



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Red, yellow don't make green

I was especially alert when out on the road last weekend.

While it was the infamous May 2-4 weekend, it seemed as though almost every motorist used that as an excuse to drive like a moron.

I found myself vigorously shaking my fist at cars weaving around me. I was honking at those who didn't signal, only to receive their icy stares as though it was my fault.

As much as I would like to think it however, such atrocious behaviour is not confined to the weekend.

We are a society of terrible drivers.

The common perception seems to be that young people are the root of all that. Yet, I often find that many of the people my age with whom I ride are better drivers than their parents.

Unlike drivers my age, our parents have not recently completed driving school. Many of them are still working with what they learned 20, 30, 40 years ago. Things have changed.

Young people today are much better prepared to handle driving on our roads than our parents ever were, and perhaps are even now.

Of course new drivers lack the experience of many more senior motorists, but one does not need experience to know that one signals when changing lanes.

Once someone has their licence though, it's far too easy for them to keep it for 50 years without having to take another driving test.

I can't even begin to imagine the infinite number of factors which could alter one's driving abilities in 10 years, let alone 50.

Drivers should be required to undergo testing or participate in a refresher course from an accredited driving school every few years.

Such a regulation would only save half the



Youth Perspective

with DAVE COUPE

problem, however. We simply have to start following the rules.

Only about five per cent of automobile collision are actually accidents. The other 95 per cent are as the direct result of human error and/or misjudgment.

There is actually no excuse for failing to signal, nor are there excuses for running red lights or failing to stop at a stop sign. As for speeding and weaving, where is this place that is so special that you must drive twice as fast as everyone else to get there?

So to help, I've come up with a few simple driving rules to remember:

Stop should be self-explanatory.

Red and yellow do not equal green.

Signalling allows you to beat other drivers to a given spot legitimately.

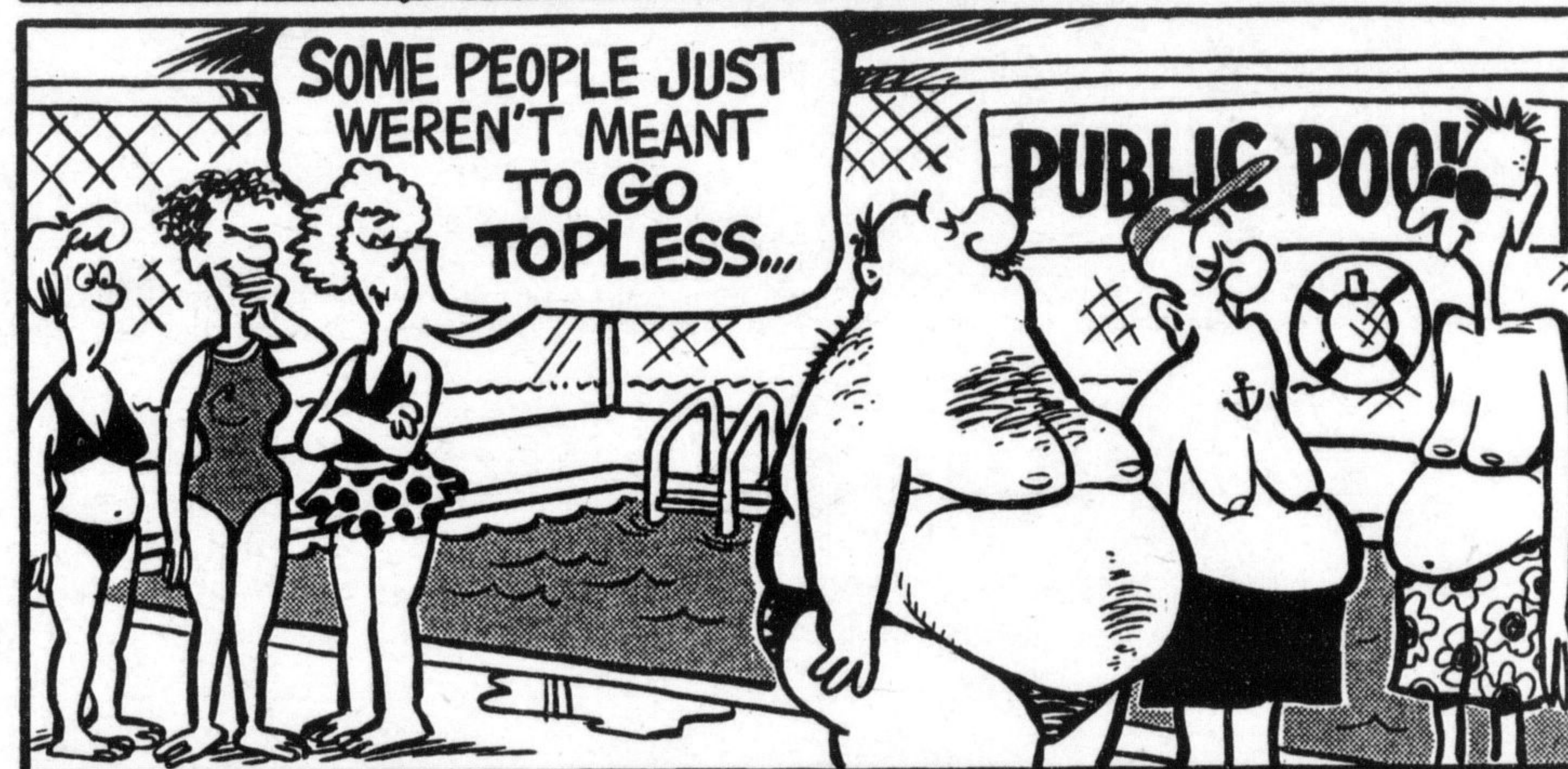
Driving and weaving creates the worst knots

Don't drive around someone who's weaving, nor weave around someone who's driving.

