

# Comment

## Join fight against community vandalism

What happened at the Stouffville Cemetery this weekend is among the most heinous and cowardly acts this town has seen in many years.

The vandals who desecrated the headstones of 42 graves are obviously a drop or two down on the evolutionary scale because no self-respecting human being would stoop to acts of this nature.

These thugs are truly morally bankrupt.

And while it takes little courage for this newspaper to condemn the actions of these idiots, we are making a call for the community to get involved in preventing actions like this in the future.

The mayor has announced he will be asking for initiatives to help prevent vandalism from the police, town council and the community.

This summer, vandalism destroyed flowers on Main St., a recreation dept. van was trashed and there was extensive damage done in the park and at the lawn bowling club.

If you saw anything at all at

the cemetery, or if you have any information, call police or the town.

If you were involved, join the human race and confess. At least then your conscience will

be at peace. Which is more than can be said for those in the cemetery.



## Breaking a record can be a truly painful thing

Steve Hoult of Ballantrae must have been devastated. His world record pumpkin was on the way to earning him a \$50,000 prize for being the first person in history to grow a 1,000 lb. vegetable.

To qualify, Hoult had to get the monster gourd to Port Elgin undamaged. When he was attempting to move it, he heard a sickening crack. It was the sound of 50 big ones going down the tubes.

I know how he feels. I had broke a record of sorts last week. But there was no \$50,000 on the line.

I had gone 32 years without ever being stung.

It's not Guinness material, but it was a record I carefully cultured. If I saw a wasp or hornet or bee come into my field of vision, I immediately headed indoors. It was not about to take any chances. You see, I am not a big fan of pain, and outside of spiders, wasps and hornets are the stuff of nightmares for me.

The neurosis comes honestly. I had, from a very early age, heard all sorts of horror stories about people getting stung and then dropping dead from an allergic reaction. This is fairly common.

In the Mediterranean, it is a common problem for people to leave cans of pop laying around. Wasps climb in to get at the sugar, and the unsuspecting diner will take a big swig. The wasp stings all the way down the throat - presto! A one way ticket to the Hereafter. As a result, there are laws banning drinking from open containers in Greece. As recently as August, there



was a horrible story of a man being stung on the tongue, and dying within minutes.

My tale has little of that sort of drama. But you wouldn't have known it at the time.

I was innocently placing a pop can (note the irony) in my recy-

cling bin when I felt a light touch on my elbow. Knowing there were wasps in the area, I panicked and flailed my arm.

Indescribable pain. Searing, burning. My arm was instantly on fire with an agony only masochists and new mothers are familiar. I will freely admit that I screamed like a schoolgirl.

This was it. I thought, I'm going to puff up like a blowfish, the world will go dim, and then I'll be riding the big escalator to the sky.

I staggered into the house, col-

lapsed on the floor, writhing in pain and clutching my gaping wound. My wife ran over and frantically tried to get ascertain the problem. As I felt my throat constrict, I gasped - 'Waaaasp! Waaaasp!'

Being trained in the effects of anaphylactic shock, she pried my hand away from my elbow and was prepared to suck out the poison. But she didn't.

'Oh, for heaven's sake,' she said, taking her seat and resuming her reading.

I lay on the floor, incredulous,

waiting for the end, apparently alone.

After 10 minutes, my arm began to hurt - from laying on it and the stinging had sort of stopped. I got to my feet, feeling just a little silly.

'Thanks for caring,' I sneered. 'You're just making the most of the fact that your so-called record is broken,' she returned.

Yes, Steve, I know how you feel. But don't despair. You can always take another crack at it next year. Oops, sorry about that.

## Week in Collingwood was tonic for the soul

Most of this column was written last week in the wilds of Collingwood, where I'd gone in an attempt to unleash the spark of literary genius which I'm trying to convince myself lurks within.

The unofficial version of the above is that Chateau Gilderdale's chief cook and bottle-washer decided to spend a whole six days in blissful solitude, writing, reading and staring at a blank screen without once considering what was for dinner or whether anyone had run out of clean underwear.

