

THE TRIBUNE

Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

Take care around water this summer

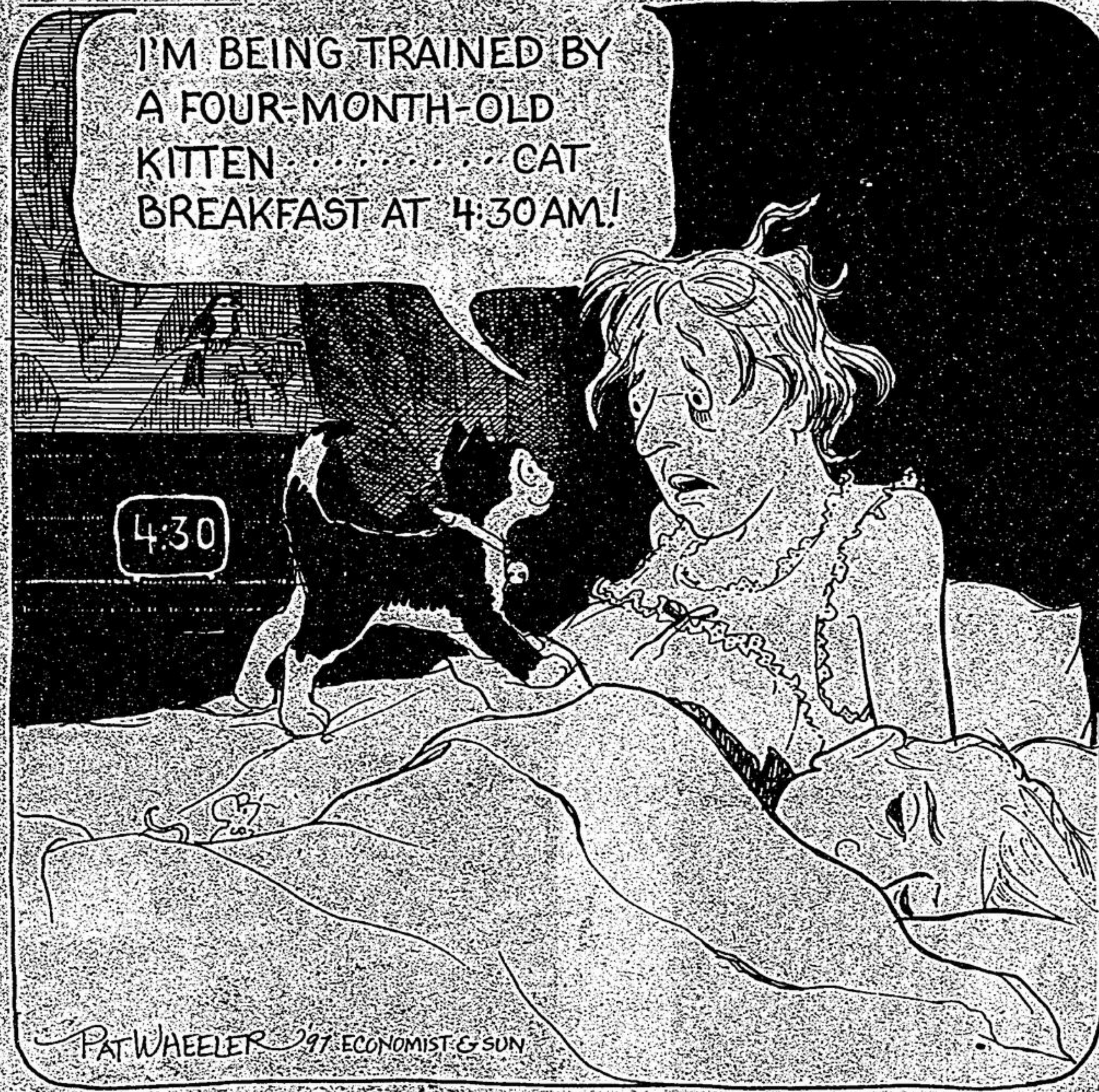
With school coming to a close this week, the summer has truly begun.

For many it is the start of long and fun days at the beach, lake or by the pool. It is also an extremely dangerous time of year for young children. With the recent drowning in an abandoned pool of a six year old in Scarborough, and another near-drowning in Toronto, parents cannot be careful enough at this time of year.

