

# Opinion

## Let Burlington be our guide

Burlington is my hometown. I grew up there. I still live there.

I lived in Burlington through its boom years. After returning from university I found a much changed town. All the places I knew as a kid were subtly different. Distances and landmarks didn't exist as they once had. In fact those years away made me realize how much my hometown had changed even while I was there to witness it.

Present day Milton reminds me of the Burlington of 1968. The QEW and the town's proximity to markets contributed to the Burlington boom and those same factors (HWY 401 and Free Trade) are at work in Milton's expected growth.

We accepted a poor mass transit system, we accepted construction equipment everywhere and short range planning in preparation for a glorious future. Now that glorious future has arrived and its promise has not been fulfilled.

The ways and haunts of my youth, the places and things that made Burlington a good place to grow up, are paved over, landscaped and forgotten. Those places that remain are full to capacity, overcrowded, dirty and not very memorable except to someone like myself with no other memories.

Burlington street planning is ridiculous. The QEW, now partly an internal Burlington route, is far too narrow for even through traffic. Its usefulness for locals is limited. Other major east-west routes are narrow and crowded. Burlington tried to encourage companies to build locally to change the commuter community into a real city with a viable tax base. The city fathers forgot that the change in demographics would put a far greater burden on city thoroughfares.

Milton is on the verge of doing the same thing. Two lane roads are being widened to four lanes when the immediate future will require six lanes and improved turning facilities to accomplish traffic flow. Already the 401 is over capacity as is the recreation system. Mil-

### Reaume with a View

with BRAD REAUME



ton is poorly served by only two arenas and no lighting for baseball fields. With the advent of recreational sports for adults these problems will only intensify.

Milton is bisected by the 401 highway and industry is properly being encouraged to locate near that roadway. The time isn't far off when an overpass will be needed at Town Line Road and another at the present Steeles Avenue overpass. If these things are done now construction will be much more convenient than if city fathers wait until Milton has 60,000 people.

At the same time improvements to HWY 25 are necessary. A north south Milton bypass may have to be considered as well as a link to the 403 extension through northern Oakville.

Even today Burlington is considered by the locals for what it isn't. Burlington isn't the mess of Mississauga nor is it the industrial horror of Hamilton. It isn't the maze of gentrified Milton or the creation of Cambridge.

Burlington was supposed to be a suburb grown up. Convenience with a certain logical format. Less congested, slower, with more emphasis on families. If Milton fails to provide those things then the quality of life will go down as demand to live here rises.

It is time that Milton took a look at the whole of development, time it studied Burlington, Oakville and Mississauga to understand the dynamics of suburban growth and post-suburban growth. Talk to people who live there, who lived through the development and with the development. We should be improving our quality of life not struggling to maintain it.



## Assertive is not a bad word

Assertiveness has gotten a bad name. It has become associated with hostility, belligerence, aggressiveness, selfishness — an assertive person is a pain in the rear.

It has gotten a bad name because there are people who are too loud and aggressive — we remember them well, and avoid them. But this is not really assertiveness, it is aggression. Assertiveness itself is a good thing, not bad, and the real problem is that the large majority of people are not assertive enough.

In fact, the term was originally used to describe the help needed for those taken for granted, used, or mistreated, and who do nothing about it. There are an awful lot of those people around, but of course you don't hear much from them (because they're not assertive enough).

Assertiveness differs from other social skills we have discussed (conversational skills, self-disclosure, praising others) because it is not designed to increase interpersonal attraction, or bring about new friendships, conversations, or dates. Instead, it is designed to prevent the loss of something, unreasonable demands, being taken advantage of, unjust treatment of some kind. It is inevitably, a conflict situation.

If a person always caves in to the unfair demands of others, when (s)he would rather do otherwise, a likely result is feelings of frustration, lower self-esteem, depression, helplessness. On the other hand, learning how to behave appropriately and assertively may have the dual effects of changing the other person's behaviour, and increasing one's own confidence and self-esteem.

Assertiveness does not imply aggression. As assertive action is made in a firm, clear and convincing manner; it is not hostile in style, content or tone. The purpose of being assertive is to change another person's behaviour, not to start a war (and hostile acts done in the name of assertiveness serve as poor models for people who do need to learn how to be more assertive).

