

Monday's Commentary

Miner's geese gathering hails spring

It's always a sure sign of spring when wild geese return to Jack Miner's farm in Kingsville, Ontario.

The tradition began around the turn-of-the-century when Jack Miner, a native of Ohio transplanted to Canadian soil, became concerned about the environmentally endangered species.

Jack Miner lured a dozen or so wild birds to his farm with the offer of food and protection from hunters.

The birds enjoyed the hospitality and spread the word among their friends. Soon hundreds, then thousands of wild geese made Jack Miner's the Holiday Inn of the bird world.

Every spring and fall, a healthy flock stops at the Kingsville rest stop on flights between Florida and the Hudson Bay area.

The geese made a fine showing last weekend. Their numbers will multiply in the fall after the mating season, when they will return with their new offspring.

Two of Jack Miner's sons, Manly, in his mid-80's, and Jasper, a rugged-looking outdoorsman who didn't reveal his age (I'd guess in his early 70's) still live on the family farm and maintain the bird sanctuary.

Jasper likes people as much as he likes wild geese. He's prone to give in-depth tours of the grounds with just a little prodding from the public. The tour begins with an acrobatic routine performed by Jasper's pet eagle, Gomer.



GOMER is a striking looking animal with a wing span that leaves onlookers in awe. Standing on his crossbar perch in a cage as big as a circus tent, he obeys his master's commands and dances across the bar gracefully.

But he's just as content to sit quietly and watch the constant stream of northernbound geese fly into the field across the highway.

To the side of the farmhouse, there is a small pond full of geese, ducks and swans. The tour group this time around included a busload of senior citi-

zens from rural Ontario on a church sponsored outing. They stood with hands outstretched as Jasper poured feed into them.

These birds weren't shy. They wobbled and squawked their way to the waiting feast cupped in wrinkled palms before Jasper could finish doling out a portion to everyone.

The next stop on the tour was a small stadium with a full-length glass wall that looked out over another, much larger pond. The site was unimpressive because there was nothing more to look at than hundreds of dried corncobs leftovers from last fall's feeding.

The pond is filled each summer when it becomes the resort hotel for Miner's Florida bound feathered friends.

See related story on page 6B.

In a yearly fall ritual, each bird is fitted with an identification tag with Miner's address and a Biblical quote tied around its leg.

As the birds die off, the tags are returned to Jack Miner's via mail. The collection of tags date back to 1909 and are exhibited in a small museum next door to the stadium.

Jasper proudly relates how the geese line up for the tagging - which is done in the pond by Jasper and two assistants wearing hip-length boots. New birds are told by their parents that it's a relatively painless procedure - much like standing in line for license plates.

JASPER ALSO emphasizes that the geese treat Jack Miner's farm as their home away from home. They fly high over nearby towns, instinctively to protect their lives, but lower when they get over Miner's property.

If a loud noise disturbs them, the birds will move in closer toward the Miner house, although it abuts a major highway.

As the grand finale of the tour, Jasper orders the geese to fly in a v-formation over the mile-wide field. They happily oblige. After all, it's the least they can do for the family that has seen to their proper care and feeding for one hundred years.

The Flip Side

by craig piechura



Fight for Fairy Penguin

As if the Fairy Penguin didn't get enough grief over its name, now it is threatened by the encroachment of condominiums.

Fairy Penguins, who reach a maximum height of about a foot, mate and raise their tiny chicks on the islands of South Australia. The largest colony of Fairy Penguins live at Summerland Beach on Phillip Island, a dot on the map below Melbourne.

Now you may wonder why a local newspaper would report about the Fairy Penguins of Phillip Island. My executive editor asked the same question when I told him I wanted to call Australia.

Here's the hook. A Southfield school teacher, Mrs. Jewell Anderson of Lathrup Village, has become something just short of a household word in Australia through her Stevenson Elementary class' effort to save the habitat of the smallest penguins in the world.

