

Go ahead, driver examiner, make my day

Have you ever stopped to notice how one person's miserable attitude can suck the life out of your otherwise nice day?

Granted, it's hard sometimes to control one's expressions when working in an atmosphere dealing with a parade of personalities that come and go throughout the day. But being in a public-related occupation, you have to learn quickly to greet each new face with a smile.

If you haven't yet had an encounter where the person serving you was a touch on the grumpy side, try taking a walk into your local Driver's Examination Centre. You might understand what I mean.

Borrowing from the words of comedian Jerry Seinfeld, I have to ask, what is the deal with some driver's examination employees?

No one likes to take a test. No one looks forward to them, especially when you know the examiner is going to be hovering over your shoulder judging your faults with a fine-tooth comb. But I mean, could some of these people make it anymore difficult?

I was prompted to write on this subject after a recent experience I had down at the driving centre in Oakville. I have had several bad experiences in the past, where my friendliness clashed with an examiner's coarse attitude. Also, I have heard similar tales from many others on how they were treated. This one pushed me over the edge.

It all began after arriving a mere five minutes late to the centre due to the heavy morning traffic. I reported to the dispatch official who reminded me in a stern and seemingly disgusted tone that I was late. Then, as if that wasn't humiliating enough, in bold letters, the word "late" was scrawled across the top of my test.

I was never one for tests. With as much preparation as I could gather, I still had zero self-confidence. Five minutes into it and I already had two faults eating away at my nerves.

My test was to begin at exactly 8:45 a.m. After cracking my knuckles a thousand times and grinding my teeth clear out of my face in waiting, the testing official casually strolled out at exactly 9:15 a.m. Now maybe it's me. Is that not exactly 30 minutes late on their part?

To make the procedure as pleasant as possible, with my nerves broken and my vital organs seizing, with a smile I said good morning and asked how she was?

Her response? A warm and heartfelt, "Yeah, okay whatever." After explaining the procedure to me, the road test began.

To me, everything was fine. All nervousness and tension was lifted and I drove with a clear head and immaculate focus. My parallel parking skills were exceptional. My lane changes were text-book perfect. After 20 minutes on the road, I pulled back into the testing centre as the instructor sat in silence making her notes. With a smile I glanced forward feeling confident I had passed.

Then with an exhaustive and utterly appalled sigh as if she had



The real deal

with ANDREW JENKINS

just eaten rancid meat, she told me I had failed. She spoke with such heated sarcastic tones, it could have melted a candle. She made me feel like an idiot. She said I failed because I didn't do a blind spot check and because I was speeding in a school zone. With the limit posted at 40 km/h, I was going at an alarming 43 km/h. She pointed out my flaws with disgust and walked off leav-

ing my day ruined.

I can honestly say I take criticism well. Without criticism, how do any of us learn? But it's the delivery of that criticism that counts the most. If I failed, that's fine. But why further hurt my feelings with sarcasm? I felt bad enough, thank you.

