



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9
(905) 878-2341
Fax: 878-4943
Classified: 875-3300

Ian Oliver Publisher
Neil Oliver Associate Publisher
Rob Kelly Editor
Karen Huisman Circulation Manager
Teri Casas Office Manager
Tim Coles Production Manager
Shaun Sauve Director of Advertising
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I was just hitting my stride

Where did the summer go? Isn't that what we always ask ourselves as August winds down?

I was just hitting my stride. I needed one more month (at least) to capitalize on my vacation time mode, but alas, time waits for no one, "they" say. I've had my chance to relax and now it's time to gear up for the 101 — or is it 1,001 — activities of me and mine.

But, I lament, I haven't read near enough romance novels this summer. What will keep my romantic heart ticking through the lean winter months?

And the 10 year old and I were barely halfway through Tom Sawyer. The "freebooter" boys were still pirating on their island. Will we cruelly abandon them when our television back in town once again casts its pervasive spell?

I all but lost the month of July this year, as far as quality cottage time goes, what with tooting around the east coast for nine days, staying in town (hot, hot, hot) for a week for daughter's pre-tour choir rehearsals, and fretting for 10 days while she whooped it up in the olde country.

The 18 year old, on the other hand, had too much idle time. He plunged into despondency — Who am I? Where am I going? What is life? I can't recall wallowing in such uncertainty until I was at least 30. Maybe I was a late starter. I have no problem with introspection and self-discovery, but one usually hopes for more uplifting enlightenment than the teen experienced. Nothing like school and a part time job to direct his mind elsewhere, though.

The 13 year old showed her age this summer, posing in front of the mirror, painting her fingernails every gaudy colour imaginable, and modelling her odd assortment of apparel. If she wasn't socializing or didn't have her nose in a book, she declared utter boredom, looking to me, as did



On the Homefront

with ESTHER CALDWELL

her younger brother, to act as recreation director.

Poor hubby was the unhappiest camper of all this summer. After being spoiled last year with a three-month leave of absence, he was lucky if he managed 14 non-continuous days off. His grand plan had been to take care of business just two days each week, but instead, business took care of him. He can't see his way clear for an official holiday until autumn when the hunters come a-shootin' and a-trampin' through our woods.

Hubby's annual toy to tinker with — the pathetic boat motor — has gone to marine heaven. Well, actually, to a ramshackle shed behind the rental cottage. He emptied his pockets last spring for a new-to-us motor that so far has given us no strife, but I am not holding my breath on the reliability of mechanical monsters.

In its stead, we had the '69 Volkswagen beetle that both men and women waxed poetic over, reminiscing about the time in their lives when they drove one of these tiny cars. It wouldn't have been hubby, of course, unless he had selected the handyman's special of these vehicles. I'm telling you, if I had that many parts that needed replacing, hubby would have traded me in years ago for a new model, but he dotes on this dark blue lump of tin. Love is blind.



A few thoughts about health care

Health care is under attack.

In Ontario health care is facing the pressure of rising costs due to an aging population, high expectations for care, universality, advances in medical science and fraud.

People in Canada have come to expect health care on-demand. They want to consult a doctor on every little ache or pain, even problems that will simply clear themselves up. Easy access to the system with no emphasis on patient responsibility invites misuse.

In a profit-driven society, people with money to spend should be allowed to purchase care when they want it. We already have a two-tiered system, with millions of dollars drained away from Canadian medical facilities and spent on care in the United States. Formalizing this two-tiered approach and keeping the money in Canada would free up scarce medical resources.

Advances in medical science allow society to keep people alive longer. These advances usually take the form of high cost procedures, further driving up the cost of health care. We are financial victims of our own scientific success.

There are many more Ontario health cards than citizens. The free care is prized by people



Reaume with a View

with BRAD REAUME

and they do not easily give it up even when they move away.

A few doctors take advantage of the system. They are paid on a fee for service basis, so human nature kicks in and some take as many patients as they possibly can. If your doctor habitually keeps you waiting for long periods, he or she probably over-books.

At the same time your doctor is self-employed. He has to pay for his office, staff and supplies. These costs eat up an average of 40 per cent of a doctor's billings.

Doctors are being targeted by the government but they form only a small part of the problem. The brutal truth is each of these areas has to be cleaned up, and firm policies established.

Each citizen should be given adequate health care by the state to live an average life both in length and quality. That means health care when required in their youth, and the ability to access necessary care as they age.

That care should take the form of health care units, which each citizen receives in equal proportion, enough to adequately last an average lifetime. Each time a person accesses the system they use up units. The more care required, the more units spent. When you run out of units, that's it.

This system would put everyone on the same playing field. It also would stop people from accessing the system frivolously.

In addition to this basic level of care, people should be able to purchase more units in a second tier of the scheme. This would allow those who have the means to use more health care.

It may seem brutal on the surface but it would encourage healthy lifestyles. It is ridiculous to spend millions of dollars on elderly patients who have short life expectations and little quality of life.

I don't know where that line should be drawn. But I do know we cannot continue to ignore this growing problem. It won't go away.

Does your youngster look clumsy to you?

Do you worry that your child is clumsy? Does he seem to have more accidents, bumps and bruises than other children? Do your warnings seem to go in one ear and out the other? The problem may be one of poor judgement rather than clumsiness.

In the September, 1995 issue of the journal *Child Development*, psychologist Jodie Plumert described an important series of studies on so-called clumsy children. She assessed how good children were at different ages in judging their own physical abilities. The results were surprising and interesting.

She asked a group of 88 six to eight year olds and a group of 20 adults to perform the same tasks. The tasks included removing an object from a high shelf, reaching for a toy while squatting without touching their hands or knees to the floor, stepping over two parallel sticks that were placed a distance apart, and passing under a bar limbo-style without touching the ground or knocking the bar off. Each task was manipulated to be well within, just within, just beyond or well beyond a child's ability.

Dr. Plumert found that all children consistently



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

overestimated their ability to perform tasks that were beyond them. This was not only true for tasks just a little beyond their ability, but also for tasks well beyond.

In an important follow-up study, she let the children practice all of these tasks, at each level of difficulty, to see how much their judgement would improve.

The eight year olds still overestimated on tasks just beyond their ability, but they became quite accurate on the tasks that were well beyond. Remarkably, the six year olds didn't seem to benefit at all from the practice, overestimating their own ability just as much after practice as

before. The adults also had a bit of trouble on tasks that were just beyond their ability, but were quite accurate on tasks that were well beyond.

Dr. Plumert also found that children who overestimated their abilities the most experienced a greater number of accidents and more serious accidents, as reported by their parents. While this study can't show a cause-effect relationship, it certainly suggests that a problem in overestimating one's ability may play a role for children who are accident prone.

There is some comfort here for most parents. The vast majority of "clumsy" children will improve with age and experience. They develop better motor control and their judgement of what they can and can't do becomes more accurate. As children's perceptions improve, their bumps and bruises decrease.

There is another message here for parents, too. If your child is six or less, it's going to be awfully hard to improve that child's clumsiness. It does no good to browbeat the child, because even if he does hear your cautions he's having trouble judging where and when to apply them. He thinks he can do anything.