

Opinion

Go back to the big city, bucko

Okay Gary, quit raining on my parade!
 Toronto Star columnist Gary Lautens wrote in Wednesday's paper about a family trip to Rattlesnake Point. He threw in a few gratuitous remarks about being intimate with the place and even gave directions.

Then he blithered on about some lazy farmer's trust in the human race all because he left his corn stand untended for a couple of minutes.

I've got a few problems with this stuff Gary. First, the farmer in question didn't expect big city Toronto folk to wander over the horizon. If he had, the price wouldn't have been three bucks a dozen, you can be sure about that.

Next, only west end commuters have any idea where Appleby Line might be. Toronto people don't realize that Ontario exists beyond the dim lights of Sprawl, Ontario. (Mississauga to natives. Hell to the rest of us.)

Gary, I drive virtually the whole length of Appleby Line at least five days each and every week. I know what's happening on Halton's very own Watling Street. You didn't mention the mile long stretch of new pavement on Appleby Line south of Highway 5, the native name for Dundas Street.

And why? Because you didn't know it was new. You were afraid to be caught in a lie. Afraid to admit that you haven't driven the lonely street to Rattlesnake Point since you fled this part of Ontario for the bright lights of Toronto!

Well I'm on to you. The whole thing was probably a lie. What farmer? What corn? I didn't see any corn stand on Appleby Line. For shame Mr. Lautens, writing about honesty

Reaume with a View

with BRAD REAUME



and trust, writing about faith in our fellow human beings and all the while making it up. (I'm feeling faint, I don't know if I can go on in the face of such brazen efforts.)

And worst of all, if I had seen such a display of trust, fair play and faith in mankind, I would have written about it. This is my territory, bub, and if something is going on columnistwise you just leave it to the locals.

That's just like the big city types to come barging through, make a big deal about a little good neighbourliness, and leave me explaining to my publisher why I wrote about pizza last week. (Multiculturalism, buster, that's why I wrote about pizza! What's it to ya?)

You're treading on people's toes Mr. Big City Columnist! Stick to the horrors of the city, the horrors that everybody who's ever been dragged kicking and screaming past the congested borders of Metropolitan Toronto is trying to avoid.

Leave the "slice of rural Ontario" bit to me and the hoards of other columnists who are desperately trying to carve out a niche, and inform and entertain our readers, in an attempt to get your job. Retirement isn't a long way off Gary. I'll let this one go. I'll waive my local rights in this one. Remember that and, put in a good word, eh? You owe me one.

I am ready for a bicycle

I inherited my long legs, big feet and a distrust of machines from my father.

Father swore off electric typewriters for years and when he finally bought one, he grumbled that it wasn't as reliable as his older clunker. He has never owned a car; he rides a bicycle instead. He has running water in the summertime only and always washes his laundry by hand.

I am more advanced than Father. I drive a car, I two-finger type on a borrowed computer, and I have an automatic washing machine and dryer. And I know for a certainty that these machines and their friends and relations are out to get me.

Why else would the car start acting strangely when my husband was out of town for three weeks? Numerous long-distance phone calls to my Mr. Fixit explaining my vehicle's peculiar behaviour got us nowhere. So I did the next best thing: I consulted my father-in-law.

The problem? The car couldn't make the grade. Every time we started to climb a hill, it decelerated — with the gas pedal pressed to the floor — to 50 kilometres per hour, which for some reason aggravated drivers following me. I spend half my travelling time pulling off onto the shoulder of the road to let other cars pass.

Right off the bat, my father-in-law, after crawling under the car, diagnosed a faulty catalytic converter. It sounded like a religious experience. It also sounded expensive.

I made an early-morning appointment at a brake and muffler shop. Believe it or not, I arrived right on the dot (8 a.m., if you must know) and waited and waited — two hours to be exact — for someone to look at the car. Fortunately, I had brought only the four-year-old with me. Those guys would have been really sorry if I had let loose all three kids on them.

