

ACROSS THE FENCE

With Joanne Stevenson



Out in left field!

It's a right-handed world, and that puts us lefties in awkward situations every day.

It's not as tough for us today as it used to be. Hundreds of years ago, left-handed people were burned as witches. Fifty years ago, left-handed children were forced to write with their right hands, with the sting of a ruler to remind them of that unjust requirement.

When I was a student, there was little consideration for lefties, but at least we weren't forced to change. My Kindergarten report card states that I had trouble cutting and often smudged my work. I never considered I was struggling with right-handed scissors — I just felt inept. And because the English language is written from left to right, lefties have to drag their hand through fresh ink whenever they write. That's why so many left-handed people write with a backward slant.

There are other day-to-day items, designed for righties, that drive us lefties crazy: three-ring binders, steno pads and coil-bound notebooks — our hands rest on the coils when writing; electrical cords, garden hoses and rope — these are made with a right-handed twist that leaves the lefty with a bunch of figure-eights when we try to wind them up; jar lids and screwdrivers twist clockwise — not our strongest direction. Even the computer mouse is accessed by the right hand.

If you look at how language has evolved, you'll see the negative image we have to live with. The Latin word for left is *sinister*, meaning "evil or wicked." The French word for left is *gauche*, which means "crooked, clumsy, awkward or boorish."

In politics, leftists are liberal or radical. And if you sit on the left hand of God, like Judas, you are untrustworthy.

There are a few benefits to being left-handed, however. In baseball, left-handed pitchers and batters make tough opponents. The same is true in tennis.

And lefties tend to be creative. Albert Einstein, John Lennon and Vincent Van Gogh were all left-handers.

There's been a lot of research about what makes a person left-handed. Some think that being deprived of oxygen at birth will do it. Others think it's purely hereditary.

My favourite piece of research is that right-handed people are controlled by the left side of the brain, while left-handed people are controlled by the right side of the brain.

This only goes to prove that left-handed people are the only people in their right minds.

If you head over the gym at McKenzie-Smith middle school this Friday night, you're "bound" to see an amazing rope-jumping exhibition.

The top two skipping teams in North America — Beamsville's Lincoln Leapers and South Carolina-based "The Force" — will be showcasing their unique athletic talents at 7:30 pm.

The Leapers have visited Acton a few times (always to great reviews) but The Force's visit is a "once in a lifetime thing" according to M-S principal Chris Logan.

You can get tickets at the school, or downtown at Jake Kuiken's Clocks & Curios shop.

Last week we reported that Acton's volunteer fire fighters installed the sharp new downtown Christmas decorations, but it really was the local Business Improvement Association who arranged for the hanging of the red, white and blue ornaments.

And while we're at it, are you aware that it is the Acton BIA — your downtown business community — that foots the bill for these holiday decorations. (Some people mistakenly assume that it's the municipality that puts up these decorations.)

Now there's another reason to support our downtown stores when Christmas shopping this year!



LETTERS

Halton Cable pens response to reader

In response to Acton resident Saul Timukas' letter in last week's edition, management at Halton Cable has forwarded to us a response, which originally was sent to Mr. Timukas on Nov. 11. The text of Halton Cable's letter follows.

Dear Mr. Timukas,

Thank you for your recent letter remarking on our Rate Increase Notice. Perhaps this reply will assist you in understanding the reasons for the addition of new channels and the corresponding rate adjustment. Some of the increase is due to escalation of the wholesale rates charged to us by networks in the Valu-Pack. The rest, however, is because of the addition of five channels to the package. The women we have talked to are delighted that finally there is a channel which looks after their interests.

The CRTC licensed several new Canadian Specialty channels earlier this year, and there is a strong and certain obligation on cable systems to carry as many as possible of these channels. As well, the CRTC regulations, which in the past have allowed the carriage of two U.S. Specialty networks for each Canadian, have changed to allow only one for one. This means that we had to drop Headline News in order to comply with the rules.

However, in a decision reached by our Board of Directors just Friday, and too late to include in our newsletter, we will retain CHN, and add two more Canadian channels, all without any additional charge to you, the customer. This is an exceptional bonus. The additional channels are the New Country Network and Bravo! There are now 14 channels instead of seven in the Valu-Pack.

You are correct in forecasting that a U.S. satellite-delivered service is able to broadcast and offer a vast number of channels to a mini receiving dish. However, there are some facts that you should know.

First, it is not licensed for Canadian operation, and thus, receiving those signals in Canada is technically illegal. The service is not attracting large numbers in the U.S. because the price for its basic service costs more than basic cable service for fewer channels (the price is the equivalent of about \$27 Canadian). Ours is \$13.71. The equivalent of our Basic plus Valu-Pack is about \$39 Canadian compared with our \$21.66, but with fewer channels. To purchase the receiving equipment is about \$1,200 to \$1,500. There are no Canadian stations on the service.

The majority of their channels are pay-per-view with movies or other features costing upwards of \$4.95 plus at least the basic service on top, so you can see that one or two movie purchases could easily bring a bill of \$50 per month or much more. Just think! Customers will have the option of going back to cable for a much better deal — if they ever left in the first place.

The digital security coding on the U.S. satellite broadcasting system is much different from the current technology and can be changed more easily and more frequently to frustrate pirates, and is much more difficult to defeat. If Canadians can't wait for the satellite service, then we urge them to investigate thoroughly before spending a great deal of money.

As far as program substitutions are concerned, we share your feelings. Canadian broadcasters such as CBC, CTV, Global and others were successful in lobbying the CRTC to force cable operators to switch Canadian channels onto U.S. channels when the content is exactly the same. You are not missing any programs, but you are receiving Canadian commercials instead of U.S. advertising. The cable operator must pay for the equipment and the personnel to make the changes, but receives no fees for this service, although it is worth millions of dollars per year to the television stations.

I invite you to write me again if you have further comment.

John H. De Jong
G.M., Halton Cable

GOT A BEEF?
Write Us A Letter

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