

ADAPTING

Just finished a busy weekend so I have to scurry to get this article to Des before the already ready prolonged deadline he gave me last week.

We had made plans for the weekend in Toronto, Richmond Hill and Mount Albert and thus a sympathetic Des gave his last minute contributor 'til today, Monday to get an article in.

Valerie drove all weekend since my recently operated on knee was still iffy and the next step is a full knee replacement within the next few months.

As we roared along the 401 on our way to the 'beach' in Toronto to visit friends she mentioned a problem we both face now when going to the city. That is developing the mind set necessary to cope with the different and often scary behavior of drivers in the GTA. We had both driven for years in the city but now find that it takes a couple of days to adjust.

One no no is to try and drive at the speed limit. This behavior is not tolerated by city drivers. The tensing of the nerves as you are cut off passed alarmingly close, glared at by everyone in the speeding vehicles which have to brake to avoid hitting you is both physically and mentally demanding. I was chatting with a friend today as we drove in his hybrid car and he advised that he's gotten used to them to a large extent and maximizes the economy of his car which is about 6.5 liters per 100 kilometers (or about 43.5 miles per gallons for us old folks) on the 401 to and from Toronto. We, on the other hand, find it easier to keep up with the flow which on this trip was about 130 kilometers per hour.

Well, we got to our friends house and guessed which side of the road parking was allowed – it changes every month – and of course guessed wrong and had to maneuver around to get legal and then we are only legal during the day so our friends have to make sure that we can park in their shared driveway. It's very difficult to get used to so many houses so close together. When you sit out on the porch at night you have to pretend that you can't see you neighbors just a few feet away!

I found myself looking positively on local County drivers (for a split second) who drive below the speed limit; don't signal for turns and who wait until you are almost up to their driveway before they pull out in front of you. I can imagine some of our visitors saying to each other 'you know it takes me a couple of days to get adjusted to the peculiar and indeed dangerous driving habits of people in the County!'

Our friends drove us out for dinner that evening to The Mandarin one of my favorite Chinese buffets with even

roast beef carved especially for you. I must say on the positive side I didn't see one person among the hundreds of diners wearing a hat but at times the behavior of the diners was selfish and as potentially dangerous as the drivers if you weren't watchful. Wherever I walked, stopped or served myself everyone else seemed to have the right of way and I was constantly jostled or made to move by these impatient folks.

Now my appetite has greatly shrunk in the last few years and I have lost significant weight but the average diner at this buffet had to be careful as they charged towards you that they didn't upset the huge mountain of food on their plate, even on their return from the fourth or fifth time at the trough.

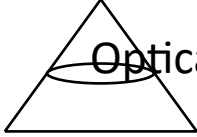
On the positive side, the food was great and the selection huge and positively no baseball caps. Generally speaking I have never seen such unthinking behavior around here (except for the hats). I think that in contrast to adapting to the driving conditions I have no intention to try and adapt to the Buffet Bustle.

The rest of the weekend was spent visiting with friends, relatives and people I haven't seen for over 25 years and who I would never have recognized on the street and who advised that they would never have recognized me – I guess I must have been getting better looking!

Perhaps there are other real pluses to growing old as well. I was reminded in watching and listening to the horde of children from infants to teens how times have changed for them in comparison to when I was a child. My Mother often said 'you have to eat a peck of dirt before you die. Now everything is sanitized. Finding ways to amuse yourself as a youngster with your friends only occur indoors or under very watchful adult eyes. Weeks are spent in day camps with delivery to and from by Dads and Mums and when you are old enough in strictly controlled sleep camps. Kids get bored with the old guys like me talking about when they were young, as well they should – so did we when we were

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