We nibbled on our breakfast — a cheese sandwich. It wasn't until we were into our lunch — the other half of the cheese sandwich — that a young mechanic entered the waiting



On the Home Front

with ESTHER CALDWELL

room and asked for my ignition key. He revved up my little gutless wonder as if he were at the starting line for the local stock car races and tore into one of the bays.

When I had spoken earlier on the phone to the shop owner, he had said they had ways of determining whether the car really needed a new catalytic converter. He lied.

Instead, the mechanic removed the old converter and replaced it with a piece of exhaust pipe. Then he told me to take the car for a spin to see if I felt any difference.

He refused to come along for the ride saying that on the last customer's car he had driven, he had damaged an almost irreplaceable something or other. A great confidence booster he was.

Anyways, my son and I went searching for a hill, any hill, we weren't fussy, but they had gone into hiding. At that point, I should have just kept on going.

I had to admit, though, that the car did seem to have more pep than previously and since the long wait had worn me down, I had no energy left to scout around for a second opinion, so my car now sports a shiny (not for long) catalytic converter and whether it needed it or not, I'll never know.

There is still something not quite right about the car. It starts singing when I hit 80 kilometres an hour — like the hollow sound you make when you blow across the top of a bottle. And my power windows keep falling out of their tracks. I tell you, the car is out to get me.

My father's got the right idea. He sticks to a bicycle.



Identifying hyperactive kids

Hyperactivity has emerged during the past 15 years as one of the most frequently diagnosed and widely researched problems of childhood.

This has in turn focussed a lot of attention and concern on the activity levels of children. It should be no surprise then that approximately half of all parents complain that their child is overactive ("constantly on the go", "bouncing off the walls") at one time or another.

In truth, the concern on the part of most parents, teachers and professionals has gone way overboard.

While half of all parents have concerns about hyperactivity, only about 3 or 4 per cent of children are really hyperactive.

What is meant by a professional diagnosis of hyperactivity is quite different from what the public generally means by the term — in fact, it is much more than an overactive child.

Much has been made of the problems that follow a hyperactive child — and these problems are real — but the large majority of highly active children are in fact not hyperactive.

Lets begin with a definition of hyperactivity, so parents can separate a real problem from the normal developmental phases that children go through.

Hyperactivity means that the child has extensive difficulties, in three general areas: attention, impulsiveness, and high levels of inappropriate activity. Second, it means that a child has consistent and pervasive problems in these three areas. Third, it means that these problems worsen in structured situations and when self-control is called for — in classrooms, when you're reading a story, in waiting his turn during class or group play, in cleaning up the toys he has been playing with, and so on. Fourth, all of this must last for at least six months before it would even be considered as possible hyperactivity.

The hyperactive child usually has trouble attending to tasks or instructions. He will have an especially difficult time in attending for any length of time to difficult, boring or repetitive tasks.

At home, parents' instructions may seem to



Psychology

with DR. A. RINCOVER

"go in one ear and out the other", as the child doesn't seem to listen.

At school, unless he finds a teacher who makes arithmetic, spelling and other academic subjects exciting, he will have a tough time attending, or mastering the material.

The problem is not really so much one of distractibility, as we used to think, but rather there appears to be a lack of persistence in attending and concentrating on tasks that aren't particularly interesting or don't have immediate consequences (ie. can be solved quickly and easily, or else are important to him).

The difficulty in sustaining attention is thought to be so common and so basic to hyperactivity, that it has been renamed "Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity".

The problem of impulsivity can show up many ways: poor self control; an inability to wait or inhibit actions; not thinking through a problem before answering; constantly switching their attention to different toys, activities or people.

For a hyperactive child, the problem of activity level is evident when structure or demands are placed on the child.

Studies have actually found no differences in the activity levels of hyperactive and normal children during unstructured time or free play, but the hyperactive child has difficulty controlling his activity level, changing it, quieting or calming down during structured times.

The peak age of referral is between six and nine years of age. These are the early school years, when problems caused by hyperactivity become particularly evident — a child must now sit at a desk for an extended period, study or follow along in a book, stay at one activity and in one place for a while, share, take turns, and clean up after himself.

Part two on this subject, next week.

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