

Opinion

The shape of things to come?

Remember the old movies which depict the coming millennium? It's amazing what a few soaring towers and lots of chrome can do. While those movies played hit-and-miss with the future they unwittingly got one thing right; commercialism rules the roost.

That philosophical beacon, that blarney stone of the western politician and that get-rich-quick scheme of the little guy are the real wheels which move human kind. Freud was wrong.

Imagine, if you will, a Milton of the not too distant future. A future in which the forces of commercialism have triumphed, by steamrolling into highways the blood-splattered remnants of those enemies of the almighty dollar who dared lay down before the great Satanic engines bent on renting asunder the very earth.

As the last vestige of the escarpment is carted away politicians will celebrate the completion of the Open Vistas Project and cut the ribbon on the 12-lane Halton Region Conservation Authority Expressway designed to satisfy the needs of the aggregate industry and use the natural roadbed created when the escarpment was removed.

Of course, chronic asphalt shortages will be the issue of the day. Mayor, Gord Krantz will urge restraint to ease road use and Firestone will swing back into production, buoyed by their new Roadsoft Tires.

Escarpment World Mall will rise dramatically on the western edge of the City of Milton, population 100,000. A 200-foot high plastic replica of Rattlesnake Point will be the centrepiece of the mall, complete with rock climbing handholds and a rollercoaster ride to the top featuring a hair-raising hairpin turn.

Of course the Big Pipe will be bringing water



Reaume With a View

with BRAD REAUME

up from Lake Ontario. It will also be bringing raw sewage and medical wastes. The water will smell like it was used in an attempt to douse Hell. Fecal coliform counts will be almost as high as the bill to clean it all up.

Future Miltonians will forget their town's name derived from a simplification of Mill Town and think that probably English poet John Milton and his epic *Paradise Lost* inspired it. They will forget the green space, the small-town speed of life and the community atmosphere which Milton once had in abundance. They will worry about the slow construction of the Campbellville cloverleaf linking Highway 401 to the HRCA Expressway.

Milton will end up looking like everywhere else, its features plowed under by the raging hormones of commercialism. It is true that the love of money is the root of all people.

Remember in the movie *It's A Wonderful Life*, with Jimmy Stewart, when he goes to his hometown and sees how it would have been without him? Crass commercialism has taken over, morality standards are lowered, everybody's surly, and there is no escarpment. Think about that and remember; if you don't stand up and save Milton's heritage it will be a much different place when the future finally rolls into town.



What would I do without you?

My dear one, in some of our greyer moments together, you accuse me of not appreciating you enough. And yes, I admit that I often forget to thank you. Instead, I take for granted what you do for the family.

If it weren't for you, we would never get off on a trip on time. You shake me awake in the morning when I would rather stay sleeping. You bustle about, packing up the car, pulling food out of the refrigerator and putting it into the cooler, organizing the cat's food and litter for the car, and waiting impatiently for the rest of us to finish breakfast so you can wash up the remaining dirty dishes.

On our trips, you pour out cups of water for young, thirsty passengers, juggle croissants and cold cuts on your lap to make us sandwiches, and fluff up cushions to prop under sleepy heads.

If it weren't for you, our weekly grocery shopping excursions would be interminable. Instead, you grab half the list and meet me with your cart full at the checkout counter. You even oversee the carrying into the house and the putting away of provisions.

If it weren't for you, lunch might never happen some days. Without hesitation, you throw together a soup from scratch - water, bouillon cubes, alphabet noodles, a chopped carrot, a handful of frozen peas and corn, and a few shakes of selected herbs. At other times, I can call on you to bake a cake or muffins for a snack or thicken the stew that's simmering on the stove.

If it weren't for you, the cats would grow a little thinner too. You clean out and refill their water dishes and keep their bowls topped up with dry food. And your participation in household chores does not stop at the feeding of pets.

Whatever task you are called upon to do, you can carry it out, whether it is vacuuming and washing floors, sorting, washing and folding laundry or bringing back the gleam on the bathroom taps.

