

# Fun, but is it poetry?

They say that there is a kind of poetry that everyone can write. It is called a limerick.

Its master, though not its inventor, was Edward Lear (1812-1888) who was a painter and illustrator as well. He once, by royal command, gave Queen Victoria drawing lessons. but in doing so ignored Court etiquette too often. She and her attendants were not amused.

For that or other reasons Lear was not mentioned in Lytton Strachey's book *Eminent Victorians*. He has, however, outlived some of them in popular memory. His life was as extraordinary as his poetry. The 21st child of his parents, he suffered from epilepsy, bronchitis, asthma and, in his later years, cardiac problems and partial loss of sight. When his parents fell upon what Charles Dickens called "Hard Times" he was raised by a sister 25 years his senior.

Lear never married. His one-time London home is now a small hotel in Seymour Street, Marble Arch, London. He lived abroad for many years and when he died at his "Villa Tennyson" on the Ligurian coast of Italy only a few neighbours attended the funeral.

He had the poet's mastery of words, sound and metre. Many a child still hears his lilting lines from *The Owl and the Pussycat*:  
*They dined on mince and slices of quince*

*Which they ate with a runcible spoon*  
*And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,*  
*They danced by the light of the moon.*

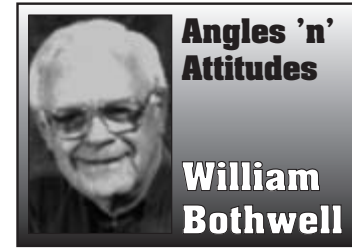
'Runcible' was one of his invented words, created just because he liked the sound of it and it had the necessary three syllables. It eventually took on a life of its own and came to describe a spoon with the kind of serrated edge that makes it suitable for eating grapefruit. It also became the adjective for a mischievous but not malicious person. "You runcible rascal" has a judgmental but affectionate ring to it.

Lear's most memorable work consists of his limericks. The origin of the form has been traced to the (usually) bawdy ditties sung in the pubs of County Limerick. The genre is celebrated in the lines,  
*The limerick makes jokes anatomical*  
*In space that is quite economical*  
*But the best ones I've seen*

*Very seldom are clean –*  
*And clean ones are so seldom comical.*

On the basis of their brevity and simplicity it has been said that even people not accustomed to consorting with those for whom work is the curse of the drinking class, anyone can become a poet by becoming a limerician. [I think that I, too, have just invented a word]. As the Irish proved, that kind of poetic inspiration may improve with successive pints and quarts of whatever.

The familiar limerick form has



**Angles 'n' Attitudes**

**William Bothwell**

five lines. Lines 1, 2 and 5 have seven to ten syllables and rhyme with one another. Lines 3e and 4 have five to seven syllables and rhyme together. Thus:

*There was a young woman whose eyes*

*Were unique as to colour and size.*

*When she opened them wide*

*People all turned aside*

*And started away in surprise.*

Most limericks begin with "There was" or "There once was". The last line all but repeats the first one.

*There once was a woman of Norway*

*Who usually sat in the doorway.*

*When double doors squeezed her flat*

*She said 'Who wants to be fat?'*

*That bulimic young woman of Norway.*

'Bulimic' was not one of Lear's neologisms. It is a modern touch. In 1846 he published *A Book of Nonsense* that went through three editions and made limericks popular with children and adults and especially with naughty adolescents. He did not always follow the five line format. His *How Pleasant to Know Mr Lear* concludes, surprisingly in view of his depressive moods, with this self-affirmation.