People who are too passive and unassertive are usually afraid to do anything about the situation. They are afraid that acting assertively will jeopardize the (work, family, or social) relationship. Several recent U.S. studies may shed some light on this. In these studies naive strangers rated various videotapes of different response styles: assertive actions were for the

**Psychology**  
with DR. A RINCOVER

most part rated favorable (not wildly so, but favorably), while passivity and aggression were both rated negatively. Clearly, an appropriately assertive reaction is more appealing than being either passive or aggressive — and it's surely more constructive.

Assertiveness training has been used successfully with a variety of people. It's been used for teaching former alcoholics to refuse offers of drinks; teaching adolescents how to reject offers of drugs; teaching delinquents to refuse when peers get involved in antisocial or illegal acts; teaching people to request fair treatment in the workplace.

In general, assertion training may be helpful in any situation where a person feels unjustly treated, and (s)he is too passive or afraid to do anything about it.

An interesting exception to the pattern of using assertion training for people who are extremely passive, is its use for very explosive or aggressive individuals. Several studies in the 1970s suggest that some people handle conflict, stress and frustration, in an impulsive or explosive manner, because they haven't learned a more appropriately assertive way to deal with the situation. Assertion training may help such people both to be more effective, and to moderate explosive outbursts.

Another group that has received a lot of attention in the assertiveness literature is women. Traditionally, characteristics like leadership, authority, decision-making, and assertiveness, have been associated with men. Emotional behaviour, nurturing and submissiveness, have been associated with women.

It should be no surprise, then, that many studies have found women to be less assertive than men; that both men and women view assertiveness as less attractive in women than men. The times are changing, however — of those people seeking assertiveness training, women outnumber men by better than 4 to 1.

Next week we'll look at the components of appropriate, effective, assertion.

## Trouble comes in threes

Two into three won't go. Three into four won't go. I never considered the mathematical consequences of having a third child. No one warned me of the pitfalls.

I didn't notice it at first. The baby was so all-absorbing, that he really wasn't one of the three children. He was one big entity and the two older kids were clumped together as another entity.

Now that our "baby" is three and a half years old, the mathematical complications are upsetting family harmony. I am becoming more aware of this culture's push for zero population — two parents, two kids. It's not that we overproducing families are severely punished for our blatant disregard for today's norm, but society still gets us in little ways.

Take our dining-room suite, for example. We purchased it when number three was still in a high chair and it didn't dawn on me until after the purchase that this particular suite came with only four chairs. Once the youngest graduated to a "real" chair, Big B was relegated to a stool dragged to the table.

More recently, we bought a folding chair (for Big B, of course) whose cushioned seat sort of matches the upholstered chairs. This is yet one more instance, claims Big B, of the family's discrimination against him.

Who decides how many food items are to be packaged together? There certainly don't seem to be any established rules. Does the number of wieners in a package ever correspond to the number of buns in a package? To quench our thirst when we are grocery shopping, we usually pick up a three carton package of juice. That used to work fine when number three was a baby, but now he's ready to tackle an entire box, which leaves me with a little sip from each of their juices.

The other day I bought a package of eight hot cross buns for evening snack. It turned out



### On the Home Front

with ESTHER CALDWELL

all right that night because Big B was out of town so we four could share equally, but it's not always that simple.

For some inexplicable reason, I have difficulty at each mealtime trying to figure out how many sets of cutlery I need. It's as if I can't count beyond four. Big B isn't home for every meal, so the numbers constantly change. I never experienced such confusion when there were only four of us.

Right now, the dishwashing roster works wonderfully. My son, whose name has an odd number of letters, washes up on odd days of the month, while my daughter, who has an even number of letters in her name, cleans the dishes on the even days. (We make special arrangements when the month runs 31 days.)

This same system also determines who sits in the front seat of the car. The child whose day it is to wash dishes gets to sit in the front seat. But trouble is coming up. Number three will soon be initiated into the joys of housework, and although the children and I have discussed how we are going to decide who will wash on which day and who will sit in the front seat on which day, we have not yet devised a workable arrangement. These daily dilemmas are so important to the kids. It always has to be fair right down the line, but it sure drives me crazy.

I won't get into the logistics of my trying to hold hands with three kids or my sitting on the couch between the kids who will be the odd one out? No juggling act could beat this one.

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