



EHS, Alison Walker photos

On left, fire broke out at the Beaver Lumber store on Water Street (now Mill Street) early on the morning of Sept. 6, 1969. The building in the background was Canadian Tire (now Carpet Barn). At right, the new building that occupies the site today. Halton Hills (Esquesing Township) is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year (1819-2019).

OPINION

WHERE'S ELMER WHEN YOU NEED HIM?

PEDESTRIANS WOULD BE SAFER, WRITES TED BROWN



TED BROWN Column

of pedestrians walking on the wrong side of the road.

"What is their problem!!" she'll spout out. "They're supposed to be walking facing traffic, not with their backs to it!"

And she's 100 per cent correct - when one is walking on a road without sidewalks, the rule of thumb is to walk on the left side of the road so that you are facing traffic, rather than the other side of the road, where you would have your back to the oncoming traffic.

I learned that back when I was a little boy at the old Limehouse School.

And I knew because Elmer told me so.

OK, I may have to explain a bit.

Elmer the Safety Elephant was a mascot used by

schools to educate kids on street safety while on walking on streets and in our case, rural roads.

And as I attended the old Limehouse School, there wasn't a sidewalk within 10 miles. Matter of fact - I'm not sure I even knew what a sidewalk was at that age - so it was pretty important to adapt safe walking habits when walking home from school.

When we returned to school after summer holidays, we'd have an OPP police officer visit the school (complete with a cruiser no less!) and he'd bring along Elmer the Safety Elephant to teach us all about safety.

It was a pretty special day when Elmer dropped by.

The police officer would

go over the safety rules and always brought along a new poster with Elmer on it, which he'd leave behind to keep us on our toes.

After all, Elmer was watching.

We usually received handout colouring sheets as well, to create our own safety artwork while subliminally being reminded of the hazards all around us.

Elmer didn't limit himself to traffic safety - he also reminded us that our houses were filled with other sources of harm, like electrical outlets, fire and wringer washers (when I was little, many a kid got their arm caught between the rollers of a wringer washing machine).

And we learned that you never talk to strangers out on the country roads.

Elmer's big gig was traffic safety. And every day,

when the students were dismissed at 4 p.m. and headed home, well, they all walked, unless a parent picked them up cuz it was raining.

And we always walked facing traffic.

Today, with the proliferation of smartphones and music devices to distract us, it's more and more important that pedestrians walk on the correct side, facing the drivers. That way, if they're playing music too loud to hear an approaching vehicle - well, they may not hear it, but they will certainly see it.

I'm not sure if Elmer the Safety Elephant is still around, visiting schools. I suspect he's still active since there is an Elmer the Safety Elephant website (elmer.ca).

But I haven't seen any Elmer artwork in a very

long time.

The Sidekick certainly thinks Elmer should be back on the school beat, educating kids to walk on the left side of the streets.

Whenever she sees an offender, she says "Geez, where's Elmer when you need him?"

Pedestrians disobeying Elmer and his safety program is only one of her "pet peeves."

There are two more.

Just have a driver change lanes in front of her without signalling and she goes ballistic in seconds.

And when someone makes an illegal U-turn?

Watch out world ... you'll face the wrath of "Super Sidekick."

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