



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Get that Welk a satellite

People in Florida were all upset the other day when NASA lobbed a rocket toward Saturn because it was laden with a couple of barbell plates worth of plutonium, a substance more potentially toxic than untreated Lake Ontario water, although it doesn't smell as bad.

Florida is full of oldsters who have retired there to golf, buy cheap liquor and organize Proposition 13-type referendums every time the state hints at raising taxes.

Getting dusted by nuke fragments if an errant space probe constructed by the low bidder self-destructs into an easterly breeze off Cocoa Beach is not supposed to be part of the deal.

Why should the Oldsmobile crowd risk a plutonium drizzle over some half-cocked plan to send the slow space boat out into the middle of the solar system? The irradiated thing won't get there for seven years, about the half-life of a reasonable retirement.

The only way to move the septuagenarian set on side would be to launch the Lawrence Welk satellite. Trust me, I know. My father and step-mother live year-round in Florida.

If you fired up a hunk of solar panels and microwave relays that hung in geosynchronous low-Earth orbit over the sunshine state re-running the Welk parade 24 hours a day, you could power it with enough plutonium to make everybody in China glow like lava lamps. The true blue-haired Welksters wouldn't care, and there are lots of 'em.

Speaking of stellar exploration and such, why do Russian space slumlords keep sending the wrong type of people to that Mir tub? It's falling apart, it's ugly and it smells bad. Why bother sending expatriate British scientists and American aeronautical engineers? They can't fix it up. Send Bob Villa and Martha Stewart instead.

That's it on the world news front, now back to our local programming.

Sources close to the area constabulary tell me the cops want to do a story about how much dope is being grown around here these days. Fine, whatever, sez I in response to this suggestion, suspecting all the time that the cops are advancing their own agenda, which is to prove that the \$400,000 per annum helicopter they want is a wise investment.

'See,?' they will say, 'We're just scratching the surface here. Imagine what we could round up with the chopper.'

One of the functions of the machine is to do aerial surveillance for marijuana fields. The other two will be chasing car thieves and providing expensive, glamour-riddled entertainment for bored law enforcement types. What the hell. It's 550 against one, unless somebody else hints they agree with me.

Helicopters are kind of a guy thing. Like the Three Stooges, and drinking until you do or say something you regret the next day.

As a matter of fact, guys certainly don't have to be drunk to put their Florsheims in their



Rob Kelly

mouths in front of women.

For example, on Thanksgiving weekend I went to a dinner party my sister threw, in the tony Danforth area of Toronto where she bought a house.

She invited an actress, the daughter of a long-time work colleague now living on the east coast. The actress, highly respected and the recipient of many professional accolades in her native Quebec, has been involved in theatre a lot, but moved here to take a role in a science fiction television show being circulated in about 140 markets across North America.

While channel flipping one night recently I stumbled on the premiere, and being a genre addict watched the whole thing. The gist of it is, NBA-sized alien of indeterminate sex has band of sinister suck-up allies and unwary dupes in palm of hand, or claw, or whatever. Small crew of resistance heroes fights other-worldly tyranny. Along those lines anyhow.

"Hey, I've seen that show," I tell the actress as she outlines the drama. I figure she's a supporting character, maybe a villain's henchwoman. She looks a bit exotic and dangerous, slim, tallish, heavy-lidded, dark. I plow on. "It's about some big, bald, weird-looking gangly alien thing."

"That's me," she says, nodding into her swirling white wine.

Space soaps are uncharted territory for her, and nibbling at the back of her mind is a little self-consciousness with regards to the alien get-up.

This actually is a breath of fresh air as far as I'm concerned, since most of the well-known or soon to be well known actors I've met have been pretentious and overly serious about their work, which is even sillier for the most part than what I'm doing at the moment.

Gamely absorbing my blurted and blunt caricature, she goes on to explain how they use various gimmicks to make her look taller, and how it takes three hours to put all her make-up on.

In order to make good for Thanksgiving gaffes I thought I'd throw in the following plug for 'Earth: The Final Conflict', somehow affiliated with the late Gene Roddenberry of Star Trek fame:

It's on Friday nights, carried by the CBC, and stars a charming young actress.

Who knows, maybe they'll offer me a bit part in appreciation? Then you'll definitely see some big, bald, scary-looking guy in the show.

Looking Back ...



The Sputniks, sponsored by Ledwith's Super Save, competed in the girls' softball league in August, 1962 under coach Neil Loomis. In back are Gail Facto, Leeni de Bruyn, Nora Hearn and Lynne McClintock. In front are Janet Smith, Susan Berub and Sandy Delahunt.

List of rules by kids to parents

What do teenagers want in a parent? Dare we ask? I did, and the results are very interesting and provocative once you can get past the daggers.

I pooled about 250 teens and pre-teens over a period of two years, asking them what an ideal parent would look like. The question was, 'If you were to give your parents advice on how to treat teenagers, what would you tell them?' In addition, I asked them to specify, for each parenting attribute on their list, whether it was present or absent in their own parents. The only added information I gave was a definition of a parent -- 'a major part of a parent's role is to shape, guide and teach their children' -- so that their answers would be relevant to parents (rather than the tooth fairy).

Know when to shut up. This rule had two major themes. First, don't push into their personal lives, ask about boyfriends and girlfriends, probe or check up on everything they do and think. Second, don't embarrass your kids in front of their friends. If you're giving your kids and their friends a ride somewhere or they have friends over for dinner, they're a captive audience for those few minutes. Don't abuse the moment to ask the friend if they have a girlfriend or some other nosy question about their lives. Don't criticize them in front of their friends, tell them what to do or relate funny stories or pictures of your kids when they were growing up. In fact, don't do anything in front of their friends except serve the dinner and go back to your room.

Read between the lines. The biggest issue here is don't listen to what kids say when they're mad. It doesn't count. They don't mean it. Forget it ... they will. You need to understand that they're only trying to hurt you because they feel you hurt them. Don't react to dumb things they say (eg. 'I hate you' or 'That's really dumb') in an argument, because you'll only perpetuate and extend the argument rather than resolving it. You'll get off topic, addressing the irrational thing he said, rather than the real reason he was upset in the first place. Take a break, say you need some time to think and cool down.



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

Tell him we'll talk about it after dinner.

Listen. When kids disagree, listen to what they're saying. Think about it. See if there's room for negotiation or compromise. Answer her questions with reason, not with '... because I said so'. If you can't think of a reason, maybe they're right. Change your mind once in a while -- after all, you're not always right (and you know it). If you spoke impulsively, don't be afraid to backtrack, to take it back -- it will make your teen feel respected.

Apologize. I love this rule. When you're wrong, admit it. Tell them you're sorry. Promise to be more careful next time. There truly is something magical about a sincere apology. It has a cleansing effect. It is endearing to the other person, it puts the problem behind you immediately and a fresh start is born. It also tells kids that you're not stuck up or power-tripping, since you make yourself vulnerable, at least for a few moments. Finally, it's a great model. It shows them how to deal with it when they are wrong.

Calm down. It really doesn't help to yell at kids. In fact, it hurts. It makes a teen feel controlled and it takes away his integrity. And it does some real damage to your relationship if it happens a lot. If you're that upset, take some time to cool off and tell him you'll talk with him later. If you yell, the teen will either be submissive, defensive, or oppositional -- and none of these are good. You want your child to think about what you're saying, to internalize it, and operate on it. It can't happen if you're yelling because all the teen is thinking about is how to get you to stop yelling. Worse, the teen may learn to yell back, trying to "win" or at least turn off your yelling.