

VILLAGE VIEW

ANDREA LEONARD

Returning to the old home town after a six-month absence, this year in particular, is a bittersweet experience. Poverty Lane, as the western section of Main Street, Osterville, was called fifty or sixty years before I was born, no longer bears any resemblance to such an appellation.

Nor did it, of course, when I left the village last fall. With that knowledge a part of one's heritage, however, one cannot not help making comparisons, because it looks so totally different, today, from how it looked as recently as five years ago.

But I bow to progress and concede that if change must come, it could be worse. And, with the demand growing for a living location within walking distance of essential services, the inevitability of multi-housing development adjacent to our commercial nucleus must be accepted. I'm glad, though, that a cap has been placed upon more apartments and condominiums than have already been approved.

The sweet of the bittersweet far outweighs the bitter and lies partially in the re-affirmation that, despite changes in appearance, Osterville remains my home town. A stroll from the post office, with stops for errands every few doors, confirms few changes in this village's people.

Life-long residents return my greeting warmly: "Glad to see you back...;" and more recently-arrived ones speak cordially: "How was your winter?"; and total strangers smile, nod, and respond to my "Good morning" with almost palpable pleasure. It's grand to live among friendly folk.

Other sweets are savored in spite of overcast skies and chilly winds, for this is the blooming season. Broadleaved evergreens glow with enormous clusters of blossom. Blueberry bushes, strawberries, lady slippers, early peas in the vegetable garden, honeysuckle, lilac, dogwood, apple and cherry trees... even the pines from which clouds of pollen drift... are flowering.

Who can be bitter surrounded with such exuberance?

With resumption of routines come demands of household and garden chores. Pine pollen makes dusting a daily necessity. Spring rains stimulate all growing plants to outstrip my determination to keep them within bounds. An unfinished afghan awaits my crochet hook, but daylight hours must not be wasted on projects doable by lamplight.

So many are the demands for attention on every hand that I hurry from one to the other, spending twenty minutes clipping, ten pruning, fifteen with a duster, thirty food-shopping, another twenty pulling weeds and thinning the lettuce. Between times I snatch short visits with neighbors, friends and relatives, catch up on news, and learn of local goings-on. One must keep abreast of current developments in this village, our town, our county.

- My suggestion to those who object to the proposed rate increase for cablevision? Cancel. No clearer message can a consumer deliver to a supplier than refusal to utilize a service the user feels fails to deliver fair value at reasonable cost.

- The recently-enacted state law mandating drunken drivers be jailed is overcrowding our prisons. Of course it is. Yet, on every hand, since passage of the legislation, people are heard declining alcoholic refreshment. "Thanks, no. I'm driving." The stricter law and its enforcement are having the desired effect.

- Our county's battle against state take-over of the court buildings is being resoundingly supported by county officials throughout the Commonwealth. Massachusetts residents who hope to control costs (and avoid heavier taxation) have a responsibility to support their county officers by writing to their state legislators decrying the state's efforts to undermine county administration of courts and court buildings, and to transfer responsibility for paying the freight to local government without permitting that entity methods to control expenses. The proposal is an open invitation to abuse. The plan is diabolical!

Lack of local concern... or even interest in the issue of state take-over of our courts... threatens to place greater burdens upon Massachusetts taxpayers. This issue, perhaps more than any other at this time, is one we, the electorate, need to

address. Apathy appears to be the standard reaction. **Beacon Hill seems far away... yet its reach is long... and its appetite for our tax dollars is insatiable.** Write your state legislators about this proposal.

- Growth in the Town of Barnstable goes on apace while planning to direct its course moves laterally. Committees and commissions are formed, meetings are conducted, opinions are expressed, conclusions are reached, written plans are prepared, studied. And discarded or ignored.

Every plan offered has its detractors. No plan at all, it appears, is preferable to one with drawbacks. While accepting a flawed plan might entail future changes in some details, it does seem that some plan is needed as a base from which to work. Once in operation, adjustments could be made. With no plan at all, controls of any kind cannot be effected.

- The sweets continue to be tasted. Now the long-fought battle for the bottle bill has been won and peace restored, results are clearly worth the skirmish. For over 20 years, each spring, I have collected a wheelbarrowful of bottles, cans, and trash from the underbrush and roadsides around this neighborhood. This year? Only a small basketful. And wherever I look, it's the same story. The face Cape Cod presents to all... residents and tourists alike... is delightfully free from litter and trash.

There is no end to sweets! At suppertime this evening a ruby-throated hummingbird hovered outside the slider door, sipping nectar from rhododendron blossoms.

We may still need a fire in the woodstove as the sun moves into the western sky, even though this is the month of June, but measuring bitter against sweet, sweets of homecoming win out, hands down.

It's good to be back.