



# OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## Okay, I got the message and I'm better for it

When I was quite a bit younger, I had a philosophy that I think I might have picked up from a war movie.

Don't volunteer for anything.

Then I had the misfortune of relating that particular philosophy to my ladyfriend, a person who volunteered for practically everything.

"Why bother," I said. "Somebody else will always do it."

She laid into me pretty heavily, and within minutes my smug little attitude changed into one of shame.

What if everyone thought the same as you? Don't you think you have a responsibility to your kids and your community? How come it's always the same people? If more people volunteered, don't you think it would make it easier on everyone?

Okay, okay, I got the message.

Instead of wondering why people went to the trouble of volunteering, I started to watch how they did it because I wasn't quite comfortable with my newly-acquired feelings of responsibility.

One of the people I watched was Brian May, a man who recently passed away, much too young. He was a volunteer.

He coached my oldest daughter's softball team, and as she noted, coached almost everybody in Milton at some time.

Brian was many things to many people, and I can't do justice to that fact in this small space.

However insignificant I was to him, he taught me something meaningful.

You see, through him, over one summer, I discovered the secret to volunteering. I don't know if he consciously knew that he knew the secret, but he did.

It was quite simple: He enjoyed what he was doing.

At the time it was a revelation to me. Prior to that, volunteering your time for free and having fun at the same time did not make an equation.

Whether he was wise-cracking from the third base coaching box or doing it in more subtle ways, one thing was clear. He wasn't there because he had to be, he was there because he wanted to be.

One incident sticks out in my mind from that summer because it involved my oldest daughter.

Brian had been teaching her how to pitch in practise, and she was doing pretty well.

When she got her chance to pitch in a game

## View Point

with MURRAY TOWNSEND



for the first time, however, she bombed big-time.

She stood dejectedly on the pitching rubber, obviously quite upset, as he came to take her out. He said something to her and by the time she was walking back to the bench she had a big smile on her face.

Last year, while coaching a girls rep team in Bolton, I had to take a pitcher out of a pressure-packed playoff game because she wasn't doing well.

I didn't know what to say to her, and when she left the pitching rubber she was crying.

That wasn't particularly fun for either her or me, and it made me recall the incident with Brian and my daughter.

The next time I had to remove the same girl from a game I was ready.

"I'm going to take you out," I told her. "But it's not your fault. If those players were all a foot taller, all those pitches would be strikes. It's their parents fault."

She left smiling.

A couple years ago, I volunteered to mind the barbecue at a softball tournament. A two-hour shift turned into a 10-hour shift when the organizers couldn't find anyone else to do it.

By the end of the day I was as burnt as the hamburgers I cooked, but I still enjoyed it. I had fun and felt useful at the same time. What could be better than that?

One night this week I got a call from two different coaches who asked if I would fill in for them on the same night. One was a girls softball team in Milton and the other was a boys baseball team in Bolton.

I couldn't because I had to work, but instead of feeling relieved that I had a ready excuse, as I would have at one time, I was disappointed.

That's because one summer I learned the secret to volunteering. Thanks, Brian.

**"Instead of wondering why people went to the trouble of volunteering, I started to watch how they did it because I wasn't quite comfortable with my newly-acquired feelings of responsibility."**

MURRAY TOWNSEND

## Looking Back ...



Trophy winners Scott Wilson and Darlene Krantz displayed the awards they won at the All-Ontario Karate Championships in December, 1976. Scott took first place in the junior green to brown belt category while Darlene was third in the women's kata event.

## Here's the whole truth

It's nice to get the whole truth.

In several instances recently more detail on events would have provided a clearer picture of the facts people were presenting.

For example, I recently stumbled across a local cable access show that gave Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac and Flamborough Mayor Ted McMeekin an opportunity to talk about local government.

I was stunned by the lack of real hard-hitting questions offered by the host Ralph Robinson until I learned he's an Oakville councillor. Nobody mentioned that little tidbit.

Regional councillors are running around trumpeting that they reduced their portion of the tax bill by 4.6 per cent. On the surface its very commendable.

They curse the provincial government because, despite their efforts, taxes in Halton will rise.

However, I wanted to know then, and I still want to know.

Would Halton council have agreed to a 4.6 per cent decrease in spending on existing programs if they were not pushed by the provincial government through the downloading exercise?

So far, in conversations with some councillors, the answer, off the record, is a resounding no.

This is just as I suspected.

Why won't anyone come out and say that publicly?

The cuts were made in response to the provincial government foisting new responsibilities on local governments, which forced them to cut their budgets to keep taxes from rising unacceptably.

It is my contention that without the downloading, municipal governments would never have cut their budgets. Period.

I believe that if you give a politician or government money they will find a way to spend it.

Witness the current federal government, which is racking up surpluses but maintaining high tax rates without reducing the country's overall debt.

Of course, some people complain that tax cuts



## Reaume with a View

with BRAD REAUME

benefit the rich.

However, in leftist Ontario the truth is the rich are defined as those who can pay their rent on time.

Well let me just say, at least these rich earn their money.

**THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ALLOWING PEOPLE WHO EARN MONEY TO KEEP SOME OF IT.**

At the same time, I am sympathetic to some form of minimum tax for individuals and corporations.

Another instance of not getting the whole story occurred recently at town council.

Councillor John Challinor patted his colleagues on their backs for fiscal management after reading a section of the recent Ontario budget document which claimed well managed municipalities like Milton were able to reduce taxes this year.

Well, that's not the whole story.

In actual fact, taxes in Milton are going up, thanks to provincial downloading on Halton Region which will push the average property tax bill up about \$138.

Yes, the Milton portion of taxes decreased but only because of a huge provincial funding grant.

In fact, the local portion of taxes could have gone down even more thanks to the provincial grant, but local council decided to put some of that extra money into a reserve fund rather than reduce property taxes a few dollars.

I just thought you might like to know.