

TORONTO

THE ?????

"Can you smell that?" said her nibs late last Saturday as we entered Highway 33 from Wooler Road. "Yes" I replied.

We were just returning home from four days visiting our two grandchildren and their parents in Richmond Hill which is really now just part of northern Toronto. What we smelled was clear air and the absence of smog and other air pollutants.

No! No! This is not going to be another criticism of Toronto even though having been born there and lived and work there most of my life, I feel I am more entitled than most to be critical. Instead just some comments about the changes that are occurring there as we observed them.

My son has a house on a one acre lot in old Richmond Hill. You can't see any neighbours because his lot is ringed in by trees. What isn't covered by house and planters holds a huge pool, gazebo and bar area and even a small playhouse for the kids. You might be in the country except for the hum of traffic that almost never ceases from Major McKenzie Drive, 300 yards south and Yonge Street 1/4 mile east.

My son is concerned however because the tree-covered vacant area to the south and rear of his property is to house 17 houses glowingly described as 'on lots up to 1/4 acre and starting at the low 500's! He's not concerned about the obvious increase to the value of his property but is concerned that he may no longer be able to go skinny dipping unobserved.

I mentioned to my son an article I'd read in The Star last week about Re-Max selling million dollar plus houses and that the majority of purchasers were in their 30's and 40's - so he took me on a tour. Wow! There is a lot of money in Toronto. We toured the land around Buttonville airport filled with hi-tech companies. In fact some of these were visited by J.F. Kennedy Jr. looking for investors before his fatal crash.

Part of the reason for the visit was for Valerie and our daughter-in-law to do some interior decorating throughout the house by placing numerous artifacts and pictures that my son has accumulated from the near and far east and South America and to shop for more

furniture. So they shopped 'til they dropped while I babysat for the 3 1/2 year old and 18 months old granddaughters/

I discovered that I was best at supervising nap time. If Mom put them to bed and waited until they dropped off she and 'her nibs' could leave in the secure knowledge that I would sit in the sun reading and of course listening to the monitor.

The not so good time was when they awoke. The baby happy and hungry would sit in her high chair and eat her snacks and drink her juice but she usually smelled awful. Now I know that changing diapers is a skill that once learned is never forgotten but knowing that I felt no useful purpose would be served in proving how adept I still was so we waited for Mom and on one occasion Dad to come home to remove the cause of the little cloud of effluvia hovering over baby.

Valerie was in her element shopping. There are so many stores selling so many things at any level of quality and price that it boggles the mind. She discovered that the years in the county where life is more leisurely and shopping requires an hour's drive to Kingston or Belleville has sapped her strength. Our daughter-in-law almost brought her to her knees in their various forays.

I was glad too to be able to return to the game playing that drivers engage in. My favourite is the one where some pleasant chap decides to see how close he can get to your rear bumper. I enter into the spirit of this game and at an appropriate time switch on the headlights which also lights the rear lights and watch the nose of his car dip into the pavement. They usually break off the game quickly after that and roar past you but always with a personable wave. It's a bit peculiar in that the waving fist has the middle finger erect but I'm sure it all in good fun and the moving lips are wishing me luck!

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