Much as I'd like to take the credit for dreaming up this devious plan, that distinction goes to my friend Cathy, who took one look at me recently and said, 'It's time you went away.'

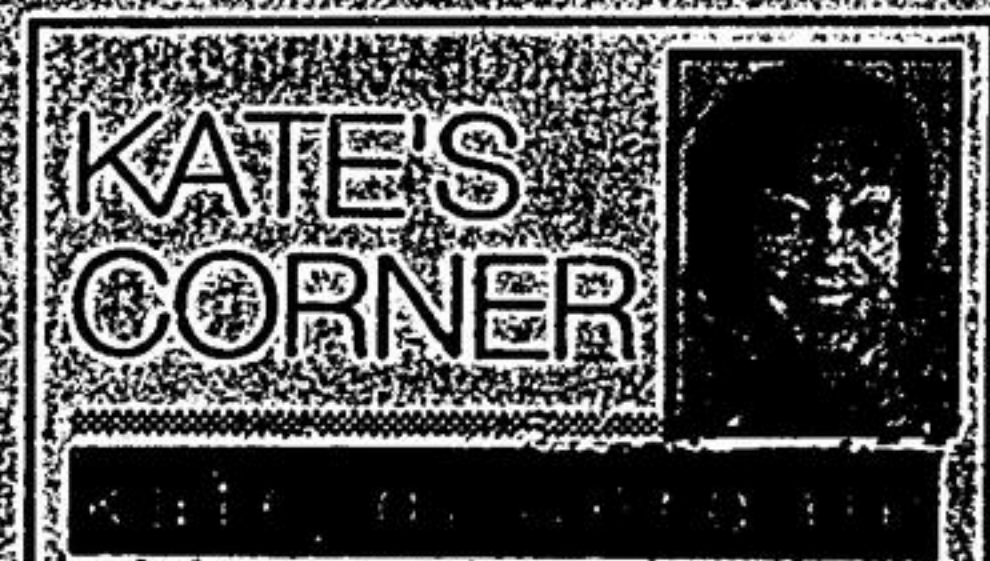
Being of a charitable disposition, I decided she was being kind and not just trying to get

rid of me. It was a wonderful notion, I said, but an impoverished writer with little more to her literary credit than lofty aspirations could barely afford the gas, never mind the cost of accommodation, required to accomplish such a plan.

Less than 24 hours later, she called me back. 'You're staying at my sister's chalet,' she announced, brooking no defiance. 'It's all organized. It was then about six weeks before lift-off and I have to confess it sounded idyllic.'

Having apprised Mr. Wallet-head of my intentions, all that remained for me to do was to ensure I churned out sufficient copy between then and the sabbatical to keep my neglected children in Pizza Pops for the week of my absence.

It was guilt, rather than good housekeeping, which saw me making chili and stews for the



family the week before I left and placing them in the freezer, where, I was fairly certain, they would be awaiting me on my return.

And while I didn't doubt that the children's protestations about missing me were genuine, I was equally sure that their pain would be considerably assuaged by visits to local takeout emporiums during my sojourn in the wilderness.

I awoke that first morning to utter silence and a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. It was all very well to talk airily about going north to write as if I were Hemingway or Margaret

Atwood. It was another matter entirely to produce anything, let alone anything remotely saleable.

As it turned out, I got an amazing amount accomplished on a steady diet of pasta and tomato sauce, pasta and pesto, French bread, plums, nectarines and a can of ravioli with meat sauce, which stirred up best forgotten memories of that infamous oxymoron, British cuisine, so unpleasantly manifest in the school lunches of my youth. So it was with a light heart that I returned to Le Chateau and looked forward to spending some quality time with my offspring. If I had ever doubted they would miss me, those doubts were swept away by warmth of their greetings.

Life without me, they said touchingly, was just not the same. 'And by the way, we're starving. What's for dinner?'

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