday night from Loon Lake where he spent the past week at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Austin Parks of Birmingham."

"Carnival time is coming to Birmingham, for on Oct. 8 to 13, inclusive, the members of the local lodge of Odd Fellows will hold a complete carnival on the grounds directly in back of the Odd Fellows Temple."

Five Years Ago
Aug. 18, 1938

"Miss Lucille Mowat, a teacher in the public schools of Flint, Mich., for the past six years, has accepted a teaching position in the secondary schools of Birmingham. She will teach English and Latin at Baldwin High School."

"National recognition has been bestowed on a poem written by Mary June Hastreiter, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dominic S. Hastreiter of 175 Abbey road, according to word received by The Eccentric."

"James Allen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Allen of West Maple avenue, has as his house guest for the week, Paul Park of Carp, Mich. James has just returned from a visit to Paul's home. Both are students at the University of Michigan and members of Beta Theta Pi fraternity."

A-Hunting He Would Go

People's Column

Forecasts Shape Of Things to Come

Editor, The Eccentric:

As the world follows its tumultuous course, and coming events cast their shadows before, the thoughts of today are lost amongst the yesterdays and found again the happenings of tomorrow, and again we pick up the thread, weaving in our minds the pattern of the evolution of Man, which is fast approaching a climax.

Confusion, turmoil, racial hatred, discontent in high places, and the ghastliness and horror of the war itself, are playing their parts in the ultimate forming of a new order, communal living and the Brotherhood of Man, through the Fatherhood of our Infinite Creator. The world caught in a maelstorm of torment, reflects the falseness and insecurity of the worshipping of false gods and the rejection of the divine laws of an Infinite Intelligence. The leaders of the world see the future married indelibly in the rocks beneath the shifting sands of time, and vaingloriously attempt to stay the perpetual motion of life, envolving in a panorama of progress, and in their blind vanity, offer "terms" of peace and security, but still holding on to their individualistic monopoly of the gifts of a Divine Creator to all of the people all over the earth. The standing armies must still stand, that they may hold their place in the light of the sun and hope the vain hope that the All Light of truth shall not eclipse their sun of material power.

The end of this war will see the beginning of the end of all existing standards of life. The present standards have done their part and are encrolled upon the milestones upon the road leading to the ultimate in life on earth. No government in its present (or past) form can stand, no religion can exist which allows its members to blast one another into eternity. No country can benefit at the expense of lesser, and less fortunate countries. The standing armies must go, to be replaced by non-political and untainted, international police. The problems of the world to be disseminated by a High Tribunal composed of men and women of strong spiritual wisdom, combined with material knowledge brought from every corner of the globe.

Education, the healing arts, social equality, the job suited to the individual, equality in all things, for all the people, all over the earth, must of necessity take their rightful place in the scheme of things, after all adverse forces have been completely destroyed.

The beginning of the end is here as man evolves to higher estate, in a new life, here on earth.

HAROLD PHILLIPS
998 Hazel

YES, ANOTHER ONE!

Editor, The Eccentric:

"This and That" blossoms out with the theory that labor publications only write one side of the story. Now ain't that a pity?

Now, boys and girls, wouldn't it be just ducky if the labor publications would get unorthodox in the field of journalism and start a campaign to publish both sides of the story. Up to the present writing this has never been tried by any publication and now "This and That" thinks labor should take the lead in the field of journalism.

I don't see why it should be the duty of labor to start everything; now we all know that labor is comparatively new in the editorial field and naturally they follow the good example set up by our more successful papers, which is catering to their readers and writing what they want to read.

Labor can pick up any daily or weekly paper and read how bad labor is and it's kind of a relief and a pat on his back to pick up the semi-monthly labor news and read the other side of the story. Of course when we read our paper we know that the opinions of the editor are biased, but show me an editor whose opinion isn't biased and I'll show you an unsuccessful editor. That's why we read editorials; if we are real students of human nature we read every biased opinion we can lay our hands on and from them we draw our own conclusions. Unfortunately too many of the reading public read only one editor or one paper and get only one biased outlook; this is why labor is having a hard time getting their biased ideas across to a biased public, made biased by many years of big business editorials but give us time and experience and we'll improve.

UNCLE JOE.

What Your City Commission Is Doing . . .

August 16, 1943

Bills approved totaling $1,935.66.

Section of zoning ordinance amended to clarify future amendments as to classification of property.

City personal taxes unpaid for years 1931 to 1941 inclusive, totalling $295.12, writtten off as taxes receivable and charged to losses, and treasurers responsible for low percentage of uncollected accounts complimented.

IRENE E. HANLEY,
City Clerk.

The navy is having a hard time finding a waterproof paint to cover linoleum on decks. For years the paint and linoleum has been a fire hazard. Recently linoleum was taken up and the paint scraped off leaving the steel surface bare and fireproof. Most pleased by the whole affair were the sailors themselves, who once spent much of their spare time chipping off the old paint and applying the new paint.

THE ECCENTRIC'S Camera Corner

If you want some good picture subjects, take the time to visit a farm. It's well worth it when you can get results like this.

PICTURE making on the farm is something that many town and city folk are likely to overlook. For it seems to me that a trip into the country, and a visit to a farm, is a fine thing for anyone with a camera—and a splendid way to spend a very pleasant day at this time of year.

Slip a few rolls of fresh film into your pocket—some "chrome" film for outdoor snapshooting, and some fast "pan" for picture taking indoors or when the light isn't very strong—and you'll be all set. Take along a medium yellow filter for your camera, and a lens shade too.

Picture making on the farm is one of those things that might begin with daylight if you're up that early—though I'll bet you're not. In any event, the earlier you get started the better, because then you can make a series of pictures as the farmer milks the cows, feeds the chickens, tends to the horses, and turns the stock out to pasture.

Working step by step—or picture by picture—in that fashion is an excellent way to approach any photographic subject, particularly one as big as a farm, because it keeps you from missing snapshot opportunities. And if you're looking for just a few good pictures, perhaps to enter in a photographic contest or salon, it gives you many negatives from which to choose.

But getting back to the picture possibilities on a farm, don't fail to get some pictures of the men working in the fields—as in our illustration, for instance. Look for interesting angles as they plow or harrow the land. If you stand back some distance you'll find that a plowman makes a perfect center of interest for a landscape.

Keep your eyes open and you'll find action, still-life, animal, story-telling and human interest pictures in abundance everywhere that men work in the country.

John van Guilder