

# Got a good story? Tell somebody.

## Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Got a good story? Tell somebody.

As a broadcast journalist, I'm well aware of the challenges today's reporters and journalists face in covering stories – from tight deadlines and a lack of resources, to corporate ownership and the pervasion of tabloid-style reporting in mainstream media. But as guest editor for a recent Saturday edition of the Vancouver Sun, I found out that I still have a lot to learn.

I've never been a news reporter. In fact, more often than not, I'm the focus of a news story, rather than reporting it. Still, I thought I had a pretty good idea of how the news game worked. I know that news is what's happening right now, and that reporters have to crank out copy fast. And I know that daily news is an ephemeral beast. I myself have been guilty of picking up a newspaper, starting to read it, then throwing it down in disgust upon realizing that it was a day old. Yesterday's news just isn't news anymore.

So it was amazing to find out just how much goes into producing a daily newspaper. I was at the Vancouver Sun for a 12-hour shift. In spite of the fact that I had assigned some stories weeks before, there were still dozens of decisions to be made on the fly – everything from writing headlines to story placement, getting reporters to follow up on leads, use of language, fact checking, and, of course, meetings, meetings, meetings.

And that was just the editorial part of the day. At 7 p.m., when I thought we had put the paper to bed, we were off to the production facility where the paper was printed – another whole set of decisions and new challenges. The entire process left me exhausted and humbled.

Overall, I'm pretty pleased with the result. We managed to include some stories that I thought would never run – an article on the true cost of gasoline in the Business section, for example. A reporter looked into what a litre of gasoline costs society if "full-cost accounting" is factored into the equation. This kind of analysis considers factors that are normally considered "externalities" in economics – things like air and water pollution and climate change. When these things are considered, gasoline actually costs upwards of \$4.00 per litre – far more than the \$1.25 we're currently paying at the pump.

Throughout the stories, my goal was to weave a common thread of sustainability. I hoped to get people thinking about the environmental footprint of everything we do and stimulate discussion about how we can do things better. It was actually pretty easy to find stories that touched on these issues for every section of the newspaper, from Sports to Arts. The reality is our economy and our way of life depends on the natural services that we generally take for granted. We can't afford to do that any longer.

I'm sure that some people will be unhappy with "my" newspaper, because I didn't make it only available online to save paper (great idea, but not an option for the publisher) or that car advertisements were still allowed in the paper, or that the stories weren't deep enough or didn't cover all the environmental challenges we face. In the end, it was just one day. I hope that the edition got a few people thinking in different ways. And I hope it gave the reporters and editors some new ways to think about things too.

So, here's my suggestion to everyone reading who, like me, gets frustrated with the media and the coverage of certain stories, or the lack of it: Tell somebody. If you don't think your local newspaper, radio or television station is covering something adequately, give them a call. Reporters are reporters because they are inquisitive people. They like telling stories. If you have a story idea, don't be afraid to write or call and suggest it. Environmental problems affect all of us. And it's up to all of us to solve them.



**FINAL DETAILS:** As construction continues on the Acton skateboard park, committee members, including Alex Roehrig (right) and Town rep Aaron Matthews check out the final version of the sign that will be installed at the site, beside the arena. The facility is slated to open the week of June 11.  
— Frances Niblock photo

## Just another day in the life of Billie

At the end of this month, the Dude's and my baby will be one year old. It's a milestone we absolutely have to mark with a celebration.

I had heard a long time ago that newlyweds were couples who had been married less than two years. The Dude and I had just graduated to non-newlywed and with that comes the question when meeting new people: "So...do you have children?" I always find it inappropriate for people to ask. Maybe some people choose not to have them or can't. Maybe it just hasn't been their time yet to have a family. I love the look on some people's faces when I respond with "We have a dog..." For them, a dog is not a family. However, for the Dude and me, right now, our dog is our family and he is a "going concern," as one of our friends puts it.

I have to admit, I fell in love with our little Billie at first sight. It had only been a few weeks since we'd said goodbye to Kodi, our beloved Malamute, and I was hesitant to quickly get another dog. But I did adore Billie. I now use the word little in a non-lit-



By  
Angela Tyler

eral sense. Billie is far from the little 19-pound puppy we brought home. He is now 142 pounds of fur and St. Bernard slobber. He may be big, but he is nothing but fur, skin and bones. He could eat a feast and never gain any fat, even though his motivation level is that of a piece of lint.

I used to think he was lazy. In hindsight, I have come to the conclusion, like most toddlers, he has his parents trained. He won't go outside unless the Dude gives him a milk bone. I love him cuddling with us on our king size bed when we watch T.V. However, he won't get up on his own. He puts his front paws on the bed and gives me this sad look until I go over and hoist his rear end up. He absolutely knows how to play us.

Although we have only had him ten months, I can't believe what we have been through. Some days I feel like I call the vet or the

breeder endlessly trying to get answers, somewhat like a new mom would call her mother or the doctor's office.

I thought and still think it's cute he has one brown eye and one blue eye, yet I am also starting to think that was our first clue to his "uniqueness." The second clue was when the breeder told us, when we picked him up, that he didn't have any testicles. I remember thinking, "Great...one blue eye, one brown eye and no balls...at least we won't have to get him neutered."

In ten months, we have gone through all the new parent stuff, even though the Dude and I have both had dogs before. This one was different, besides the obvious; he was ours...together.

We have gone through the sleepless nights where our baby couldn't make it eight hours without having to go for a potty break. Lucky for me I am a sound sleeper and the Dude experienced that far more than I did.

We've gone through baby or puppy food and toilet training. We've done the obedience les-

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