Speeding will get you to a collision much faster.

And to think that by actually following the rules of the road we could reduce vehicle collisions by more than half.

It almost sounds too simple, doesn't it?



Maybe it is worth the drive

Pack and load. Unload and unpack. Pack and load. Unload and unpack. That's why I don't drive to the cottage every weekend. Unlike hubby, who seems to have an organizational knack for getting there and back with the least amount of fuss, that skill continues to elude me and I find I spend a large amount of time with pre-trip and post-trip activities — both of which are a drag.

I got away with not going up on the Easter weekend, but I couldn't ask for special favours to miss the Victoria Day weekend at the cottage. Since hubby regularly makes the cottage his weekend getaway (get away from what or whom?), we do not have to go through the traditional opening-up-the-cottage ceremony.

We already know what water pipes have frozen and burst and we have already had the field mice nest among our tea towels.

The 18-year-old drove up in the infamous bug on Friday night with a carload of groceries. That kid will do anything to escape washing dishes. As a trade-off, he had planned the weekend's menu and purchased the necessary food, although we discovered over the course of the weekend that he had overestimated by four people.



On the Homefront

with ESTHER CALDWELL

Saturday, to my surprise, the rest of us actually left the house at 9:35, only half an hour behind schedule.

There were five of us — the driver (me), the 10-year-old and his friend, the 13-year-old, who was sulking because she wanted to stay home, and a Korean student who was going to experience cottage country for the first time.

On principle, we have to have our first dip of the season on the May 24th weekend. In my younger, foolish days, I would have tiptoed in for a brief encounter with frigid water, but I left that delight to the 10-year-old. The 18-year-old followed suit later in the weekend. Paul, the Korean, just shook his head in disbelief at the crazy Canadians.

Of course, nature's welcoming committee was out in full force. The blackflies hunted us down mercilessly.

Paul is a city boy for Seoul, so we tried our best to initiate him in the ways of roughing it in the bush. I took him on the official boat tour around our small lake. He endured 40 minutes of rough seas and cold winds. He still managed a smile at the end of our excursion. Later, we threw him out into the elements to mow the lawn.

The kids introduced him to a nasty game that had mysteriously made its way from one of the relatives' cottages on the other side of the lake. Hour after hour into the dead of night, Paul threw the dice with the rest of the addicted gamblers, fighting for control of the world in a never-ending game of Risk. I am afraid Paul was too polite to pull out.

What's a stay at the cottage without a requisite bonfire, even if it was in a drizzle? The two young boys found the usual sticks to poke into the fire then brandish dangerously at the crowd. Eventually, the moon peaked through the shroud of clouds and even a few stars twinkled. We listened to the frogs croaking in the swamp.

Maybe that time spent packing and loading, unloading and unpacking was worth it.

Careful look shows the answer will be there

The parents called me in tears... they didn't know what to do or where to turn. Their son, James, an eleventh grader, is now getting 50s (and worse) on his tests at school. Yet, he got all As and Bs in elementary school and middle school. What's going on?

He says he sailed through elementary and middle school without doing much studying, so study skills may be lacking. He says he wants to do well, but talk is cheap and his motivation must be questioned. In James' cases, other possibilities (memory deficit, stress, drugs, psychiatric issues) have been ruled out.

How can we identify what is going on? To gather information, I met with James, his teachers, his parents, and looked carefully at his tests, homework, and his student record. A crucial part of this is to look carefully at his tests and homework, because his errors will often tell you what you need to know. Here's what I found.

James had no trouble concentrating in at least some of his classes. His work on science labs and computer keyboarding, for example, is consistently high (80s and 90s). This tells me he can concentrate, at least for 72 minutes (a class), so an attention deficit is probably not the issue.



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

In looking over his tests, we find some very interesting patterns. On a recent math test, he got 56 per cent. A closer examination, however, reveals that he did better on the later, harder questions than he did on the earlier, easier questions.

Furthermore, in examining his errors, he was often able to identify what he did wrong and provide the correct answer. This means that the level of difficulty was not the problem.

The same test (and several others) revealed that virtually half of the points lost were due to careless calculation errors, which in turn made the final answer wrong even if he understood the problem and how to solve it. This tells me that

he doesn't work carefully and he doesn't check his work, signalling a problem in motivation and/or study skills.

In the course of conversation, he told me that he's getting scared because he's really trying hard and still not doing well. I pursued whether he knows what it means to "really try", because he never really had to do it before — it all came so easily in the early years. It turns out that he has a test in two days and he hasn't even read the chapter.

James didn't have a clue how to study for a test. To test this notion, he agreed to meet me twice a week for three weeks, to prepare (properly) for his next test. If he got 90, he would know that the issue really is study skills. He read the material on time, I questioned him on his understanding of each new section of material, we reviewed the old material each time, I obtained extra timed problems from the teacher and gave him sample practice tests (to practice his test-taking skills). He got a 97.

If you know what to look for you can usually tell if the problem is motivation and/or study skills. If it is not, then you should obtain some professional help.