

Editorial

The Halton Hills HERALD

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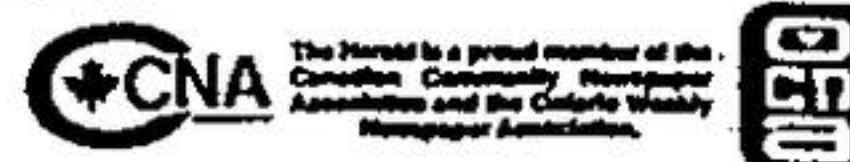
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I miss Bert

It really is strange how a person's mind wanders when you are doing the most mundane things.

Why, just the other day I was taking a shower and realized there was a void in my life. I couldn't quite put my finger on the seeming sense of solidarity until I dropped the bar of soap on my foot and that combined with the mouthful of water I swallowed when surfacing face-first to the shower head allowed the proverbial penny to drop.

I missed my pet fish Bert.

You see, I was having problems with the motor operating the aerator in my home aquarium. I should state aerators because I had tried several and for some reason, couldn't get enough pressure to produce the little bubbles of air that the fish need to survive.

I found out there are indeed 'death wish' fish when I arrived home late one afternoon and discovered that a tribe of guppies had leapt over the edge of the equarium wall and were not dotting my livingroom indoor-outdoor carpeting.

Some pool party, I thought, as I realized mouth-to-gill resuscitation would do no good.

Next, I thought of Bert. The tank was somewhat murky from the remnants of the pool party and at first I couldn't see him. Then all of a sudden, up he popped from the depths and, as was his custom, pressed his catfish-like face against the glass of the aquarium. Bert, I should have mentioned, is a bottom feeder - his exact species remains a mystery.

I was so relieved that Bert hadn't signed up for the mass suicide dive that I sat down and ate a can of tuna.

Bert and I were alike in many ways.

Both loners, both of us enjoyed swimming and fish food and both of us have plunged to the depths while occasionally rising to the heights, all the while attempting

Editor's
Notebook
by
Colin Gibson



to swim against the current.

Besides that, he never argued with me, although on occasion I thought I had detected a facetious glub or two emanating from the aquarium.

When that happened, I would either flash a can of tuna in front of the tank and remind him of long-lost relatives or threaten to take him for a walk in the shower. That usually was sufficient to end the glubs.

But back to the raison-d'etre of this column.

After the guppies left for the big fish tank in the sky I decided Bert would be better off in a safer home, a safer environment and a safer aquarium.

There was a tearful parting (well, at least there was water around Bert's eyes) when I brought him to the foster fish tank.

I visit him occasionally and as is his custom, he usually comes over and presses his face against the tank. It's just not the same though and the people in the adoptive home might just think I was a bit weird if I started talking to him.

Nevertheless, I do miss him.

Maybe I'll go out and buy a pet ferret.

P.S. This might not be the best column ever written, but at least it takes your mind off the Persian Gulf War.



Poets' Corner

PRIVATE HELL

That's what life before death
is all about,
Isn't it?
A constant, inner battle
With the demons and doubts
within us.
Fought by ourselves,
With ourselves,
To prepare ourselves,
To feel worthy to meet
What ever power it was
That created us, in its
own image.
With such impure instincts
And insurmountable
imperfections.
Maybe, that power isn't a
good guy.
After all?
Maybe, it was the devil
himself,
Who knows?
But the battle rages within
us all
To find the truth,
And escape our own
private hell.

By J.B., Acton.

SCARY STUFF

In my mind there's a monster
that just will not sleep,
And my body suffers daily from
the hours that it keeps.
I don't function well in the real
world, you see.
The world in my mind is what
matters to me.

The world all around me is cold
and it's grey,
Subservience in silence day
after day.
When night falls - sleep calls -
and the majority do sleep.
But the monster awakens and
begs me to weep.

I won't be defeated by this
creature within.

I'll fight for stability against
rebellion and sin.

Still, in my mind, there's a
monster that won't go away.

And we'll all be in trouble when
the night meets the day.