And with undivided attention, you will settle



On the Home Front

with ESTHER CALDWELL

into the mountain of toys, resorting them and arranging them in an orderly fashion in the cupboard. You'll also mow the lawn and clear the driveway of snow, but you demand a monetary reward for those jobs.

If it weren't for you, the cuts and splinters of family members would be badly managed. You're the one to head for the first-aid box and calmly collect bandages and antiseptic creams.

You are particularly adept at removing foreign bodies, specks that I can barely see even when I am wearing my glasses. And you don't shy away from shaking a bit of salt on a bloodsucker that has attached itself to the big toe of a distressed youngster.

Other creatures don't upset you either. You willingly capture desperate flying insects and huge dock spiders and release them outdoors, although you refuse to approach bees and wasps that have unwittingly buzzed into the house.

If it weren't for you, clothes drying racks, dollhouses, and storage drawers would remain unassembled in their packing boxes. You always relish the prospect of reading, understanding and carrying out the assembly instructions. Toys that need re-gluing, untwisting and un-jumbling also fall into your hands for a quick-fix job.

Those children whose toys you repair look to you for entertainment and companionship. You read stories to them, play Snakes and Ladders with them and take them for boat rides just before sunset. You teach them knock-knock jokes and play hide-and-seek among the cedars.

You may be only 11 years old, my dear son, but if it weren't for you...

Patience a virtue for kids

If you offer your child a choice between one cookie now, or two cookies in 10 minutes, which will he choose? Will he last the whole 10 minutes when the cookie is sitting right in front of him within arm's reach, or will he cave in and grab it before the 10 minutes is up?

Preliminary data suggests the child who waits the 10 minutes for a bigger booty will be on the honor roll in high school and have more friends than he can handle.

Dr. Walter Mischel, a professor of psychology at Columbia University, has been studying "delayed gratification" in children for more than 30 years. Now, he thinks he's found something - a small slice of behaviour at four years of age that may be linked to important skills down the road.

The data suggests that children who could wait for a greater treat, at the age of 4-5, were judged later as teenagers to be attentive and able to concentrate; to express ideas well, to be receptive and responsive to reason, to be competent, skillful, to set high standards for themselves, with the ability to plan ahead, and able to cope with stress in a mature fashion.

This research suggests it is highly desirable that a child can delay. Intuitively it makes sense, as it takes some strength and will to have the patience to wait. It fits age-old notions, like "ego strength" and "resiliency," that date back to Freud. Most important, it's a good skill for the four-year-old, who is able to maximize his pleasure, and it also suggests some well-being at a later age, in adolescence.

Most of Mischel's work in the last 15 years has focussed on finding out what children are thinking about during this dilemma; what goes through their minds as they sit at a table with the cookie on it, salivating, trying to wait.

Well; kids who did wait came up with some pretty simple, but effective, coping strategies - some covered their eyes, some covered the cookie, some talked or sang to themselves, others flapped their hands or feet, or picked their noses. Some just fell asleep.



Psychology

with ARNOLD RINCOVER

The key appears to be distraction - doing or thinking about something, anything, but that cookie. In contrast, thinking or talking about it (eg. how great it will be to eat two cookies), may just serve to exaggerate the lure and taste of the cookie.

Kids who sit and stare at it are more apt to eat it (before the 10 minutes are up), perhaps because staring at it allows our fantasies to go wild - the chocolate chips get bigger, juicier; we imagine the taste, with the chocolate oozing between our teeth and down the side of our mouths - and it becomes very hard not to grab that one available cookie ("A bird in the hand...").

Still, it is important to note that the importance of delaying gratification is not entirely clear. Other studies suggest the nature of the loot, how much more is gained by waiting (one bite or 10 cookies), how long one has to wait (two minutes or two months), all will influence whether a person waits. It is simply not the case that children "can" or "cannot" delay; rather, most children will wait under certain circumstances and not under others.

This said, it would still be extremely important if we could devise a standard, easy to apply test for preschoolers that predicts success and well-being during the teenage years. If further research supports the "delaying" ability as a crucial skill, then we must ask: "Can we teach a child to delay?"

In other words, the real value of this research is that it may identify an important skill for us to teach at a young age, one which may make life a lot more enjoyable.

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