

Highway Robbery

by Matt Potter

“NO!” LOCAL GAL TELLS STATE PLANNERS

by Sally Royalton Manning,

Swampville Sentinel Social Affairs Reporter

“We’re really against big government,” says Francine Bellweather McGrew—McGraw, sitting in her home office on leafy Elm Street, in one of Swampville’s quieter northern neighbourhoods. “So we felt kind of vindicated when we got their letter.”

Mrs McGrew—McGraw, a pretty forty-nine year old blonde who realized only last week she forgot to have children — “I looked out into the back yard and saw my biological clock rusting under the sycamore tree,” she explains — is facing a tough decision: leave the neighbourhood she and husband Bud (51) have called home for the past twenty years, or move to a strange district where the neighbours won’t share their history, may call them names, and will probably eat them.

“The government is building an east-west interstate highway right through my office here at home,” she says, sitting before a wall decorated with dozens of home creative writing certificates, and choking as she speaks.

But no amount of certificates for good grammar and grate speling can stop the wheels of progress now. A black line painted through the middle of the room marks where a gaping hole will soon appear.

“The interstate’s going to split this room in half, and they’ve given us a month to decide what we’ll do.”

Mrs McGrew—McGraw, who models airplanes in her spare time and is one of Swampville’s busiest amateur homemakers, is keen on keeping the southern half of their ranch home and selling the northern half after the enforced split.

"We were thinking of maybe selling it to a time-share resort concern, now that commuting from downtown will be cut down to thirty minutes once the interstate is built."

But Mrs McGrew—McGraw says she and husband Bud are not certain about staying in the neighbourhood now, despite the worrying news of rising cannibal attacks against newcomers in nearby areas.

"We'd move out of Swampville, but all our friends and family are here," she says. (Mrs McGrew—McGraw is the middle daughter of Lloyd C. Bellweather Jr., two-time Mayor of Swampville, and the late Belle "Ringading" Rambeau Bellweather, five-time homecoming queen.)

"But we also don't like the idea of living across the highway from a string of sushi bars either," Mrs McGrew—McGraw says, popping more popcorn into the microwave for local chipmunks. "We're a little worried what the smell of chicken grease will do to property prices."

But to raise awareness of their plight in the hope that others may see the warning signs earlier than she and her husband did, Mrs McGrew—McGraw, who has proudly never paid taxes except once when under the influence of an evil accountant, has announced that she and her Marketing Manager husband will hold a garage sale.

"Well, I say *garage sale*," she says, sorting through boxes in readiness for the big day this Saturday, husband Bud too sick in the hospital with bronchitis, galloping pneumonia and a phlegmy tongue to help. "But Bud, poor guy, stuck on Ward C and feeling miserable with three tubes coming out of his ass, says *yard sale*. Though I'm organising it so it's a *garage sale*, even though most of it will be in the yard."

Mrs McGrew—McGraw promises earlybirds can pick up many bargains.

"I'm selling some great openings to stories," says the shy activist and part-time author, who also plans to sell cookies, cupcakes and political placards to help fund their move into state politics and turn the tide on big government.

"I've never been that great with middles and endings, but I'm a real wiz with story openings."

As a measure of the quality of Mrs McGrew—McGraw's story writing talents, ten story openings are listed below. These along with other story openings, home-baked cookies, cupcakes, placards, buttons and other delights, will be available at the garage sale, which starts at 7.30am this Saturday, at 2800 Elm Street.

Francine McGrew—McGraw's story openings.

All offers over \$10.00 will be considered.

- *By the time I've made myself an eight course Chinese banquet, I really can't be bothered making someone else the same ...*

- *Polyester is a great leveller ...*

- *He was a pie-eyed albino horse with a stutter and he answered to the name 'Future Glue' ...*

- *She was on the fast track to celibacy ...*

- *I knew her face but not her hair, at least not the right way up ...*

- *She wanted another liver reading ...*

- *My nose was a mess of pimples and that's not a good way to enter any country, including Liechtenstein ...*

- *"It's not often I'm nice," I said. "So just accept it, you cunt." ...*

The *Swampville Sentinel* believes this last story opening may offend some readers, so Mrs McGrew—McGraw is happy to offer it at a twenty percent discount, if you or your publisher, agent or editor don't care for four letter words.

