

It wasn't all that bad of a summer

AH, summers are not what they used to be, except for the young. They're not as long, not as hot, and not as mysterious. That's the story of our recent one, at least in my books.

It was cool and wet, fine October weather in July, not one night sweltering in bed, listening to the one mosquito that had penetrated the screen. In fact, even the bugs were hibernating: "Too cold for me, Mama. Too wet for me, Daddy." Only a few intrepid earwigs seemed to tough it out.

Do you panic and start smashing and squashing when an earwig scampers across your bathtub? I do.

August was even more of a disaster, at least for me. The toilet tank on my downstairs Johnny burst one night after a fierce thunderstorm. I'd heard water running, but thought it was off the roof.

Went downstairs and walked (in my slippers) into half an inch of water on the kitchen floor, a river running down the basement stairs, and, when I waded to the basement, two inches down there, with more pouring down every second.

Started throwing towels all over the place. The water kept gushing out of the tank. Fiddled with it. It kept spurting through the busted tank, like an elephant having a leak.

Thank the Lord for plumbers, especially

Bill Smiley

when they're old friends and good Anglicans. We got her stopped. That is, I dashed about in my sodden slippers, trying to keep it from flowing onto the hardwood and under the rug, and Tom had enough sense to turn the water off, at some secretive tap in the basement, which I hadn't been able to find.

Then came a man from the insurance company, with a sixty-foot snake that sucked up all the water. Jolly good. But it was not to be. Next morning, my upstairs toilet overflowed and I went through the throwing-towels routine again.

Oh, well, these things are sent to try us. I don't worry for what. I don't want to be in charge of the towel-throwing department when the next Flood comes along. Meantime, I'm going to have an awesome plumber's bill.

Summer, of course, was not all bad. Some old friends sought me out. I was invited to Victoria, B.C., the Ottawa Valley, to Goderich, Ont., by an old airforce friend Anderson, to Georgetown for a meal any time, to the Bruce Peninsula, and so on.

And I got gifts. Don McCaig, an old

newspaper friend, gave me a copy of *Dieppe and Beyond* by John Patrick Grogan (isn't that a lovely Ottawa Valley Irish name?) describing the life of a young Canadian captured at Dieppe, and his life as a P.O.W. It is a good read, and can be bought from Juniper Books, R.R. 2, Renfrew, Ont. Another old newspaper friend, George Cadogan, dropped around and I stuck him for lunch and a good reminisce.

An old golfing buddy, Bruce Coran, turned up. Hadn't seen him for twenty odd years. He didn't bring me a present, but a memory. One time, he took four swings with a 4-wood and moved the ball forty yards. Then he calmly took his golf club, put his foot in the middle of the shaft, bent it double, and threw it into the woods, without altering his composure, except for the face turning purple.

Back to gifts. My son, Hugh, brought me an eight pound Arctic char (frozen, of course) from Baker Lake, N.W.T. Hugh was quite pleased with himself, but what does an aging widower do with a great, hairy eight pound fish? We solved it by giving half to the

neighbours, cooking up some steaks, and making a massive fish salad. It's delicious, just like salmon.

Even Ben, my grandboy, left me a souvenir. Of course, he usually does. Last March Break, it was a rung kicked out of the bannister. This time, it was a baseball through a storm window and screen.

And I received numerous gifts by mail: everything from being accused as a male chauvinist to an excellent writer: but I'll deal with these in another column.

Another Gift, as summer waned (how does one wane?) was an evening with an old student and comrade, Julie, home after a year in France, and oh, so sophisticated. We split a bottle of wine (not chilled, as she scolded), she gave me good advice, and we parted with a hug and kiss. First time I've kissed a girl in a year or two. It wasn't bad. In any way.

The lady who keeps my house from looking like a hovel, Evelyn, keeps bringing me corn and tarts and muffins. Gerry, the young guy who keeps my place from looking like a jungle, kept it looking like a wellbred jungle.

Not a bad summer? Except. Except, I got word that my little brother had died. I'd thought of visiting him this fall, in England. Too late.

The art of helping children survive childhood

Imagine seeing the world through the eyes of a child. Lively five to eight year-old-boy or girl, would you want to?

