

the HERALD

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DAVID A. BEATTIE, Publisher
and General Manager

BRIAN MacLEOD
Editor

DAN TAYLOR
Advertising Manager

Phone 877-2201

Second Class Mail - Registered Number 9943

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Editorial

Read on

It may be hard to believe but there are over 3,200 people in Halton Hills who can't read or write at a Grade 9 level.

That figure, according to the North Halton Literacy Guild, means just under 10 per cent of Halton Hills residents fit into that category. But, through efforts of groups like the guild and Halton's educational system, we're actually better off than the rest of Canada.

One person in five can't read or write at a Grade 9 level in Canada, the guild says.

The tales told by three students and the guild's tutors in our special on literacy this week are incredible.

People who couldn't read would actually watch the expressions on the faces of other people so they could imitate them when a document was passed around.

Others would say they forgot their glasses and get strangers to read labels in a grocery store.

Still others would disguise their poor spelling with messy handwriting.

Because these people are coming forward with their stories of persistence in their quest to read and write, others may seek help.

The tutors are waiting to help those who need it.

In our "civilized" country, it's heartening to know there's help for those who seek and desire basic communication skills.

Strange days



Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook

Well, Sunday certainly wasn't your average day at the Ex. I set off early from quiet Cambridge with my better half (the name's Karen, she's quick to remind me), but all wasn't quiet on Lakeshore Boulevard. After grinning at those poor, unfortunate souls pulled over on the side of the road with their hoods up - smoke belching out of their radiators - I joined them. Sitting there on the edge of my car, water boiling up through the overflow container, watching motorists grinning at you isn't as much fun. "I guess this is our 15 minutes of fame," Karen chuckled.

Not funny.

But a visit from a friendly neighborhood Metro Toronto police officer certainly changed our fortunes. He began inspecting my engine. Oops. Isn't today my birthday, I remembered. I wondered if my license sticker, which read September, '89 so clearly, was still valid. As our constable cheerfully named off a list of things which could be wrong with my car, I listened attentively nodding and agreeing, as I attempted to place myself strategically between him and my license plates.

Not only didn't he notice, he had an interesting parking idea in store

for me. At our Scottish friend's insistence, we parked on the grass beside Lakeshore Boulevard. He then placed his card on our windshield and sent a message to dispatch that the car wasn't to receive a ticket or be towed. Then, he showed us the back seat of a Metro police car while he navigated the back streets of Toronto with some interesting bylaw infractions - eventually dropping us off near the front gates of the Ex.

So it was into the Foster's building, Snowbirds screaming overhead. The two of us were on our way to the Batmobile when I glanced out of the window. I was stunned. A tiny area of the lake was all I could see, but 200 feet above it was a fiery object tumbling into the water. It was a Snowbird jet. I grabbed Karen and heaved her in front of the window. "Look, look," was all I could say.

The jet crashed into the lake. There was no gasp from the people watching. Only dead silence. This was no movie. And the flames weren't special effects. The condition of the pilot wasn't announced. When we saw a parachute falling into the water a few seconds later, we assumed it was the pilot from the jet which just crashed into the sea. But that wasn't the case as we found out on the 10 p.m. news.

Seeing such an event live makes those attempts by the movies to imitate them kind of crass. Everyone in the crowd at the airshow just stood silently waiting for word of the pilot. Somehow, movies simply forget that part.

Oh yes, eight hours later at the end of the day, after a two mile walk, our car was still there, along with about 15 others.

Is money really the problem for women entering politics?

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park
Thomson News Service



Would more women run for political office if the government took over total financing of political parties?

The Committee For '94 thinks so. It recently wrote Premier David Peterson advocating that the government cover the expenses connected with nominating and electing all provincial and municipal candidates. This, it said, would permit more women to seek elected office.

The Committee of '94 describes itself as a "non-partisan group of activist women dedicated to getting more women" into elected office.

"We are committed to public funding because we believe that more women would run for political office if the increasingly high costs of candidacy were not a barrier," the letter said.

