

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Rail Safety Week

The railway now known as CN, an acronym for Canadian National, as it used to be known before it grew into "North America's Railroad" with the acquisition of railways in the U.S. and Canada, is appealing to the media to support Rail Safety Week which started on Monday of this week and ends on Sunday. The emphasis this week by railway police is on trespassing.

While fatalities and serious injuries from railway crossing incidents have been declining, they still claim an alarming number of lives every year. CN officers at 100 railway crossings in Canada and the U.S. have been alerting motorists on the importance of safety at crossings. They have been aimed at the dangers of trespassing on railway property.

Trespassing includes: walking, playing or running on or beside railway tracks; driving a bike, a car, an ATV, a snowmobile, or any other vehicle on or beside railway tracks; taking a shortcut across railway tracks or railway property or entering railway yards at any time.

Recent statistics reveal that trespassing incidents claimed 58 lives in Canada in 2006, remaining at a constant yearly average over the past decade, while fatalities due to crossing collisions were down to 28, reflecting a steady improvement during the same period. Statistics also show that in 2006, 93 per cent of trespassing incidents resulted in death or serious injuries (63 per cent fatalities and 30 per cent serious injuries).

The alert could be especially significant in the Acton/Rockwood area where there are at least eight railway level crossings, most of which are protected by signals or gates. Nevertheless most have been scenes of fatalities over the years, despite warning signals. Further protection in the form of "alerts" should not go unheeded.

CN's concern for the safety of people along railway lines is admirable but after viewing the railroad's safety record on their lines as described by CTV's W5, it sounds a mite hollow. Numerous derailments across the country which have been blamed on poor or lack of maintenance are blemishing CN's name as well as safety record.

Some of the incidents and accidents may have political overtones as the result of dissatisfaction among employees, but the evidence on W5 certainly concluded that the railway has a long way to go on safety issues among its own employees.

Community clean-up

What a difference a community clean-up can make – in one day. It was a daunting task facing dozens of residents who took part in Saturday's clean-up. The litter uncovered by the arrival of Spring came in just about every shape and form but Sunday dawned bright and warm and this community's appearance was transformed.

One roadside in particular noticed was Wallace St. where it runs from McDonald Blvd. to Main St. N. The litter was everywhere but the crew from St. Alban's Church responsible for the street did an amazing job cleaning up. What a difference they made. It was the same elsewhere in the parks, rural roadsides and ravines.

It's a fine reflection on a town when the residents have pride in their surroundings and work at keeping them clean and livable.



CREEK CLEAN-UP: Bernice Garrett, Pauline and Tony Russell, on the left bank while Alexandra and Cloe Russell and Margot LaFrance, all members of the St. Alban the Martyr team, clean up along the creek that runs through the Bovis subdivision. – Submitted photo

Signs of spring are everywhere

Is it spring? Can we actually believe the snow has gone until next winter? I think we can now because there are some telltale signs that spring is here.

There are the obvious signs of spring. In my garden, the bulbs are starting to push up. The maple tree in the front yard has little buds, coloured cherry red and I can hear the birds in the morning in the tree chirping away. I can hear the birds because the windows are starting to be opened.

The best thing about opening windows is smelling spring. Some people don't understand what spring smells like. It is something you either get or you don't get. The thing about smelling spring is that you usually only get to smell it once a year.

Another sign that spring is here is this week's large garbage pick-up. The amount of stuff on both sides of roads in Acton this week is unbelievable. Each day two things happen with all this stuff. In the morning the piles seem to be smaller because all the pick-up trucks and cars that drive by



By
Angela Tyler

salvaging other people's garbage. Then, when the piles go down, the people in the houses bring out more stuff.

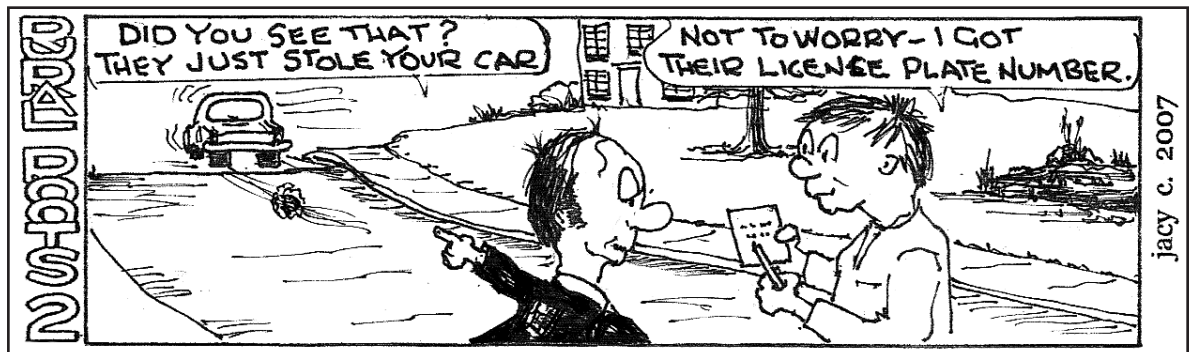
When I was looking out the window, I was boggled by the number of vehicles driving around the cul-de-sac scavenging. Little cars, big cars, pick-up trucks and cargo vans... it was like a parade. The best one was this beat-up old van that drove in with a guy driving who looked like Grizzly Adams. The van was funny. It reminded me of the television show the Beverly Hillbillies. Remember, the opening credits showed the family travelling west. Their car was loaded with everything tied down and Grandma in a rocking chair on top? Well this guy had the same thing going. He had bicycles and more tied to the top of the van. I'm sure if he was stopped by the police he would have got a ticket

for an unsafe load.

On Monday morning when I left for work, I was almost stopped dead in my tracks as I was greeted by another reminder that spring is here. It was the smell of skunk. It was pretty fresh and I had a horrible feeling that it may have sprayed around our home.

Sunday morning though was the worst. After I woke up and headed outside to run some errands, I realized that there are some things about spring I really don't like. I could live without the mud that the dog brings inside after being in the back yard, but in the end it really isn't that bad. What is bad is the aroma that I smelled Sunday morning. It was overwhelming and it seemed to encompass the whole west side of Acton. It smelled like manure. Then I remembered that those awful blue trucks are in the fields off Highway 25 spreading all that stuff that makes the air smell all over town.

Spring is great. The snow is gone and we'll soon have warm weather. However, some days it's best to keep the windows closed.



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