After contacting Australia's two highest-ranking officials by letter, the Stevenson third graders have become involved in a raging political battle between developers and conservationists. And the Australian media didn't miss the Southfield connection.

Mrs. Anderson's daughter Diane teaches school in Australia and lives about an hour's drive from the penguin sanctuary. When her mother visited her there last year, they went to the beach at dawn to see the little flightless birds head out to sea.

Part of the penguins early-morning ritual is a parade along the beach in a din of incessant yapping.

THE PENGUINS huddle together at the water's edge," Mrs. Anderson said, and push one bird into the sea to find out if any leopard seals are lurking in the water waiting to eat a Fairy Penguin for breakfast. If the first guy makes it, they all join him for a swim.

After catching fish all day by literally swimming circles around their prey, the penguins come back to Summerland Beach precisely at dusk. There they parade again for on-lookers and head back to little burrows known as rookeries.

So, when the Phillip Island zoning officials received a request from developers to build a condominium complex at Summerland Beach, Diane Anderson sent the news clippings to her mother, a long-time penguin booster.

"It all dates back to September of 1952 when I was pregnant with my son who is a lawyer now," Mrs. Anderson says, chronicling her interest in penguins.

"It was a hot day and I was so uncomfortable. My husband gave me a copy of the National Geographic because it had an article in it on Antarctica and the Adelle penguins, hoping that would help cool me off. I've been fascinated with penguins ever since."

AND WHEN Mrs. Anderson's third grade class at Stevenson heard about the threat to the penguins home, they

talked of little else. Mrs. Anderson explained that Australian conservationists are concerned that people who live in the proposed condos will bring their dogs and cats with them and the animals will disturb the Fairy Penguins breeding grounds.

Diane Anderson said in a telephone interview that other islands have seen the penguins disappear in the wake of development.

"When the penguins do their nightly walk, (officials) cord off the beach area with ropes to keep the public back. But the penguins invariably will come under the ropes to shake a flipper with you."

Realizing that the penguins captured the student's attention, Mrs. Anderson decided to incorporate the birds into her curriculum.

The class is learning how to spell "flippers," "waddle," "penguin," "ecology" and even "regurgitate."

The class did penguin crossword puzzles and asked the teacher for permission to go to the library to learn more about the birds, a request a teacher rarely hears.

Even letter-writing instruction took a decidedly utilitarian form. The students learned the ropes by writing letters of concern to Australian Prime Minister Rupert Holmes and Frank Wilke, leader of the opposition Labor Party which opposes development on Summerland Beach.

"WE ARE KNOWN as the Stevenson Ambassadors," the letters stated, "and we like to think the Fairy Penguins in their funny little suits when we visit you someday. We know that dogs and cats just don't mix with friendly birds, particularly those (birds) who love people and cannot fly. Please ask the people to find some other place to build their homes."

According to Ms. Anderson, the letter was held up by the Labor Party leader as proof that the Fairy Penguins' plight was more than a matter of local concern over new development.

Laborites were angry about the zoning officials' decision to keep a wildlife official from testifying on the threat by developers to harm the penguin's habitat.

The Melbourne media knew a good feature story when it waddled by. Stories on the class' letter to the politicians were printed in two daily newspapers. The host of a radio breakfast show talked to Mrs. Anderson live on the air one day.

Diane Anderson said she was sleeping when the radio program was aired. Later, several persons stopped her to ask if her mother was "The Penguin Lady."

No decision has been made on the developers' request to build condominiums on the beach, but Ms. Anderson says some landowners on the island favor new construction as a means of bringing revenue to the island.

If the third graders at Stevenson have their way, the penguin parade will continue uninterrupted.

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

It's a matter of convenience

The next time you have your hair dyed, take heed of what the hairdresser is doing. Not only to combat the numbing boredom that settles in at a beauty salon but also to keep tabs on everyone's health, or at least comfort.

Take the case of the person who decides that the old hair color isn't what it should be. Blondes want to be brunettes and brunettes are still hanging on to the blonde myth.