*He reads but he cannot speak Spanish.*

*He cannot abide ginger beer.*

*Ere the days of his pilgrimage vanish.*

*How pleasant to know Mr Lear.*

*During my time in England I came across the following lines*

that require some knowledge of alternative and abbreviated place names. Try this:

*There was a young curate from Hampshire*

*Who went about without any pampshire*

*But another from Salisbury*

*Advised him to Walisbury*

*And so he returned to his pampshire.*

It helps to know that the abbreviation for Hampshire is 'Hants'. 'Pampshire' must then be 'pants'. Sarum is the ancient name for Salisbury. Sarum rhymes with 'wear 'em'. The last line, again, should sound like 'Hants'. Similarly obscure is,

*There was a young fellow named Cholomondeley*

*Whose bride was so curvy and colomondeley*

*That the best man, Colquhoun,*

*An inane young bolquphoon,*

*Could only stand there and stare dolomondeley.*

It helps to know that the English surname Cholomondeley is pronounced 'Chumley' and the Celtic name Colquhoun is usually simplified to Calhoun.

Lear the artist published several books with titles like *Illustrated Excursions in Italy* and

*Journal of a Landscape Painter in Greece*. His ambition was to paint all the scenery mentioned in Tennyson's poetry from the flower in the crannied wall to the brook that came from haunts of coot and fern. And, of course, the willows and aspens seen by the Lady of Shallot

He did not live to complete his wish to illustrate all the scenery that had been word-painted by the great Victorian poet. His most whimsical drawings were made to accompany his nonsense limericks – the ones, for example, about the old man with a flute when a serpent crawled into his boot and about that extraordinary person of Dutton whose head was as small as a button.

Not surprisingly, it was Ogden Nash who eventually finished some of Lear's incomplete 'poetry lite'.

And now a challenge. This newspaper will offer prizes for what are judged to be the best limericks that include the names of places in or people or features of Dufferin County

All that are fit to print in general circulation papers will be published in *The Orangeville Citizen/Shelburne Free Press* and *Economist* in December.

## Unseen Beauty of the Natural World

There is a whole world of natural art out there at our finger tips. These are art forms we'll never find at the AGO where artists get recognition when their work is exhibited. Mother Nature creates her work on a different medium which is accepted without our really seeing what we've been given. (Unless of course 'man' sees a monetary value in it).

One outstanding example is the split cedar railings in this part of the province. This is a common feature of the landscape which I pointed out to my teen-age grandson on the Hockley Road. This was a typical trip which he made regularly without ever 'seeing' it. At one time farmers cut cedar trees, split the trunks which were fastened together to form a fence containing cattle. This common usage of a natural barrier represents an art form throughout our farmland. However replacement of old fences or creating new ones involves a great deal of work. Establishment of a chain-link fence is a common alternative, useful, less-work, but lacking scenic attractiveness.

From an artistic perspective the old pine stump fence is a common feature of rural Ontario, from the days of clearing forests to open up farm lands. In those days large white pine were often found as a component of the landscape. As the property was cleared for farming the pine provided good material as barn materials and the stumps were dragged to the edge of the field where they formed an intricate barrier. Society has awakened to the beauty of these root masses adding character to property landscape. I have enjoyed picking up

odd sections of roots for property decoration. One outstanding example forms an attractive backdrop to a large flower garden in front of the office of Somerville Nurseries in Simcoe county. This natural art-form now also attracts the attention of the commercial world as being of monetary value in landscaping.

A common form of art is a tree leaf. The oak especially has intricate foliage designs completely unseen when it comes to raking up the garden in the fall. Leaves are not only good compost they are something to be admired. Of even greater significance is the maple which we have chosen as a national symbol on our flag despite the fact the species doesn't occur beyond eastern Canada. Fall colours are a well known characteristic of the nation's fabric. However leaves are viewed as a fall nuisance in the front yard. Leaves make excellent compost but are hardly recognized for their artistic value.

Stone is another natural substance which is gaining recognition in landscaping. Rock gardens are prominent property features now whereas the use of rocks at one time was questionable.

Piles of rocks at the side of many fields attest to their nuisance value when a field is cleared for ploughing or tilling. I have admired a stone fireplace built by a friend of mine in Thunder Bay composed in part of waste amethyst rocks from a local quarry before the commercial world recognized their value. In the same vein a collection of washed limestone rocks from Tobermory about 50 years ago served a decorative purpose first

one or the other must be given up and that at once.

