

Idiosyncrasies...just like barnacles

Idiosyncrasies. Now, there's a fifty-dollar word if I ever saw one. The dictionary defines it as "a personal peculiarity" and, believe me, when I look at some of the 'personal peculiarities' of some people around me--and myself as well--I couldn't agree more.

They're funny things, these idiot peculiarities. They sneak up on us through the years and become so attached to the old personality that, after a while, we don't even realise they are there. Like barnacles. Some may be funny, but most of them are not, 'cause we don't realize we're driving others around the bend and up the wall with our quirky little habits and maddening little mannerisms. But would we appreciate it if they were pointed out to us? Not likely. "You're not so plu-perfect yourself, you know!" is the likely retort.

They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Well, it's not

Olga Landiak Kennedy

Life, According to Baba

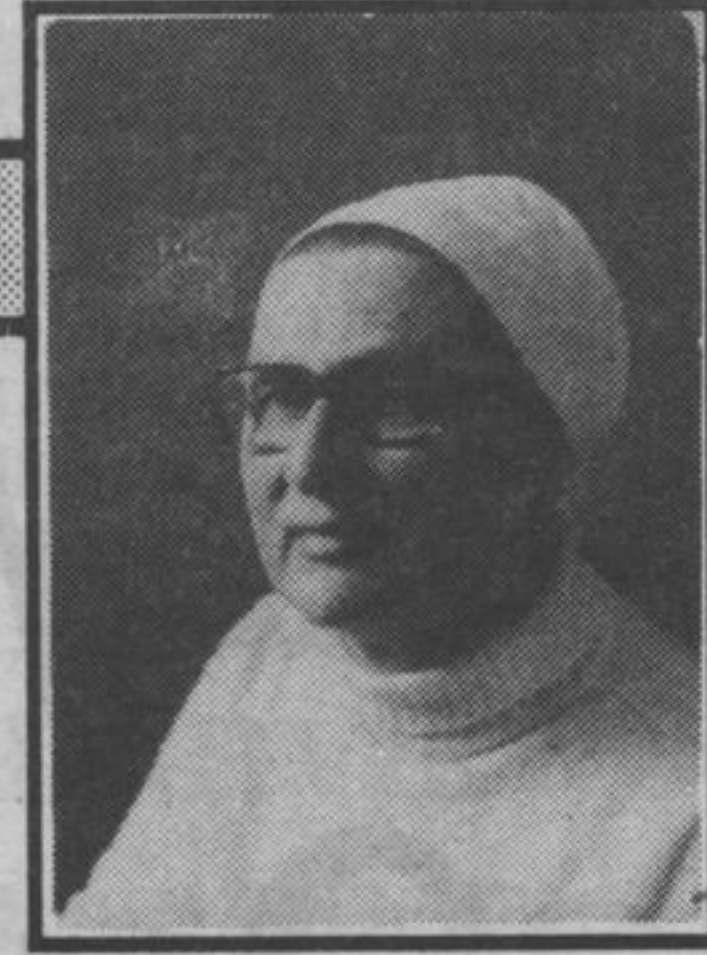
the new tricks I'm talking about, but the old ones. The old, set-in-concrete ones which have become more and more pronounced over the years and more exasperating to others around. Not just the funny little physical things we do, which is bad enough, but mainly what comes out of the old mouth.

It's best to keep it firmly shut and not yammer on about the 'good old days'. Maybe they were 'good' in a lot of ways as compared to the do-my-own-thing of today, but the young 'uns who are practising it, are not going to appreciate being told how immoral, wicked and uncaring they are. Moral lectures just ain't their bag, so you might just as well save the old breath and talk of more things in common. If it's possible, that is. It's pretty tough

finding anything to leap that generation gap.

No use offering any useless advice either when these same young 'uns sweet in doing things their own sweet way whether it be in the kitchen, workshop, business, or whatever. Maybe there was a way you always did such-and-such, and maybe it's the way your own parents and grandparents did too, and, since it was good enough for them and good enough for you...blah, blah, blah. Everybody's going to tune out just as soon as the very first 'now, in my day...' words are uttered.

And insisting on certain little rituals being observed to the 'nth degree all the time, ain't going to win you any gold stars either. Is the world going to fall apart if 'a personal peculiarity' is not kow-



these unimportant little burrs which fasten in the mind to the exclusion of the more important things of life. When you start sliding down the sunset side of the hill, it's time to take stock of all one's own little peculiarities and start chucking them out of your packsack of experience so that one is a more easy and pleasant person to live with or visit.

Who needs, or wants, to listen to an old grouch belly-aching forever and a day about his or her aches and pains, when the world is full of others suffering even bigger aches and pains than they'll ever experience. Sure, coping with getting older, more wrinkled and less physical, isn't easy, but who ever promised us a rose garden without any thorns. Getting rid of the thorns of idiosyncrasies can go a long way to making life a heck of a lot more pleasant for everybody all round. And that goes for the young 'uns too!

towed to or taken notice of? It might be the cause for a lot of hurt feelings and a bout of the 'nobody-cares-about-me' blues but, shucks, is it worth the fuss. Life is short enough as it is at any moment along the Highway of Living, without making it any shorter and disagreeable by unnecessary sulks and tantrums because of some idiot peculiarities.