I believe it would be a scary experience, luckily for the survival of the human race the kids are so full of youthful exuberance and boundless energy that, its all part of growing up to them.

LET'S HELP THEM TO SURVIVE CHILDHOOD

I took a driver improvement course in defensive driving recently, conducted by Derek Smith of the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

And communicate he did, with the relaxed assurance of an instructor who has seen all of possible combinations of human folly behind the wheel, and heard every excuse in the book -- and then some.

The best weapon in his arsenal of accident fighting equipment is a film. An eye opener, made around 1982 in France, it is both current absorbing, and proves that kids are the same the world over, God bless 'em. It also gets the adrenalin pumping.

A typical kindergarten scene, four girls, all dresses, ribbons and smiles, an empty table, four race cars and a hidden zoom lense, they were left alone.

In 15 seconds 'Broom Broom' noises, the little darling crashed head-on, ambulance and fire engine noises, wip up the 'pretend' blood and start over. Logic 'This is what cars

Ray Baker

are for, right?'

The scene changes. An eight-year-old boy peers around a hydro pole, then darts into traffic, "If I can see them, they can see me."

Fact and fantasy play an integral part of their growing up, and we wouldn't have it any other way. One minute they are in space, or fighting monsters, and even when back on earth they literally 'Live in a world of their own' and it's not our world.

Example: "If I cover my eyes with my hands I can't see you," ERGO "You cannot see me either." So if a car or truck bears down on them, cover their eyes and it will go away.

Vulnerable is the key word, their peripheral vision is 30 percent less than an adult, their hearing is acute, but the direction finding antennae is not as finely-tuned as ours, they identify a car horn, and look in the wrong direction.

Now comes the biggest 'Boo Boo' of the adult world, the placement of children crossing signs. The first one, way up there in a different world, at a neck angle not normally utilized them, shows two children crossing hand-in-hand. ANSWER "Those

children are shown running, therefore we must run across the road."

Crosswalk lighted signs, "OH, that's an adult figure, it's just for adults we have to find our own way across." Their logic is unarguable and consistent.

WE ENCOURAGE CONCENTRATION

Excellent, kids can concentrate on home work, watching TV and following a soccer ball right across the road. Their concentration is total, to the exclusion of everything else.

You can train them in safety, apparently at nine they start to identify with the adult world, this is good timing, training wheels are long gone, they watch big brother doing 'wheelies' and quietly watch Dad not putting on his seat belt in the car.

It doesn't matter anyway, cars crash, spin, twist, and screech to a stop upside down, the driver climbs out, shakes his head and carries on. That's real life to a child raised on the 'A Team' and 'Dukes of Hazard.'

The important thing to them is losing their surplus energy. Moving from A to B, quickly, and a movement must be completed. Whether it's a ballet step, a fast draw on the trigger, or a playmate across the road they

have to see NOW.

You are a bright healthy 8 year old, a Volkswagon Beetle is the size of a truck, a truck is the size of a freightcar, you can't see over or around them, you have to walk between them, right?

And the sad part is they cannot differentiate between a moving car and a stationary one. Think about that one, try it. A moving dog they can, its legs go up and down, its ears flop, as it runs towards them. A car's shape never changes.

You can judge velocity, momentum, kinetic energy and point of impact. They are trying to synchronise their facilities to catch a moving baseball using the same judgements, but not as polished as ours.

What have we done with adult sized signs, adult related pictures, and using our own highly developed sense of danger as a yardstick for the kids? We treat them as miniature adults, which they are not.

I wish the movie was compulsory viewing for every driver. But until then, if this column saves even one minor mishap, with one child, it will have served its purpose. Thank you Mr. Smith.

This weeks quote: "CHILDREN ARE OUR OWN FUTURE" ANON.

Ray Baker is a freelance writer, and the father of three sons, he and his family live in Penetanguishene.

Local scholars honoured at Georgian College

With 27 graduates from the Schools of Engineering Technology and Adult Training, local students figured prominently in last Saturday's October 5 convocation ceremonies for the Georgian College of Applied Arts and Technology.