Now, what do the people of Shelburne think of the situation here? In which does Mr. R. L. Mortimer display the greater amount of interest – the public school and the responsible duties connected therewith, or the newspaper in connection with which he has to do so much wire-pulling and bulldozing? We hope we have drawn attention to this matter for the last time.

A petition was presented to Melancthon Council at its meeting Monday last from John Allen and 34 others, asking that a grant be made to improve the hill immediately north of the post office in Horning's Mills.

### 100 YEARS AGO

**Thursday, September 30, 1909**  
• The 42nd annual exhibition of the Dufferin Central Agricultural Society, held in Shelburne Tuesday and Wednesday, bumped up against the worst dose of wet weather the Society has been "favoured" with for



**From the Global Classroom**

**Doug Skeates**

in Mother's front garden and now in ours. A piece of brain coral from the Bahamas is a valued art example in our living-room.

I have collected some of nature's artwork in various parts of the world. This especially applies to seed pods. We pay little attention to pine cones in Canada but these are only a starting point. The Casuarina of the tropics produces a small pineapple shaped cone which is useful for craft purposes. Probably the most outstanding example is the 'flower' of the Cedrella tree from Central America. When the large 'cones' dry out and split open they leave a semblance of a highly decorative wooden flower.

There are many, many natural structures which adorn our forest lands here and abroad. It is unfortunate that these are so commonplace as to be largely ignored when we consider what is commonly called art. A world of artistry is at our fingertips but often too close to home to be recognized as beauty.

### Your Weekly Chuckle . . .

By KEITH HUNTER  
"I'd like two pork chops," the customer told the butcher, "and make them lean."  
"Yes ma'am," he replied, standing them on end. "Which way?"

### Dipping Into the Past

## Editor decries dual roles of R. L. Mortimer as principal, rival editor



several years. The only redeeming feature about Wednesday was that it did not rain all the time, the intermissions being plentiful enough and lengthy enough to give people the idea maybe the remainder of the day would be alright after all. It was really surprising the number of people who turned out in spite of the weather, and it is quite evident that if the weather had been favourable all previous records for attendance would have been totally eclipsed.

• The Dufferin Light and Power Co. is now giving all-night service in Orangeville and Shelburne.

• Mayor A. D. McKittrick, of

**Dods & McNair Funeral Home, Chapel & Reception Centre**








Terry Gauthier   Bert Gauthier   Abby Gauthier   Randy Mugford   Lily Douglas   Sherry Varkel

Dods & McNair Funeral Home cares about our community through the services we provide. Orangeville's only locally owned and operated funeral home.

941-1392

www.dodsandmcnair.com

## A 'long overdue' proposal by PM Harper

Some see it as a plot. Then again, some people think everything is a plot. But the fact is, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's proposal to add 33 seats to the current 308 House of Commons seat total is long overdue.

And much fairer to Ontario than the current situation.

Mind you, when Harper first suggested redistribution last year - a proposal which mercifully died on the order paper - he wasn't being fair to Ontario, a reality which is essentially par for the course when it comes to representations on behalf of Canada's largest province.

He had only proposed that Ontario get an extra 10 seats, well below what our population growth demanded, a proposal which - much to his credit - Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty immediately raged against.

Oddly at the time, Peter Van Loan, an Ontarian, and the federal minister for democratic reform, dismissed McGuinty's as "the small man of Confederation," an insult which should have been applied to himself and the Harper troops and not to McGuinty who, in this particular instance, really was representing the best interests of Ontarians.

Van Loan should have been ashamed of himself. Actually, it appears he was.

Why? Because McGuinty made so much noise over the half-baked redistribution proposal that the Tories decided to enter talks with the premier and eventually agree that this province deserves 21 extra seats, not just 10, along with seven more for British Columbia and five additional seats for Alberta. Critics see it as a nefarious plot by Harper to use redistribution to finally get the majority government he pines for.