Well, maybe.

The committee's letter quotes approvingly an earlier study by the Ontario PCs which identified four reasons for low female participation in politics.

These were "constraints on being wives, mothers and low-income

earners; the socialization process which from childhood discourages females from competing; the bias in candidate recruitment toward the male model of what makes an electable politician; and the power male riding elites enjoy to favor male candidates."

MOST FORMIDABLE

The committee then somewhat dubiously draws the following conclusion: "The experts isolate the first reason - money - as the most formidable barrier to women seeking election."

Actually, "expert" opinion isn't really that clear-cut. Money in politics has never really been a problem in and of itself. The difficulty is in getting plugged into the proper network that gives access to money, a problem hardly restricted to women. Try being a poor male from the boonies and see how far you get!

The committee's blind spot is that it sees low female participation rates solely through feminist goggles.

Women are 51 per cent of the population - why then aren't women 51 per cent of the elected politicians, they ask? (This, incidentally, is where the name Committee for '94 came from, with its stated goal of "half the House in '94.")

In fact, the PC analysis explains quite well why women will never compete on equal grounds in the political system with men, either in numbers or in success.

Women are wives and mothers and to the majority, that is their first priority. The practice in our society and perhaps all societies is

husbands and children almost always come first. Whether women necessarily choose those roles voluntarily is open to argument, but it is absurd to pretend that anything else is the norm. And all feminist propaganda aside, that isn't like to change.

It is also a matter of record that the so-called low income of women is also mainly a consequence of marriage and children. According to the Fraser Institute, unmarried women without children have incomes almost identical to men of comparable age, education and skills.

TOUGH ON BOTH

Frankly, politics is tough on both sexes. To do it right is time-consuming and all-encompassing, which is why it wrecks marriages and makes difficult the raising of children at the same time.

Women have an added burden, too, in the sense they aren't men and never can be men in terms of what is sometimes called "male pair bonding," a non-sexual biological affinity among men that doesn't seem to have a counterpart amongst women and leads to them being seen as outsiders by "old boy networks."

That doesn't stop women succeeding in politics, as everyone from Agnes Macphail to Margaret Thatcher shows. If Bette Stephenson had wanted the premier's job in the PC leadership race of 1985, she'd have won easily.

But for cultural reasons it is harder for them.

The committee's idea that government money is the key to female success in politics is just too simplistic.



Norval Flour Mill

The Noble Mill in Norval was one of the early industries in the village. The mill was located about where Club 2000 sits today. The Esquesing Historical Society is planning an historical walk around Norval on Sept. 13.

LETTERS

Valley should be left parkland

Dear Sir,

Mr. Al Pilutti in his recent remarks to Halton Hills town council concerning lands behind Fagan Drive, Rosefield Crescent and Wilson Court is somewhat off base. He referred to the area as a "garbage dump," "not a valley" and a place where "dog droppings" prevail.

He is right on the third count as many residents use the green belt as a hiking trail and a most excellent place to exercise their dogs (rather than on town streets).

Town councillors should definitely inspect the property Mr. Pilutti wants to buy back from the town

for a measly \$250,000.

This land has been known as a conservation area and treated as such by local residents for over 20 years. Mr. Pilutti claims it is "not a recreational area," perhaps the town doesn't recognize it but local residents have, over the years cut the grass, planted trees, built skating rinks and currently make wide use of this area for hiking, biking and simply enjoying a nature trail through the trees near old camp Norval.

His statement that building houses on this land would be a benefit to the town and the residents is preposterous.

The town has a petition signed by every resident boarding the property. They clearly want the land left as it is (and they continue to care for it) with no expense to the town.

There are many acres of fresh land available for development away from one of Georgetown's most attractive and cared for residential areas - let him pay the going price and leave the natural recreation area to the citizens who simply want peace and quiet and a natural valley parkland left as it was intended.

Sincerely,
R.G. Eckroth,
Fagan Dr., Georgetown