

EDITORIAL

with Dawn Brown

The new angry mob

There are times when it's hard not to marvel at how far technology has come in a very short time. A few years back, I found some old albums that had belonged to my grandfather. When I put played them on my record player, my son—who was still in elementary school at the time—frowned at the spinning album before looking up at me perplexed and asked, “But where is the music coming from?” I couldn't help but smile. He has grown up in time of MP3s and digital streaming, so why wouldn't he be confused by how a flat disc could store music only to be played with a needle over grooves. I, on the other hand, have seen music go from albums, to 8-tracks, to cassettes, to CD's before shifting into MP3s and beyond. And some times it's easy to forget that it wasn't all that long ago, either.

The same could be said about computers and smart phones. It really wasn't that long ago when cell phones were just phones, used for emergencies or by people who travelled for work, or that the internet was only just finding its footing. Now, taking seconds to quickly double a check a fact or detail is almost as natural as breathing, and more than once I've wondered how I ever did anything without Google.

As technology as continued to advance, social media was born and continued to grow in popularity. And why not, with so many platforms to choose from? Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the list is extensive, and everyone is on the action from school-aged kids, to great grandparents. Heck, there are even accounts set up for people's pets. Social media has become an amazing means to reconnect with old friends and family, for small businesses to market their services and products, to connect with people around the world. It really is an amazing thing when you think about it.

But as with so many things, there is a dark, ugly side to all of this “connecting” as well.

With the rapid growth of social media, and the sheer volume of opposing ideas expressed within our news feeds, perhaps it isn't all that surprising that there would be disagreement and conflict amongst the users. People frustrated when their opinions do not receive the validation they believe they deserve. Though, it is perhaps a little disturbing just how quickly the tide can turn. Often it doesn't matter what the topic—a seemingly benign slice of life story, a political piece, health and wellness, celebrity gossip—all too often discussions degrade into name calling, ugliness, and even out-and-out threats. There seems to be a rapidly diminishing sense empathy, basic respect and common courtesy on social media, lately, and one can't help but wonder if people would be so ugly if they didn't have a computer screen to hide behind. If they had to look and speak to someone directly while spewing their hateful comments, would they? The possibility that some might answer yes is more than a little chilling.

While we look back over history, and the idea of an angry mob throwing rotten vegetables at individuals publicly shamed in the stocks, or our ancestors gnashing their teeth at the prospect of a public hanging seems barbaric by today's standards, one can't help but wonder if we really have evolved all that much. Or have we simply thrown in with an angry mob while safely behind our electronic screens?



INNOVATION AWARD: Halton Hills Hydro was recently awarded the Innovation Excellence Award. The award is presented by the Electricity Distributors Association and recognizes Local Distribution Companies that have introduced unique business models focused on new or better ways of creating value while having a meaningful impact on customer satisfaction. - Submitted photo

Capital punishment

The other day I was flipping through my Twitter feed. I remember when I signed up for my account I had no clue what it was or why anybody would even want to Tweet. I have since learned to appreciate it for what it is as well as realizing how to best utilize my account. For me, Twitter is a little glimpse into a variety of news. I follow newspapers and other media outlets and, quite frankly, far too many of the Trump resistance movement as my “guilty pleasure”.

There are a dozen or so large market print media reporters who I follow regularly, and I quite admire their work. I look forward to reading their articles and/or columns. They come from a wide selection of newspapers—some from newspapers I would never choose to read, but I still appreciate their work.

The other day, I noticed one of these journalists had written about Dellen Millard who was convicted of murdering Tim Bosma and recently Laura Babcock. Millard is appealing his conviction of Babcock in which he was sentenced to “life in prison” concurrent to his conviction of his sentence for murdering Tim Bosma. In other words, he has been sentenced to two, 25 year life sentences that will run one after the other. The now



By
Angela Tyler

32-year-old could be eligible for parole when he is 82 years old. Unless the conviction of Laura Babcock is overturned he will spend 50 years in prison. For 50 years he will be in a room that is seven square meters at the maximum possible size.

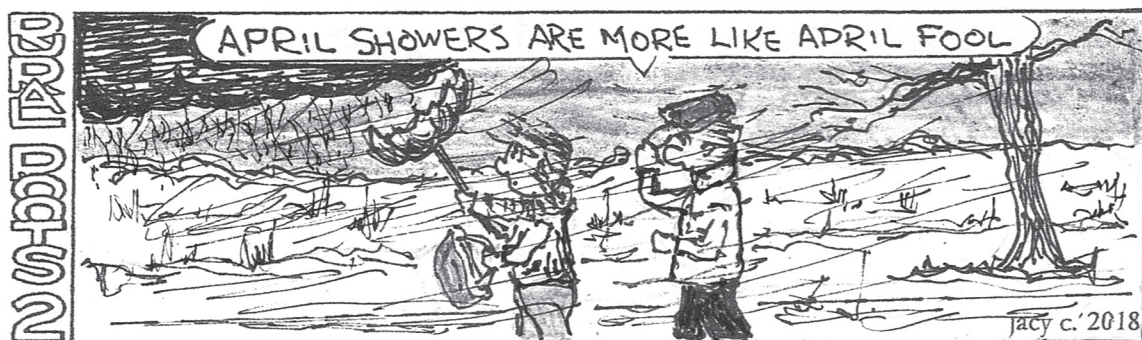
Some people I know don't think that is enough. Some people compare him to Paul Bernardo—although different types of prey—they are both serial killers in nature. Some proclaim prison is too good for them that they should get the death penalty. The problem here is that Canada hasn't had Capital Punishment since 1962. In 1987 there was a bill to restore the death penalty to the Canadian justice system which was defeated in the House of Commons. We as a nation recognize that the death penalty is unacceptable and barbaric. Capital Punishment in Canada was not by lethal injection. We hanged people. We wrapped a rope around their necks and killed them. 1,481 people were sentenced to be killed this way during our years of Capital Punishment. 697 men and 13

women were hanged in Canada.

As I was reading the article about Dellen Millard, another person tweeted that “they should have got the death penalty”. It's easy to hide behind a computer screen and vent our opinions on the justice system. It's easy to say, kill them like they killed their victims. It's easy to take an “eye for an eye” stance. However, what happens if they weren't truly guilty?

I am not by any means saying Dellen Millard or Paul Bernardo didn't commit the crimes they were convicted of. However, I am saying that over the past 30 years we have seen case after case throughout Canada and the world where people have been convicted of crimes they did not commit. In the United States, there have been people who have been sentenced to death and been given their lethal injection who had to the end proclaimed their innocence. What happens if they really hadn't committed the crime they were convicted of?

This is a huge topic to discuss in such a short space. However, we are a civilized nation and we've grown beyond rope and gallows. Never for a moment should any of us think that 50 years in a seven square meter space is getting away with murder.



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