After all, Quebec wouldn't get any additional seats - they're already over-represented as it is - and since the Tories don't do that well there, and do prosper in the west, it's seen as a plot.

In Quebec, they elected one MP for every 105,000 people. In Ontario, that same MP represents 115,000. Don't even get me started about Prince Edward Island, which has four MPs for 140,000 people, or roughly one MP for each 37,000 people. But most of the additional seats in Ontario would be in and around Toronto which, last time we checked, isn't necessarily the strongest part of the universe for federal Tories either.

Whatever ultimately happens, it's not going to be happening any day soon.

The actuality have to wait for the next census results and then appear before the various Boundary Commissions - independent bodies set up by each province to sort out the various machinations of adding new seats.

Which means that it likely won't happen until 2014 in any event.

Even with Harper's plan, of course, we're still a long way from a pure representation by population basis on our Commons' seats. But given the size and unique demographic breakdowns in Canada, there has to be some give an take.

For example, the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunuvut have one MP each, but if you combine their total population of 107,000, that's less than an Ontario MP has to represent.

But you have to consider the size and, however remote they may be, clearly they deserve to be represented in Ottawa. The big sticking point, as always, is Quebec.

If Quebec politicians and commentators see redistribution as a way to make their province less powerful in Ottawa, it's not hard to imagine the politicians getting cold feet and deciding to give Quebec more seats even though, given its fairly static population growth (and its current numbers) it doesn't deserve more.

But B.C. and Alberta clearly are growing and deserve to be heard more in Ottawa.

Indeed, between 2004 and 2008, those provinces where first and second in total population growth, yet they continued to be underrepresented in the Commons and grossly underrepresented in the unelected Senate.

(Each has 10 senators, the same number of Senators that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have, even though their combined population is slightly more than 20 percent of the two western provinces with an equal number of Senate seats.)

But Senate inequality is another story for another column. Right now, Canada's three fastest growing provinces deserve more MPs - they also deserve better ones, but nobody can guarantee that - and the longer the current situation exists, the larger the democratic deficit for Ontario, B.C. and Alberta voters.

## Conservatives need attractive new policies

Opponents of the Ontario Liberals must be wondering what they have to do to win an election, because obviously they are not doing the right things now.

The latest proof was a Toronto by-election after the Liberals were caught repeatedly failing to protect taxpayers' money, but the Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats were unable to put even a dent in their comfortable majority.

The Conservatives have been repeating every waking moment before and since that the Liberals gave Ontarians a "summer of scandal," but they will need much more than catchy phrases to bring them down.

As the second biggest party and one voters traditionally support when they do not vote Liberal, the Tories appear to have the only chance, although small, of catching up to the Liberals in the election due in 2011.

Voters have virtually excluded the New Democrats from their thinking since they ran up massive budget deficits when in government from 1990 to 1995, although they have recovered and now offer some of the better ideas and more effective presentations in the legislature.

One guide to opposition parties' prospects is how previous opponents won government. When the Liberals won in 2003, voters were ready to replace the Conservatives under premier Ernie Eves, because they had had their fill of spending cuts, started by premier Mike Harris and continued by Eves, that weakened public services.

In opposition, Dalton McGuinty promised many changes in policies, including increasing the minimum wage and welfare benefits, which largely had been frozen by the Conservative governments, and more spending on health and education, which signaled a more compassionate approach to governing.

Harris won government in 1995 when a puff of wind would have toppled the NDP, but he was brimming with tempting policies, including cutting bureaucracy and income tax, eliminating deficits and putting stricter curbs on labor, which many felt held back business, all in an easy-to-read pamphlet, *The Common Sense Revolution*.

These suited the public mood at that time, although some had lost their appeal a couple of elections later.

The NDP under Bob Rae pushed out the Liberals in 1990 after premier David Peterson had lost popularity by calling an election a year early and putting too much effort into placating Quebec, when Ontarians were more concerned about jobs.

