

Are School Newspapers a Thing of the Past?

In the 'modern age of technology' (*what a clichéd phrase*), are student newspapers a thing of the past? Social networking and texting are currently the primary means of communication of most teenagers. To their credit, some teachers have incorporated these media into the classroom in order to be relevant to students' lives and engage them in productive learning. And who knows what the future will hold?

What will never go out of fashion, however, are the need and the desire to have a voice. In essence, that is what propelled the creators of the first student newspapers at St. John's. The very first was back in 1928 when it came into being as *The Torch*. The masthead proudly proclaimed it to be the "Official Organ of the Students of St. John's Technical High School". It was printed professionally by Veterans Press in the Nokomis Building on Cumberland Avenue and sold for 5 cents a copy.

It came out for a while, and then fell by the wayside. Many incarnations of the student newspaper came and went over the years, until two guys, drunk on Wynola and Jersey Cream on the way back to school after lunch one day in 1953 (*see cover story*), thought they'd dreamed up the perfect idea of having a student newspaper. The fact that they didn't know the history of the earlier attempts and versions is a glorious part of the story, because it is the essence of youth to strongly believe that they are the creators of everything. The memories of phase one of our own 'glory days' is one of the reasons we're here to celebrate this weekend.

So the *Techonian* came into being in 1953, and published as such until the late 1970's (certainly a respectable run). But the name fell into disfavour with subsequent generations of youth. Some of the names of later student

newspapers at St. John's included *The Schmata*, *St. John's Magazine* and *St. John's High Times* (*see page 7*).

A special run of the *Techonian* came out in 1984-85, the 75th Anniversary Edition, to help organize that reunion. Remember, snail mail was still king then.

One of the salient features of all the versions of the student newspaper over the years has been their similarities. They cover school events – sports, dances, student council, cafeteria, etc. Some years, however, they were big on BIG issues – politics, substandard housing, jails, poverty, racism, drugs, sex and rock 'n roll. In the 1960's, *Techonian* reporters interviewed Tommy Douglas, Judy LaMarsh, and Laurier Lapierre, to name a few. They did an exposé of Vaughn Street Detention Centre which caught the eye of the big mainstream media in the city. They continually assessed the quality of the education system they were part of.

As you stroll through the decades rooms this weekend, take time to look at the student newspapers you may find there. You may even find your own name as a contributor or contributee. Take time to reflect on one of the essential questions – how have youth remained the same, how have they changed. It is so easy to assume that our own generation was the best ever. The truth is that every generation has their mission to fulfill, and hopefully will remain true to the human and social ideals that fuelled us. Only the form of expression or media may change.

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CHILLAX THIS WEEKEND!

St. John's Techonian

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Techonian Reflections

By Jim Diamond,
Class of 55

In my senior year at Tech (1954-55), I served as Co-Editor of THE TECHONIAN along with Lois Skinner. (Lois: Where are you now? At this reunion, I hope). What do I remember of the experience? Not much. In those days THE TORCH was the big thing. THE TECHONIAN was touted as the next big thing. Apparently it had once existed, had passed into oblivion, and was being revived. Lois and I were charged with reviving it. The major task was not getting articles but getting ads from local merchants. We needed cash, or so I recall. The articles were eminently forgettable, except for one item that everyone, including the teachers, read: the gossip column "Seen and Heard," written by Dora Halper and, gosh I forget who else. (Note to "who else": Please identify yourself, unless you still fear lawsuits).