

STUPIDITY

I did something really stupid the other day. So stupid that I began to ask myself if this was a new phenomenon or did I have a history of doing stupid things.

I looked up the definition of stupid and stupidity and found that it wasn't helpful e.g.

'Stupidity – a poor ability to understand or to profit from experience' I don't think that applies to me totally since I don't often make the same mistake twice.

There is a major exception to that statement which often creeps back into my memory when I think how wonderful and clever I am.

Many, many years ago when I was in the early twenties, I was invited to accompany my girlfriend of the time to a skating party on the Credit River in a little village called Cheltenham.

I could skate and had learned as a small child but had never skated on a river before. I joined the group and skated up and down a section of the river until I was tired and skated over to a pillar holding up a section of the bridge. It looked like a good place to rest. I found myself up to my neck in water as the ice gave way where the pillar entered the river. With some concern the owners of the property took me into the house, kept me by the stove wrapped in a blanket until my clothes dried off. How embarrassing!

"You should stay away from anything that is projecting through the ice. The ice is usually very thin and will give way under you weight" was the advice I was given.

Back I went to the river and skated until I was tired again. I stayed away from the bridge pillars and instead skated over to a log sitting on the ice. Again I was up to me neck in water and realized how very stupid I was.

The definition of stupidity seemed much too harsh and surely doesn't apply to me, I thought. You can judge if I tell you my latest fiasco.

It was last Monday. We had had our house power washed by Richard which caused some spots on the windows after it dried. Our windows are constructed so that all the windows in the bedrooms can be cleaned from the inside. One window lifts out letting you reach the outside of the next one, clean the removed window and replace it. We've done this for the 17 years we've lived here.

Having watched Richard climb up and down the ladder I thought I could do that. Of course, Richard was not cleaning the windows and could stay on the lower rungs of the ladder since he had the power washer – a fact I did not take into consideration. So I decided that 'Hey, I'll use the ladder to clean the outside of the windows and Valerie could do the inside. Please note since spouses

never take advice from their spouse especially men, Valerie said not a word, but I noted she was nowhere to be seen as I tramped off with my ladder.

The first set of windows was OK; the second had so much growth and vegetation that I couldn't get the ladder in close. Okay, I thought I'll do that window the normal way but I should be able to do the master bedroom window at the back of the house. I managed to get the ladder set up on this final window although there was considerable lovage growing beneath the window and the propane tank for the kitchen stove and fireplace did not permit proper centering of the ladder. No matter! I began the cleaning. Because of the lack of centering I couldn't reach the top corner of the second pane so I stepped on the top of the propane tank – the part that cover the valves – reached for the corner, slipped, fell bounced off the tank and ended up on the paving stones around the tank on my back wedged between the tank, a barrel full of mint and the lovage – thank goodness for the lovage!

As I lay there moaning Valerie was suddenly there and eventually we were able to extricate me and put me in the whirlpool tub with some Epsom's Salts. We couldn't detect any broken bones – I could still move – but bruising began to appear. Valerie said not a word so I knew that I was going to have to say it – "what a stupid thing to do"! She did say, however, that the pain was probably going to get worse.

I had a doctor's appointment the next day so Valerie drove me since she was right it was getting a mite more painful. I mentioned the 'accident'. He examined the bruising and scrapes and stated that he has also once done something that stupid.

Valerie in her usual kindly way decided that the definition of stupidity was much too harsh she just put it down to being a man – pig headedness came into the conversation somewhere.

I can assure you that I will not wash windows from a ladder ever again. Valerie's note: (He will probably try something else of equal stupidity)

- John A Jackson