

OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Hasta la vista, baby

All good things must come to an end. (How's that for deeply inspiring, deeply moving, deeply profound do-do?)

Yep, my time in Milton, is over. It will be henceforth a chapter in my best-selling, destined-for-TV-movie, autobiography titled Milton: Where's That? Due to economic circumstances above and beyond the control of whoever is above me and in control, I'm being laid off, effective yesterday.

Of course I shed a multitude of tears, but not for my own sake, no, I'm too subtle for that; I shed those tears for you, faithful readers, who, (despairing for something to read) never let me down (unless the mysteries of the toothpaste tube remained virgin literature). It was for you that I cried myself to sleep night after night, after walking the quiet, lonely 2 a.m. streets, trying to figure it all out.

I could spend the rest of this column reciting all the wonderful people I met in town, all the deep and enduring friendships I made and all the funny, memorable, crazy fun days I spent here. That, however, would be a whitewash.

Oh, don't get me wrong, I had fun in Milton. I enjoyed my job and the contacts I made along the way. The truth is, there are great people everywhere, difficult people everywhere, and tales of good, bad and ugly incidents everywhere. I think I only met one person in Milton patently different from anyone else I'd ever known; a person whose impact will remain with me in several little ways long after I have forgotten most of what happened here.

In the end, despite attempts to make it more, it was a job; a means to an end; and there is nothing like a lay off to bring that fact into sharp focus.

I'll always have a soft spot for Milton, a funny little town, in a strange geography where people aren't funny or strange. They live, grow up and ultimately die. I'll always

REAUME WITH A VIEW

with BRAD REAUME



strain to hear Merchants' scores, silently cheer for the high school teams, and hope that all the good people I know in Milton have nice, fulfilling lives and all the difficult people in Milton shrivel up and die lonely, miserable deaths.

Hey, I'm entitled to my opinion.

Losing a job is sometimes treated much as the death of a loved one. I, however, look on it as a chance to explore different paths in life, in fact I relish the opportunity. I've always been an optimist.

Of course, in three months when all the paths lead to rough roads or dead ends, I'll probably think differently, but now at least I'm wildly hopeful about the future.

The end of one chapter is the beginning of the next. Like I growl to the team that wins my baseball league each season, a nanosecond after the final out, you're the defending champions and next year starts.

So, in the world of my employment, this is already next season. I lament not my passing from *The Champion*, I rest not on whatever laurels were tossed my way, I merely turn the page on this chapter and anticipate the joys and trials of my tomorrows.

The fact that I'll soon be broke, penniless, destitute and probably jumping freights to unknown destinations, is beside the point. Those experiences will fuel the next chapter of my autobiography, "Riding the Rails: Career Training."

Abuse has a turning point, and can be stopped

Child abuse doesn't happen overnight, it usually grows in stages and parents typically don't even know it's happening.

The first stage is the parent's own upbringing. Were they abused as children? Did they learn how to solve problems by talking, compromising, sharing, or did they usually see aggression in their family and friends? Was cooperation encouraged, acknowledged and appreciated, or were they disrespectful of authority figures? Did they learn to accept the consequences of their own actions, or did they always try to lie, cheat or sneak their way out of it? All of these are the training ground for child abuse and poor parenting.

Research suggests that many of these problems can be overcome, however. Factors that will help include: a loving and supportive spouse; financial stability; some experiences with success at work, school, or other activities; adequate supports to draw on (day care, extended family, parent training, etc); therapy for any depression, marital problems, stress that may be achieved, if a parent seeks some help from a therapist.

In stage two, a parent's efforts to handle life's stresses, and their child, have failed. They feel they're "losing control", their child is uncooperative and unpredictable. It is at this point that parents are most at risk for child abuse.



PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

Parents often "step up" the intensity of punishment in an attempt to re-establish control. Any feelings of frustration or stress that arise elsewhere, are taken out on the child. Everything the child does is exaggerated and seen in a negative light.

In addition to the methods mentioned (for stage one), a crucial component of treatment at this stage will be "skills training". Using real-life situations, or imagining vignettes ("You just told Glen to be careful because you have your good dress on and you're going out ... and he spills his drink all over it. What do you do?") The trainer will use modelling, practice and feedback to show appropriate ways of dealing with situations.

A therapist will often have to eliminate irrational beliefs that parents have about their child. For example, they often have unrealistic expectations about how often "normal" children cry or disobey their parents, and they



Braving a storm with your pet

Thunderstorms can be pretty exciting. Indeed, many of us feel that we've had enough excitement this summer to last us a lifetime. Seems as though we've had a minimum of three thunder and lightning blitz-type storms a week, for the past three months. Part of this excitement stems from wondering where to build the Ark necessary to take us all to higher ground.

Putting all excitement aside for a moment, storms can bother some people, and some animals, to the point where anxiety is a serious problem.

Children, and (admit it, now) some adults, may be frightened by the sudden flashes of light and the deafening crashes of thunder. On the positive side, people can talk about and understand what's happening during a storm. Even though they may still be frightened, children can be helped to develop coping strategies.

Animals? This is a bit trickier. Just consider the concept of sitting down with your cat or dog, and explaining barometric changes and cold air fronts. "Don't you feel better now, Ralphie?" Right.

It's not that animals are unaware of barometric changes. They usually feel the on-



PETS AND YOU

with ANNE NORMAN

coming storm before we do.

Conscious thought, however, is not involved, and some animals are much more sensitive to weather changes than others. All we can do to help them cope is to try to protect them.

Cats often hide in small, dark places during storms, and I have known cats to predict storms 12 hours in advance.

One, in particular, would slink around the house on his belly, moaning softly until the storm arrived. Then, his eyes would widen with fear, and he would shoot off like a rocket to some secret hiding place in the basement, and remain there for the duration. No amount of coaxing or reassuring ever made the slightest bit of difference to his behaviour. He was terrified, period.

Dogs bothered by storms tend to run frantically in all directions when an atmospheric change is imminent. It may even be necessary to confine them temporarily, so that they do not run away or injure themselves in their panic-stricken state. Dogs have jumped straight through windows in their agitation.

Be aware of your own attitudes, and how closely your pet identifies with you. It is very possible for your pet to react to a situation with anxiety mirroring yours, just because it seems like the right thing to do.

Thoughtlessness or utter stupidity can condition a fear response into an animal. For example, facing a dog's or puppy's crate towards a picture window that provides a panoramic view will expose the poor creature to flash after flash of lightning while the thunder rumbles to his very vitals. "Watch and be afraid" is the message you are conditioning into this unfortunate individual. Think about the scenery you are presenting to your pet; think about his mental health, which may ultimately affect yours as well.

Make a point of keeping your pet as comfortable and as safe as possible during weather disturbances.

Be alert to serious physiological changes such as hyperventilating (extremely rapid, shallow breathing), the nictitating membrane (third eyelid) coming out over the eyeball and staying out, or heavy salivating.

In the meantime, remember the true origin of storms. It's only the angels bowling and lighting their cigarettes.