By J.B., Acton.

MAN IN A TREE

There once was a man in a tree,
Who jumped around like a flea,
He fell one day,
And I'm sorry to say,
There once was a man in a tree.

By Jamie Cambell,
Age 11, Milton.

GROWING UP

The warm
teddy bear
tucked tightly beneath
his arm.
The first shy smile
of the girl across the street.
The trembling groom
standing, saying "I do."
The new father
staring at a
teddy bear
in the
corner.

by Jason Piper,
Acton.

BROTHER

This young cub
now so grown
I cannot lift him
I try to teach him
right from wrong.
This cub becoming
full grown
my love
growing
so
strong.

by Jason Piper,
Acton.

Cute kids cause concern

Okay. It's curmudgeon time. So let's get straight to the point.

Am I utterly alone in this sentiment, or is there anyone else who is going to erupt into hysterical shrieks the next time he's exposed to Cute Children on television?

Let me hasten to say that I have nothing against children in general. Perish the thought.

When I was younger, it's true, I used to see things differently. I used to argue that the average small child compares most unfavorably to the average dog - observing that dogs are, in general, more loyal, more intelligent, better behaved and better smelling.

But I've matured a little, and now I don't say things like this.

It's not that I've changed my mind, exactly. It's just that I've realized it's an unfair comparison.

There's no point in asking the average small child to measure up to the average retriever. This will just give the poor kid a complex.

When confronted with a misbehaving three-year-old, living parents should avoid sighing: "We'd have been happier with a collie." They should take the positive view, and remind themselves: "This is much better than a wombat."

But my fondness for kids in general doesn't help much when it comes to Cute Kids on TV. Unfortunately, my response to these is about the same as my response to, say, professional tennis players.

I try to take the Christian view of pro tennis stars. I try not to be cruelly judgemental.

It's just that so many of them so richly deserve to be locked in damp cellars and nibbled at by weasels.

We're all, of course, dismally

Weir's World

by
Ian Weir
Thomson News
Service



familiar with TV's Cute Kids. There is apparently a civic bylaw in Hollywood requiring that each sit-com must have at least one wretchedly precocious child who goes about deflating adults with withering and wise observations.

Given the remarkable standard of sit-com writing, these are usually along the lines of: "Wake up and smell the coffee, Numb-nose."

These kids are almost as intolerable as the ones on the commercials. There are now dozens of these - all descended from Scott and Joey, who used to drag their fondness for cheese into our living rooms on a nightly basis.

This is not a time for subtlety. I did not like Scott. I did not like Joey. I even hated their dog.

The one tiny consolation lay in wondering what would happen to kids like this when they grew too old to be cloyingly cute.

My personal belief is that such children end up in Reform School, where they spend a gloomy adolescence making license plates and murmuring "More cheese, please."

The question, of course, is why modern TV insists on subjecting us to these kids. This didn't happen in the good old days, on shows

like Lassie and The Littlest Hobo.

Granted, there were cute kids on these shows. But at least their primary function was to fall down abandoned mine-shafts.

True, Lassie and Hobo invariably insisted on rescuing them. Neither of these dogs ever hit on the happy compromise of lowering lots of food into the shaft and just leaving the kid there until he was 21. But overall, things were bearable.

Sometimes, I'm frankly uncertain why Cute Kids on TV get on my nerves so much. Maybe it's just because I remember my own childhood.

When you and I were kids - as we both recall - we were strictly forbidden to be witty, let alone precocious. If we wanted to be clever, we had to do so on our own time, while walking 17 miles to school through a blinding snowstorm.

I remember the many occasions on which my mother said to my father: "The boy's being cute again. Let's send him to boarding school."

And of course, we could never afford cheese.

But if you tell Scott and Joey this, would they believe you?

Write us a letter!

The Herald wants to hear from you. If you have an opinion you want to express or a comment to make, send us a letter or drop by the office. Our address is 45 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 3Z6.

All letters must be signed. Please include your address and telephone number for verification.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters due to space limitations.