

# One Born Every Minute

I used to think I had a reasonable level of intelligence. I could add, subtract, divide in my head (multiplying is a long forgotten pastime). I read a lot, used to write Orders in Council, regulations, policies and what I thought to be erudite papers and essays. This air of complacency has been shattered lately.

What, you may, ask is the horrible experience that has caused you to doubt your competence? There have been several.

The first was my experience in purchasing a small disk satellite system. Everywhere you looked there were ads NOW ONLY \$99 - OUR DISH FOR \$89.50 and other varying prices. Under these prices was usually a line of very small print 'after programming allowances' or some such vague statement. Well, we had had dealings with two antennae suppliers in the County and I called. The first one said the cost is \$299. "But what about the ads" I asked. "It pains me to have to indulge in what is really misleading advertising" he said "But when everything is added up it will cost you \$299." The second dealer gave me the same story even though each of them had signs stating lower prices. No matter what ad you read it always ended up that you had to pay a total price of \$299.

Oh well our big dish was a pain in the neck so we bought a small one for \$299.

Great! Well not quite. Recently a host of additional channels were 'previewed' free up until January 7th 2002. Our company sent out a folder offering various packages for of course, various prices. The way the information was presented called into doubt our reasoning ability so Valerie called the company's head office. A very helpful service representative explained it to us and we made our choices. A couple of weeks went by and our bill arrived and sure enough the extras we wanted were there and we paid for them.

Two day's later, these extra channels disappeared from our set. We now entered a mind boggling round of attempts to reach the company. Busy! Busy! We did manage to get an answer one morning at 6.00 a.m. but after 40 minutes of

being told how important we were as customers we hung up!

We E mailed the CRTC and got an immediate response and were advised that our complaint would be part of the record reviewed when licensing time arrived - so what! We were paying for stations we didn't get. "Maybe the phone lines are out of order" I suggested. Valerie called the Bell operator who said the line was working but that her Father had also been trying to get them and was finally successful at 1.00 a.m. in the morning. We tried at various times for two more days and then unbelievably got through. Seems that 700,000 customers lost their channels on January 7th. So much for customer service and prepaying!

The most recent attack on my feeling of competence is dealing with the phone company. We bought a box mobile phone some years ago from Bell. It is great, has 3.1 amps and will even work in Milford! The smiling employee at Bell explained the plan - you'll own the phone after 18 months and you have this and that service. We seldom use the phone and keep it for emergencies. After 18 months the only thing that happened was that the bill went up.

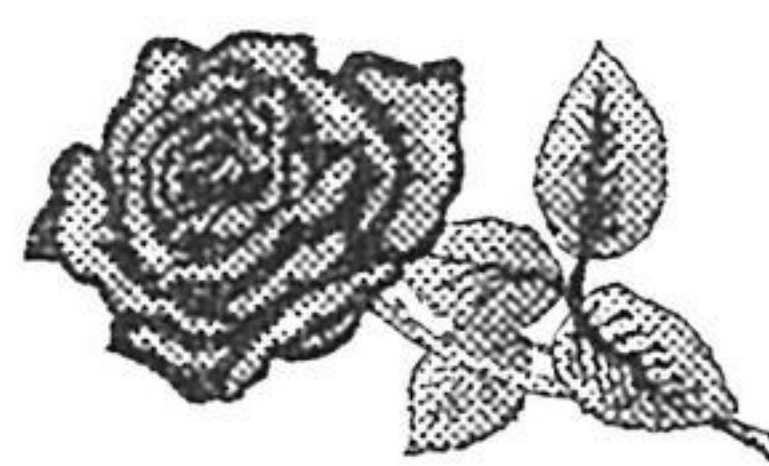
Recently I received a 'free' little cell phone. Its so cute but it won't work in Milford - the vortex of the County. The material with the phone seemed as confusing as the satellite information (although different companies - I think it is a corporate plot) so we dropped in at the Bell Mobility Office in Belleville. A very nice young lady explained that my 'free' phone included free night 6.00 p.m. - 7.00 a.m. calls and free weekend calls for 3 months and 20 minutes of call time. There seem to be millions of options open and we picked one and also I was advised I could get a cheaper plan for our big box phone.

Thinking that finally I had worked one of these plans out I proudly explained all of this to a group who had also received the 'free' phone.

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**JANET MURPHY**  
193 Murphy Road  
Milford, Ontario K0K  
2P0

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