

# OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## Hey folks, live a little — feel free to mess it up

I recycle, and I'll bet you do too. I'm with the program. I pile my newspapers neatly in the corner, rinse and wash tin cans before placing them aside, and I even purchase things based on packaging.

However, all this do-gooder stuff is leading to a very serious problem: suburban squalor.

Living spaces have ceased to be neat and tidy, piled everywhere are heaps of what was once, in wasteful error, termed refuse. Garbage, junk, trash and rubbish, now we have it all and we've convinced ourselves that it's in our best interest to keep this stuff.

We all live in an urban squalor. You know, the sink full of dirty dishes, the pile of newspapers waiting to be recycled, and a pile of clean cans waiting for the smelter. Suburban squalor exists in a direct relationship to the size of the mess and the available free time to clean it up.

Suburban squalor forces people to face the dark side of their souls. What level of effort is necessary to maintain your immediate environment to an acceptable level? How much time is required to raise that level to the societal norm? Company can be such a bother.

Tonight when you're watching tv and even the commercial is boring, look around you, evaluate the level of mess, and determine your level of suburban squalor. If you have super tidy living quarters then you're probably not successfully balancing life's little pleasures against the necessary level of household cleanliness.

A friend of mine claims the acceptable limit is a mess that takes 20 minutes to clean. That is because, no matter how close potential visitors live, it still requires them 20 minutes to get their act together enough to arrive. In other words, the spur of the moment in 1992 is 20 minutes long.

Of course suburban squalor exists all around

### REAUME WITH A VIEW

with BRAD REAUME



the home and office. How many times do you see overflowing recycling tubs at the office, or desks filled with every manner of papers claiming to be important?

Look in your truck lately? If you still disagree with me about the state of squalor we all live in, then one glance in the luggage portion of your automobile and I will rest my case. Hey, I even know people who have removed the spare tire in order to have more space back there.

There's a fine line between 'a place for everything and everything in its place' and the happy comforts of keeping those useful things right at our fingertips and those that have just lost their usefulness, only a short fling away.

Personally, I think that a super-tidy attitude was wonderful when someone was around the household 24 hours a day to police it. Now however, it is of the utmost importance, to make a living, live that living and prepare for dying by enjoying yourself and forgetting to spend the time to keep everything spic and span.

Tidiness just isn't on the top of the heap anymore. Of course I'm not advocating dirtiness, filth and general wretchedness; what I am saying is short of starting the bubonic plague, live a little. Life is too short to worry about a pile of newspapers, tin cans or dirty dishes.

## Pets worth their weight in gold whatever their cost

Do people appreciate a pet more if it costs more? Sometimes. Should it be that way? Probably not.

The fact that "cash value" of something often increases its actual value in the eyes of the beholder. It's human nature, I guess, and probably goes back to the dawn of time. It's unfortunate that animals may be prized more highly by their "keepers" according to what the cash outlay for their purchase may have been.

A common misconception, across the board, is that anything that's free can't be worth very much. If it were, why would it be given away?

That's a tough one, all right. My only problem with it is that some of the best-loved pets in my life came from "Free to Good Home" beginnings. My current cats are Abyssinians and, yes, I did pay for them but they are no more loved or looked-after than any of their predecessors, regardless of origin. Fact of pet-ownership: all pets require the same good nutrition, vaccinations, veterinary care, love and affection. All pets.

Do pets know their own cash value and dole out companion animal qualities accordingly? I don't think so. The Humane Society has always recognized this insidious "free pet equals disposable pet" syndrome. Not only is



### PETS AND YOU

with ANNE NORMAN

there scrupulous screening of potential pet-owning applicants, there is an adoption fee as well. And papers to sign, attesting to the adopter's responsibilities in looking after the adoptee. Yes, let's step into the real world and get it in writing.

Okay, nothing can guarantee proper care or lifelong commitment to any pet but a few moments thought before signing on the dotted line may mean that an animal gets a better chance.

Another problem is that of taking pets for granted when there are great numbers to choose from and take home. It tends to be a widespread philosophy. A farm vet once told me, when I took an injured pet goat into his office, "Ah, just get another one, goats are cheap enough."

Fortunately, baby steps towards progress



## Drugs can get addicts off drugs

Can we treat an addiction? Can we really help an alcoholic or a "Crack" user?

Education hasn't been very effective. Therapy and counselling haven't worked very often. Medication hasn't worked. Public appeals ("Just Say No") haven't worked. What next?

Gerry was 43 years old and alcoholic. After fruitlessly making the rounds at detoxification centres, Alcoholics Anonymous, and psychotherapy, he entered an experimental drug rehabilitation program at Johns Hopkins University, directed by psychologist George Bigelow.

He was given a drug, disulfiram (also known as Antabuse), which will make him violently ill (sweating, vomiting, shortness of breath) if mixed with alcohol. Gerry found out just how powerful those effects are — once — and then he successfully made it through detoxification. After detox, he began a program of behaviour modification, to teach him to reduce temptations, avoid places and people that have in the past involved drinking, to teach him how to cope with stress in more adaptive ways. He made it; he hasn't had a drink in two years.

Without both the drug and the behaviour modification, Gerry would probably still be an alcoholic. The drug got him off the alcohol, but the therapy taught him how to stay off it.



### PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

how to deal with the situations in his life that typically "drove him to drink". Either treatment, alone, usually fails. Detoxifying someone, going through the agony of withdrawal, will not usually be sufficient unless we also teach them how to handle stress and break old habits.

Some people oppose the idea of using drugs to treat a drug addiction. Yet, there are advantages. Pharmacological agents are convenient, they overcome the problem of "will power", and they work quickly. Most of all, they offer the chance of stabilizing patients, so we can begin to work on more permanent behaviour changes.

On the negative side, the notion that it is a "magic pill" is an illusion, and we can't just rely on the pill to do all the work for us; without long-term behaviour change, it will fail.

Research published in the journal, *Alcohol and Drug Dependence*, shows that the combination of pharmacological and psychological treatments is more often successful than either alone. With this success in mind, researchers have been searching for other drugs that can be used for other kinds of addiction.

There are several creative ways to use drugs in treatment. Antabuse has the effect of causing an adverse reaction when mixed with alcohol, and thereby deters drinking. A second approach is to substitute one (safer) drug for another. Methadone offers many of the same euphoric effects as heroin, but with fewer risks. Then, a patient can be gradually weaned off methadone as psychotherapy progresses.

A third approach is the use of "antagonists", which prevent the abused drug from having its usual effects. A drug called Naltrexone has been called a "wonder drug" because it prevents the euphoria and physical dependence caused by opium.

A fourth approach is to give drugs that help a patient through the agony of withdrawal. Flurazepam, for example, helps a patient to sleep during withdrawal.

As ironic as it may sound, research is showing that drugs are a valuable tool in the treatment of drug addiction. But in all cases, they must be combined with psychotherapy. Drugs don't teach anything, they can only open the door to treatment — the learning of new skills and habits must follow.