Hair product manufacturers aren't hanging onto one of the ingredients in that dye, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Division of Cosmetics Technology under the Food and Drug Administration will be cracking down on an ingredient in the dye that they say causes cancer in animals.

So far, the regulation is something that's projected for the future, but talk of it has made Clairol Corp. to take the ingredient, commonly called red dye 3, out of its preparation. But other manufacturer's have kept it in.

The ingredient keeps the brown tones in color. Some dyes have a tendency to turn red after the shade has been worn a bit.

NOW, YOU'D THINK that the move to remove this suspect ingredient from the beauty shop shelves and the heads of persons who want only their hair-dresser to know for sure their real hair color would create a general wave of benevolence for the Division of Cosmetics Technology.

If you do, you're about to learn something about convenience versus theory. In other words, if you don't see the problem right before your very eyes, then it's a cinch convenience wins out.

Take the case of Farmington Hills hairdresser Raymond Tomashuk, who has been in the business since 1956. He owns his own shop in the hills and in his words, "likes to keep the atmosphere light."

"The establishment's already ruined tint products," he says.

Since Clairol took the dye out of its tints, Tomashuk took Clairol out of his shop.

"The color all looked like lemon yellow," he says. "And I'm being polite."

Now, remember, there's not a regulation on the books that says Clairol had to give up that ingredient. There's no regulation that says the ingredient is officially cancerous.

There are those who would debate that it is at all.

EVEN THE DIRECTOR of the Division of Cosmetics Technology of the FDA, Heinz Eiernmann, will admit that there's no positive answer when it comes to figuring out if something causes cancer.

In coming to that conclusion, the researchers must calculate the danger of an ingredient by extrapolating down from animal to man and from the high doses test animals receive to the normal doses a man would.

"There's no way to confirm the validity of the mathematical extrapolation," Eiernmann says.

Of course, Eiernmann is a cautious man, too. Head of a division that's accused of Big Brotherism ever-

ytime a substance is suspected of causing cancer, Eiernmann has the attitude of a man twice burned and shy.

"Before we regulate something, we have to be able to defend the case in court," he says.

"You can't cry wolf if there's no wolf in the background."

Not everyone could be susceptible to cancer through an ingredient, but to the one person who has that tendency, then the case is serious, Eiernmann points out.

Then, his division is faced with trying to determine the acceptable level of cancer in a substance.

ENTER INTO THIS TANGLE of tightrope walking, convenience loving and pure disbelief, is area hairdresser Shila Morgenroth.

Shila, as you might recall last caused a stir when she began coloring kiddy's hair. She prefers the title of "colorist."

Working with color day in and day out, she's noticed that the substance used to bleach out the old color and prepare for the new can irritate the nose, the eyes, the skin and the psyche.

So, she got up a petition campaign of sorts, carried it to a show in Las Vegas and tried to get her fellow workers to rally around.

About 72 of them made out affidavits saying that they thought the powdered bleach was more of a hazard than a help.

Some were worried about existing allergies and future bronchial problems.

"They think just because we're hairdressers that we're stupid," Shila says.

So, Shila packed up her affidavits and sent them down to Eiernmann.

IMMEDIATELY THERE was a Catch-22 syndrome at work. If one person is the impetus for the complaints, then they're looked at as one complaint by Eiernmann's division.

Talk to the hair product companies and get them to change their packaging so that the powder doesn't fly around or need to be mixed. There could be an easier way than litigation.

There's a difference between a health hazard and an irritation, Eiernmann says.

Powdered laundry soap does the same thing. On Saturday mornings in laundry rooms across the state, persons with dirty clothes in the washer and the last clean set on are sneezing away and feeling virtuous.

But how virtuous can you feel if you do it every-day?

As for the powdered bleach, Shila might end up fighting the profession. As one hairdresser explained, why mess up a good thing? The old way works fine and if you do it slowly, the powder doesn't fly.

So, when's the last time you saw a hairdresser work slowly?

As for myself, I'm sticking to my natural shade. Shucks, brunettes taught those blondes how to have fun.

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