I guess the hardest thing to learn the older and more hide-bound one gets, is to let go of

Spring brings out the hungry wolves

Grubby snow banks, muddy gravel driveways, water puddles announce Spring is nearer than you think. Hope their forecast is true.

The Canada jays are very shy these days flying away the second a door is opened. Until recently the jacks have been tame enough to keep on feasting on the back feeder when either of us went out. Or walked to the back door crunching hard packed snow and ice crystals underfoot. Ah but not now are they willing to continue feeding when we approach. Merely the sight of one of us and they're gone. Almost gives one and inferiority feeling to be so cold-shouldered by our erstwhile friends of winter.

The nests hold eggs, too precious for the about-to-be-parents to take any chances with humans. To further confuse the humans stealthy, and devious are the jacks when they approach the feeding areas. And a different roundabout route used when they return.

Only once in forty years of birding have I spotted a Canada jay nest. And it was a very high in a very thickly branched old-timer of a spruce. Not being a very great tree climber never did see the nest close up.

Helen Atkinson

Birdsongs from Helen

How did I spot the correct tree where the nest was situated? Believe me it took several days of looking, watching and of very darn cold feet. There was a great amount of snow that year and by middle March it was just as cold as deep winter. "The good old days", one hears so much about. Never have really figured out what was so GOOD about them except one was young, and the world was our oyster.

"Have you seen a wolf or wolves around your place?" No we haven't but apparently many local residents have seen them about their yards.

An eerie feeling to see a big timber wolf nonchalantly strolling up one's driveway in the middle of a sunny afternoon. Was told that just yesterday.

And a neighbor living not too far from here had his yard dog killed by wolves, or a very hungry wolf, right at the back door one night recently. Fun and games in the country.

Cleaned the freezer out of a great many packages of split,

freezer burned and so on as of yesterday. The compost pile is still buried in snow piled high. So where to dump the frozen foods... a wild assortment from smelts to pumpkin ready for pies.

Get it where some of the wild creatures may enjoy a treat in their winter-weary diets.

Right out in the open across the peony bed. There sat the frozen lumps of this and that. The contents had been taken out of their freezer bags and packagings.

Now, how long will it take for the ravens and crows to find the booty?

Within a half-hour of the stuff being chucked onto the hard snow, a raven circled, eager-eyed overhead. "Now where did all that stuff come from 'Twant there earlier." And it flew down for a closer investigation of the pile of fruit, veggies, fish and badly freezer-burned meat.

Bingo! Ah've hit the jackpot! Seemed the ravens loud remarks as he hoarsely hollered for his friends and no doubt, relatives.



"Come on fellas we eat high off the hog today."

Within a very few minutes four of his fellows joined him.

No sooner were the ravens sorting out their favorite bits than a couple of bluejays arrived. The jays didn't land too near the ravens but stayed at a safe distance watching and yelling.

Two more blue jays flew in from the deep woods across the track. "What did you find guys?"

The jays stayed well back from where the ravens were enjoying their repast. They stayed back but did not stay quiet. There was no doubt they were

chivying the ravens to hurry up, leave some for us will yah.

Almost before the last raven lifted into the air the jays flocked to the feast.

An hour later the pile was lowered to scraps scattered across the snow. The pumpkin had not been touched. Frozen pulp ain't to our liking. And yet have chucked fresh pumpkin after steaming too much for dinner and the birds waded into it as though it was manna from heaven.

Like humans I guess, the birds have summer tastes in food plus winter tastes.

With spring just ahead one wonders, "How many warblers will we see this spring?" There were not too many around last year in my favorite birding areas. Will it be better or worse this season?

We shall just have to wait and see.

Several birders have mentioned that fewer winter birds have been seen around their feeders this year than in the past few years. Sad if their numbers continue to drop as they have been doing.

And nary an evening grosbeak here in too many weeks. Have you had any?

Northerners...are we really whiners

Northerners. People in southern Ontario call us whiners. But just who are we, government prints up to sell our beauty spots to southerners and Americans don't portray northern people at all. They only show pretty pictures of lakes, rocks and trees.

Northerners, like other Canadians, have an identity crisis. Like other Canadians, the first thing we say when somebody asks us who we are is "Well, we're not Americans, eh!" On top of that, because we live in Parry Sound, or somewhere north of that, we make all kinds of



nasty jokes about those people - you know - the ones who live in "the south". We don't have their real estate prices, or their traffic - neither of which we miss much. But we also don't have their power and influence. And that we do seem to mind, a lot.

NORTHERN INSIGHTS

by Larry Sanders



Northerners thus have a tradition. You can see it early any weekday morning, at an airport in Sudbury, Thunder Bay or the Sault. Go out to one of those airports some morning, and count the briefcases. They're going south, to "a meeting",

Northerners have been doing it for years. In fact, there are bureaucrats, consultants, municipal politicians and other quite noble professionals who have made a whole career out of being a traveller - or a professional whiner, the way those southerners

see us. People whose whole reputation hangs on their ability to go down south, wrestle some grant or statement of support from someone in Toronto or Ottawa, and come home victorious.

We northerners have learned how to complain. Sometimes we do it effectively. The trans-Canada highway is still not up to humane standards, but the issue is at least on the public agenda. Towns like Atikokan and Ear Falls lost iron ore mines and half their employment base, were

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