

SLEEP

One of the most chilling comments, at least to me, is contained in the play MacBeth, by William Shakespeare in Act 2 Scene 1. Here Macbeth, talking to his wife after having committed murder says he heard a voice saying "Sleep no more! Macbeth hath murdered sleep".

Now, I suppose a guilty conscience can prevent sleep as can excitement; think about children on Christmas Eve or before an exciting holiday trip. But in my experience the greatest threat to sleep is the bed you have to lie in.

This was reinforced recently as Valerie and I began and ended a vacation travelling on Via Rail to and from Halifax. Our two person compartment complete with private washroom and shower was at the very least, cosy, and after awhile slightly claustrophobic. We spent much of our time during the daylight hours in the Dome Car that came with our Eastern Class tickets. Despite the wine tasting and various other presentations by staff the worst part to me was the beds. At the pull of a lever the upper bunk descended from the ceiling and another lever lowered the bottom bunk.

Valerie volunteered to take the upper bunk and the sight of a masterful negotiation of the ladder and launching herself onto the bed will forever be indelibly printed on my mind. The bottom bunk was a relatively thin mattress on a steel sheet and my weight was sufficient to render any cushioning effect null and void.

This caused me to think of various experiences I've had with beds. No! No! Just as it relates to sleep!

When I was a young child and visitors arrived to stay over, all kids' beds doubled in capacity. My two sisters slept in a double bed which could hold two more friends at the bottom, whereas my single bed could only hold another cousin with his head at the bottom and his feet somewhere around my head. Usually this did not result in a good nights sleep for anyone.

Sometimes if two male cousins needed my bed, the two chesterfield chairs in the living room would be pushed face to face and I had my own little bed with a crack in the centre complete with upholstered sides so I couldn't move. Again this arrangement was somewhat discouraging of sound sleep.

I recall taking my son and two other fathers and their two sons on a canoe trip to Algonquin Park. We set up camp on an island with tents and awnings and the boys, more into camping in the wilds than their fathers, collected a lot of cedar boughs for mattresses. I have never slept on a lumpier, more uncomfortable foundation. So much so that I took my sleeping bag out of the tent and slept under a tree on a relatively soft comfortable piece of the Canadian Shield.

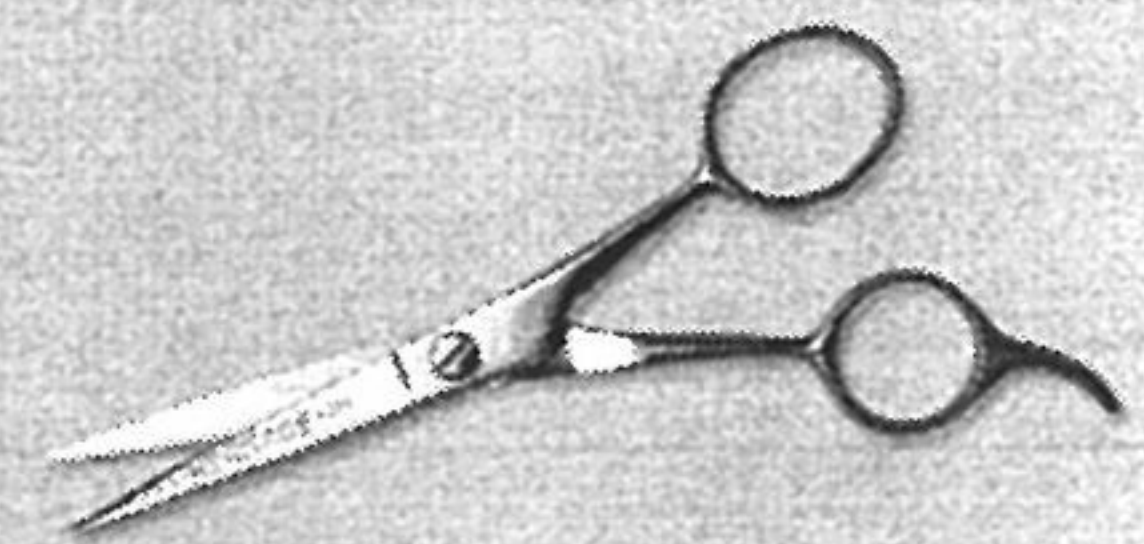
I had some experience with bunk beds when I attended a six week course one summer with the army cadets at Val Cartier, Quebec. Most of you can picture a large room with rows of two level bunks filled with teenage boys. The noises and odours were themselves enough to discourage sleep but the army worked us very hard each day so that while the odours and the noises were still prevalent everyone slept the sleep of exhaustion.

Some years ago Valerie had heard that foam mattresses were just the thing so we bought a bed with the foam mattress which still resides in one of our spare bedrooms. We used it as our bed for a number of years but I never really enjoyed a totally rewarding sleep. They say that the new memory foam is very good. I saw an ad on the internet for slippers made with memory foam and they are quite comfortable and if they last for the rest of my life they may have justified the expense.

When we moved here thirteen years ago a new bed for the master bedroom was purchased. A superior spring filled Queen size with some slight padding on the top provided an extremely comfortable place to sleep. We have a duvet and sheets and pillow cases of 500 threads to the inch Egyptian cotton.

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