

Where have all the robins gone?

Usually the calls start coming in about mid-February. By the end of March I've taken a dozen or so. This year I didn't receive one. Nada. Zip. I can only conclude that robins no longer exist in southern Ontario.

For the better part of 10 years as a news editor (and another dozen as a member of the toy (sports) department), the one thing I've learned in the newspaper business that is as certain as a QEW traffic jam is that some readers always call when they spot the first robin of the year.

Decades ago newspapers gave the first sighting as much attention as a crash involving a bus full of orphans. But, that has changed over the years and the first robin sighting has gone the way of the 10-foot sunflower or the zucchini that looks like Bob Hope— those events are no longer newsworthy.

Editors are loathe to run a photo of Aunt Emma standing beside a gourd that looks like Jean Chrétien because we know the day after the picture appears someone will call to say they have an artichoke that bears an uncanny resemblance to Joe Clark and "could you come and take my picture, too?"

However, this year not one reader called to tell us about spotting a robin. (I did get a call about an owl in someone's back yard in March but that doesn't really count.)

Odd calls are part of the business. Not a month goes by without someone phoning us to do a story on a particular business because they have been "ripped off". Those callers are usually turned over to the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and are never heard from again.

Other callers are not so easy to get rid of. "Do you know that I can tell the weather by the kind of muffins they are selling today at Tim Hortons?" was how one call went several years ago.

THIS
'N
THAT



John McGhie

In 1980, during soccer's World Cup championship I got this head-scratcher from a woman: "Please can you give me the home telephone number for number 11 on the Argentina team?"

There have been other wacky calls from a variety of crackpots, idiots and the criminally insane.

"There is a bomb in your building and it will go off at 3 p.m." was one I fielded during a stint in Cambridge.

Unfortunately, there was no bomb and we had to return to our rat-infested, mouldy building after a brief evacuation. Staffers stood across the street as the deadline neared quietly hoping the building would be blown to smithereens.

But, while those calls always come out of the blue, the robin calls were ones I could always count on... until this year.

Come to think of it, I haven't seen a robin this spring. Maybe it's too early for a call.

Dis 'n Data

It's nice to see you can run away for a week and come back to find the world the way you left it: The Maple Leafs still provide more tears and cheers than a Love Story movie marathon; Stockwell Day is still a dope and Mike Harris and education system employees continue to make going to school for kids as much fun as dancing in a minefield with steel-toed boots.



Lions serve seniors

It was a full house as Georgetown Lions Club entertained 105 seniors at their annual seniors dinner. Taking their turns serving were (left) dinner chairman Bob Jackson and Lions president Jim Levy, as Hazel Kee, Wilma Parker and May Harley enjoyed their meal. Photo by Ted Brown

Brazen bandit steals \$10,000 in rings

About \$10,000 worth of men's gold rings were stolen from Reeds Jewelry Store in Georgetown Marketplace Sunday afternoon.

Halton Regional Police report about 12:55 p.m. a man forced open a display case in the store and removed two trays of men's gold rings while staff were busy with other customers.

The man hid the trays under his

coat and left the store. Mall security spotted the man getting into a black Jeep as he fled from the parking lot.

The man is described as white, 5'11" and 180 lbs. He was wearing a black leather jacket and blue jeans.

Anyone with information about the theft is asked to call police at 878-5511 ext. 2415 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS or 905-825-8477.

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