

Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

Politics tend to cool off in summer

Politics and hot weather don't mix. With summer officially starting this week, it is tradition that local politics take a back seat to fun in the sun. However, this year, there are as many burning issues as there are burning bodies on the beach, and this year, candidates will have to face the electorate in the fall.

To this end, voters should be grilling not only on the barbecue, but on the campaign trail as well. Here's what we should keep in mind, with the municipal election looming in November:

- If you have an issue of concern to you and your neighbors, find out where each of the candidates who are seeking your vote stands on that issue.

- Stay abreast of who is running where and for what office. We will notify you as each candidate registers their intent to run.

- Remember that the bulk of your tax money is used by the school boards and the region. These candidates are often passed over, and given cursory consideration at the ballot.

Stay informed over the summer, because, depressing as it sounds, the fall is not far off.



I think lawnchairs best left on the ground

The man of my life fell out of the sky. When Gerry bought the ultra light, I wondered—How could the old boy juggle all his toys.—The snow mobile, the dirt bike, the Gold Wing motorcycle, the computer, the cottage and me were being asked to move over to make room for a 1984 MX 11A Ultra Light aircraft.

Thank goodness Gerry doesn't have a job. If he had to work for a living, I'd never see him. When people ask for a description of the ultra light, I simply say, "It's two flying lawn chairs."

Gerry bought the little airplane, having never been up in one. He's quick to point out, however, that he did sit in an ultra light once. And, while he's not positive, he thinks he had a dream about an ultra light in 1961. Actually, this flying thing is all my fault. When Gerry retired last year, my retirement gift was to join me on a 30-minute helicopter ride out of Buttonville Airport. I liked it. He loved it. Gerry couldn't afford a helicopter so he settled for the ultra light.

It must be noted: There are laws



Off the Record

Joan Ransberry

linked to flying lawn chairs. Before you fly, Transport Canada stipulated that you must become a licensed pilot.

Gerry went off to airplane school in Centralia near London. He did the Transport Canada classroom bit, passed with ease and went on to

become a student pilot.

Up he went. Hour one, hour two, hour three and on it went. As the flying time increased, Gerry's confidence grew. While his sister wore out a pair of rosary beads, I didn't worry. Quite the contrary. I was marking time until I could go up. Besides, I'm not Catholic.

I like a thrill. I've flown in small aircraft many times. Once coming home from Lions Head, I took over the controls of the Cessna for a few minutes. I felt quite important. Also, I've flown upside down with a stunt pilot. I've had a few helicopter rides and soared in a hot air balloon. My fun hasn't all been in the clouds. I've raced a stock car, am an old hand at go-karting; I've shot rapids in a canoe, been whitewater rafting and taken a slow ride in a submarine. So, I didn't fuss when Gerry took up with an ultra light.

Last week, Gerry climbed into the aircraft. With flight instructor Bruce by his side, Gerry took the controls.

The engine started, the plane lifted, the engine quit; Bruce took over the controls and Gerry and Bruce came down. The plane was up about five apartment storeys when it lost power. Cause of the crash was mechanical failure. It was not pilot error.

Gerry walked away from the crash with minor injuries. The instructor, meanwhile, was not as fortunate. The 36-year-old pilot was admitted to London Health Science Centre in serious condition. He faced nine hours of surgery. His injuries included a broken back. Soon, Bruce will be transferred to a rehabilitation hospital where the long slow road to recovery will begin.

After the Transport Canada carried out its investigation, the badly damaged aircraft was taken to a farm in London.

Everyone is asking—Will Gerry go up again? The answer is: I don't know. I have, however, suggested that he take up needlepoint.

Bailey and Cracker make good team

I was shocked and appalled by an assertion in a recent Broadcast Week article concerning my favorite celluloid man.

In it, writer John Brady claimed that 'Large, cranky, over-weight middle aged men with shaky finances don't have Cracker's success in attracting women. Well, maybe he should have checked with a few representatives of the opposite sex before pontificating about their guy preferences. As a member of the female gender for my entire life, I have always found the lad a lot more appealing than your average Hollywood hunk.

Cracker, for those who don't follow the television series, is a very large bloke indeed who espouses unhealthy habits (drinking, smoking and gambling) and the kind of politically incorrect attitudes which endear him to those of us who have had it up to here with that creeping '90s malaise. Fear of Causing Offence.

He is played with over-sized magnificence by Robbie Coltrane, whose other career outings include the title role in 'The Pope Must Diet' and one of two less-than-devout ladies of the cloth in 'Nuns on the Run.' What Cracker lacks in physical beauty, he more than



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

compensates for in intelligence and sharp, sometimes deliciously nasty, wit.

As police psychologist Fitz, he does not tread lightly on other people's sensibilities. He is opinionated, unapologetic, a feckless husband and an all round dreadful role model. Like Donovan Bailey, he says what he thinks before thinking about what he's going to say.

And like Bailey, his antics are greeted with all the horror evinced by a Victorian matron who finds herself in the presence of a naked piano leg.

Having the vapors over displays of public petulance by modern day 'heroes' seems to be gaining favor among many members of the media, which may account for why I, and other cranky, middle-aged practitioners of the written word, find ourselves defending the indefensible.

Of course, there is a distinction

between Coltrane, who is acting out a role and Bailey, whose job it is to run as fast as he can, something he does better than anyone else in the world. But nowhere is it written that the poor bloke must be held to account for his opinions—when asked what he thought, he simply gave a colorful, honest, spur-of-the-moment reply.

If he'd wanted to be a diplomat, he would no doubt have chosen a career in the diplomatic service. But Bailey's problems are symptomatic of the insatiable desire to find every well known individual's Achilles' heel, in order to unleash gallons of ink and miles of videotape in righteous condemnation of perceived imperfections in character or attitude.

If we want our athletes to win at all costs, we shouldn't be horrified when their competitive edge spills over into their rhetoric. And while Cracker is a fictional character, his job puts him under immense pressure and throws him into close contact with some obnoxious, often psychopathic criminals.

What Bailey and Cracker share is the fact that they are fallible human beings like the rest of us. And like the rest of us, they sometimes make mistakes.

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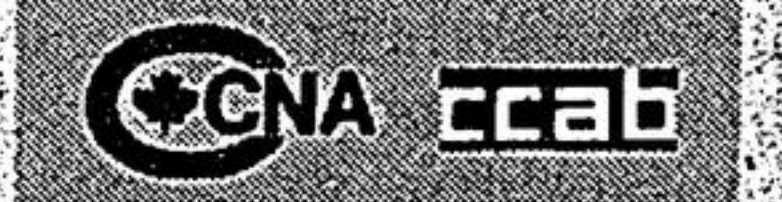
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