But the NDP always offers more policies than other parties, because its rank and file, unlike those of other parties, hammers them out in public at conventions and expects them to be in party platforms.

The NDP had policies for everything, including some it could not fulfill, such as public auto insurance. All these governments helped dig their own graves, but opposition parties also offered appealing policies.

This cannot be said of the current Conservatives.

The only policy new leader Tim Hudak stressed in the by-election was opposition to harmonizing the Ontario and federal sales taxes, but his case was weakened, because he was not sure he would kill harmonizing and some business-minded Conservatives support it.

When Hudak campaigned for leader, his most consistent theme was curbing the power of human rights tribunals, but he has been cautious not to raise this now, because most Ontarians feel the tribunals provide needed protection.

And his emphasis that he is a disciple of Harris would have won him many votes a decade ago, but not now. He also has said since that he wants to reach out to immigrants, but not how.

Hudak was handicapped because the by-election was forced on him when he had been leader only a couple of months and before he could put together a wide range of policies addressing current issues.

He will have difficulties finding popular new policies, because he has a record of being right-wing when this is not popular and, if he wants to appear more moderate, his problem is that McGuinty occupies most of the centre.

But the Conservative leader will need policies, because he is not going to win an election merely by reminding voters that he is not Dalton McGuinty.

### 125 YEARS AGO

**Thursday, October 2, 1884**  
• Writes editor W. L. Smith in the *Shelburne Economist*: The *Economist* has repeatedly taken exception to the manner in which the headmaster of our public school is permitted to engage in other callings, to the neglect of his responsible charge as teacher, and we now beg to draw the attention of our school board to a like evil having been summarily corrected in Mount Forest by the Education Department of the Province.

Mr. Reid, headmaster of the high school, had a majority at the board who winked at all his side transactions (if the equally responsible position of an editor can be classed as such), and who countenanced the neglect of his school duties which inevitably followed. Several gentlemen interested themselves in the matter and the result was that the high school board received notice from the Education Department that Mr. Reid had the choice of relinquishing either the school or the newspaper — that

### 125 YEARS AGO

one or the other must be given up and that at once.

Now, what do the people of Shelburne think of the situation here? In which does Mr. R. L. Mortimer display the greater amount of interest – the public school and the responsible duties connected therewith, or the newspaper in connection with which he has to do so much wire-pulling and bulldozing? We hope we have drawn attention to this matter for the last time.

### 100 YEARS AGO

**Thursday, September 30, 1909**  
• The 42nd annual exhibition of the Dufferin Central Agricultural Society, held in Shelburne Tuesday and Wednesday, bumped up against the worst dose of wet weather the Society has been "favoured" with for

### 75 YEARS AGO

**Wednesday, October 4, 1934**  
• A number of teachers from the Dufferin-Peel Inspectorate met at Orangeville Public School Sept. 27 at the call of Inspector Liddy to arrange for a musical festival to be held in conjunction with the teachers' 60th annual convention. It was decided to confine the scope of the festival for this year to vocal music taught in the public schools. Upward of 500 contestants will participate.

• Traffic Officer Kirk, who was stationed in Shelburne a few years ago, has moved back to the town. His beat is on Highway 10 from Orangeville to Owen Sound and Highway 9

### 50 YEARS AGO

**Wednesday, September 30, 1959**  
• Two projects to be built east of Shelburne will cater to the motoring trade and summer visitors. Work is in progress on the former John McQuarrie farm on Highway 24 by Mr. Joe Blake of Kleinburg, who expects to have an interesting nine-hole golf course in operation by next June. Mr. Jeff van Wissen, of Toronto, has purchased two acres on Highway 10 just west of Primrose, and plans to begin construction next spring of a motel and restaurant.

### 25 YEARS AGO

**Wednesday, October 3, 1984**  
• Orangeville Council has reaffirmed its opposition to making central Broadway a four-lane artery.  
• Dufferin County Board of Education will hire an additional kindergarten teacher for Shelburne Junior Public School.