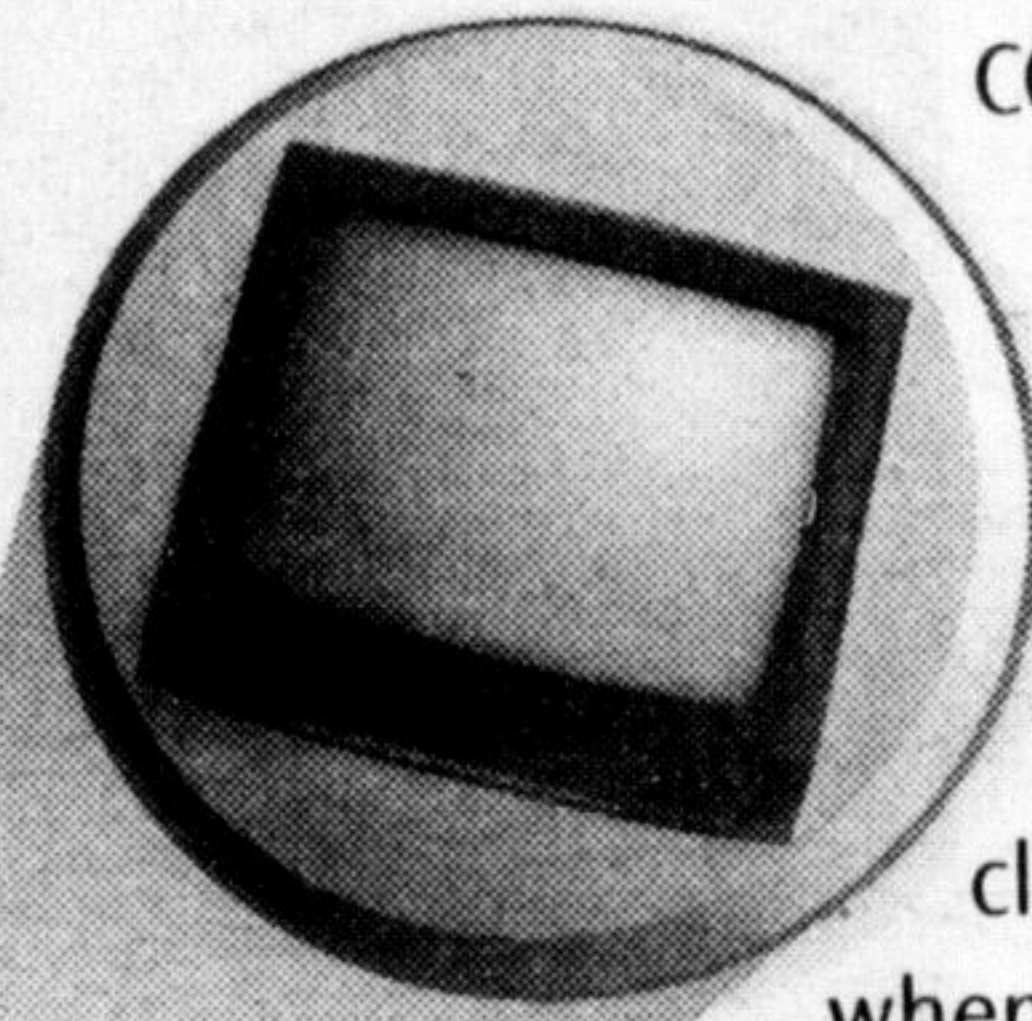
Was it something I was wearing? Was it my spikey hair? What was it about me that this examination centre employee just couldn't stand? Some people have off days. It can make your own day seem like a waste. As people you meet throughout life remind you of how unfortunate their day is with a tone as soothing and gentle as a smoke alarm, remind them of how great your day is.

At the very least, it ticks them off royally to see they haven't broken you as they have many others before you

(Andrew Jenkins is a second-year journalism student at Sheridan College. He's currently interning at The Champion through Sheridan's community journalism field placement program.)

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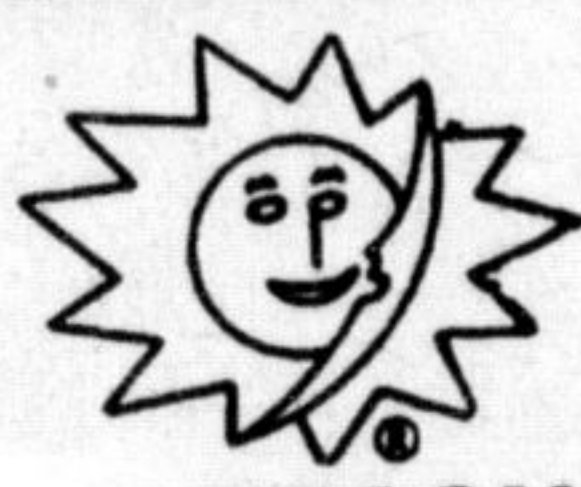


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