Among the graduates assembled in Barrie's Georgian College Theatre, were seven students from Penetanguishene, six from Midland, and five from Wasaga Beach. Three Victoria Harbour and two Port McNicoll graduates attended the convocation, while Waubaushe, Washago, Wyevale, and Wyebridge were each represented by one former student.

County school board makes it all official

At its most recent meeting, Simcoe County Board of Education confirmed the appointment of William Hartman as vice-principal of Regent Public School in Midland.

OPP motor launch was on the job in district

General Williams II, Midland OPP's motor launch patrolled areas near Honey Harbour, Midland and Port McNicoll last week so as to allow divers to search for stolen property at the bottom of each community's harbour.

County brass meet next on Tuesday, Oct. 22

Next meeting of Simcoe County Council at Midhurst is set for Tuesday, Oct. 22 at 10a.m. in the administration centre.

Fielding the Growth to be shown

As urban centres spread more and more into what was once prime farmland in Ontario, the problem of the province remaining self-sufficient in food production has been magnified.

Between 1960 and 1979, 19 percent of Ontario's foodland was taken out of production and the trend has continued into this decade. Many agriculturists think the loss of this farmland will be felt by all of Ontario's residents, whether they live in cities or the countryside.

In the documentary "Fielding the Growth" CKVR reporter Sharon Burkhart investigates the dilemma and the role the province's new Liberal government will play in addressing it.

It will be shown Sunday, Oct. 27 at 1:30 p.m. on CKVR-TV.

Red Cross Blood Donors' Clinic slated for Dec. 18

Next Red Cross Blood Donors' Clinic in Midland is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 18 from 12 noon to 8 p.m. Target is 400 pints of blood.

North Simcoe news briefs

Duck hunters enjoying season

Duck hunters have been taking advantage of the wet weather of late to bag their limit of migratory birds in and around North Simcoe.

It appears the damp weather has kept flocks of geese and ducks well within range of duck blinds.

Female CO for Sea Cadets

Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps Trillium as of Oct. 22 will be in the charge of a female commanding officer. Lieutenant Nancy Clements of Penetanguishene will become on that date the fifth female commanding officer of an Ontario corps.

The Trillium group from Midland has won a trophy for earning last June, during annual inspection, high marks, placing fifth out of 45 corps and second out of corps with fewer than 40 members.

SCBE top brass meet in Barrie

Next meeting of Simcoe County Board of Education trustees has been set for Wednesday, Oct. 23, at 8 p.m.

The public is invited to attend the meeting at the Education Centre in Barrie.

Sea cadets win Bartley Bull trophy

Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps Trillium, based in Midland's Civic Centre, was given very high marks last June during annual inspection.

The Trillium group received a mark of 91.1 percent, putting it fifth out of the 45 corps in Ontario, and second in the group of corps with fewer than 40 members.

For taking second place in the small corps category, the local sea cadets have won the Bartley Bull trophy.

The RSCCC Trillium group meets each Tuesday evening in the Midland Civic Centre. Eligible to join are teenagers between age 13 and 19.

Chalk up yet another successful year at Shrine

Martyrs' Shrine officially closed last night following yet another successful season. It re-opens next May during the long Victoria Holiday Weekend.

Liquor-related charges laid

A number of liquor-related charges were laid by Midland OPP late Friday night and early Saturday morning.

None of the charges were related to motor-vehicle accidents.

Cardinal Carter

publishes important pastoral letter

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Second Vatican Council and in anticipation of the upcoming Extraordinary Synod called by Pope John Paul II for the Vatican, His Eminence G. Emmett Cardinal Carter, spiritual head of the Archdiocese of Toronto, has just published a 20-page pastoral letter.

SCBE gives okay

Simcoe County Board of Education has given the green light so as to allow a storage garage to be constructed at Huronia Centennial School in Elmvalle and that the cost be shared by Elmvalle Minor Ball Association.

Long-term borrowing required

SCBE has authorized spending \$450,000 on new administrative computer equipment. The county school board also cleared the way at its last meeting to allocate \$207,000 for a six-unit portable at Tottenham Public School.

Financing for these projects will come through the issuance of a debenture or similar long-term borrowing.