The statistics on children and drowning are terrifying. According to the Red Cross, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional death among Canadian children aged one to four. The leading cause is motor vehicle accidents. Most staggering among the statistics is that 69 per cent of these young victims are alone at the time of drowning. An additional 24 per cent are accompanied only by other small children.

Obviously adults must watch children like hawks when they are around the water. The Red Cross says give your children your undivided attention when they are swimming. Don't be distracted by anything including the telephone. It only takes a few seconds for a tragedy to occur.

Have fun this summer, but also be careful.



Issues of safety a concern for area parents

Dear Editor,

Re: Safety of students at St. Mark and Glad Park Schools

Last fall I attempted to bring to the attention of both the York Region school boards and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville my concerns for the safety of children around St. Mark School during the construction of the new Glad Park School and what I thought were serious planning issues, that were not being taken into consideration for when the new school opens this fall. Basically I was thanked by the public school board for my

concerns and left to think that I was alone with my concerns.

As the opening of the new school draws closer I realize that I am not alone, far from it! Concerned parents of St. Mark have been passing around a petition and currently have more than 500 signatures of support. With the added issue of an earlier start time, 8:15 a.m., other parents are coming out and voicing their concerns.

I do not believe that the parents of the children that will be attending Glad Park School next fall are as aware of the seri-

Letters to the Editor

ousness of the situation we will all be facing when the school opens.

Our concerns are:

• Both schools, which will have more than 1,250 students between them, will use the same dead-end driveway in front of St. Mark, known as Glad Park. This is the only entrance and exit for approximately 15 buses, children walking to both schools and approximately 200 cars to drop off their children to both schools at

the same time. This "street" is 21 feet wide and only 300 feet long with no exit! The traffic on this street now is horrendous in the morning and after school with only one school and about 700 students. Should there ever be a need for emergency vehicles at these peak times there would be no hope of gaining entry past the traffic.

• The implementation of a 1.6 km walking distance for all students means that children as young as 3 years old will be asked to walk to school, many for the first time ever. With the 1.6 km walking distance comes the reality that small children have to cross the 9th Line at the heaviest commuter times. Anyone familiar with the traffic on the 9th Line knows that cars and trucks race up and down at speeds exceeding 80 km/h. The horror stories of trying to cross even at the crosswalk are terrifying. There is no crossing guard at Millard for a lot of these children which are coming from the subdivision on the East side of Ninth Line. There are apparently stoplights and an extension of Millard planned for the future, but not likely within the next five years.

• The walking distance also affects children from other areas around the school. There are no sidewalks on any of the main arteries leading to the school - Elm Road, Glad Park, Fairview Avenue or Rupert Avenue.

• Added to all of the above is the new start time for both of these schools. The visionaries at our school boards have decided to implement an 8:15 a.m. start time for both schools. All in the name of saving some money. In the dead of winter our children will be arriving at school in the dark, whether they walk, are bused or driven. Our children will be walking in the dark to school on snow-covered streets.

It is the hope of everyone involved that if enough people show support that these very serious issues can be resolved and no children will be hurt or worse yet killed, trying to get to school next year.

Cathy Singh
Stouffville

Off to France to battle with a phobia

For the last couple of years, I have accompanied two friends of similar vintage to a charming country cottage, where we derived considerable amusement from vacuuming flies off the windows in order to enjoy the full glory of the panoramic view.

This year, we decided to broaden our cultural horizons, not to mention our knowledge of minute, air-breathing arthropods, by familiarizing ourselves with the creepy crawlies indigenous to northern France. Not, I hasten to add, that any of us is especially fond of insects or their environmental cousins, but when someone offers you the use of half a Breton long house for the princely sum of \$180 a week, you don't start complaining about sharing space with a multitude of multi-limbed tenants.

Our vacation is to commemorate a collective 150 years on earth and our destination is the holiday haven of a good friend's brother and sister-in-law, whose description of the chateau in question contains the following enticing information:

"The house is rural and unoccupied for weeks at a time. Visitors must therefore accept that they share their accommodation with a variety of



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

small four-, six-, and particularly eight-legged creatures." Since I read that, I have been endeavoring to convince myself that spiders are people too.

As a lifelong arachnophobe, however, it's going to take a lot more than getting in touch with my inner child to overcome this primal fear. My only hope is I will come through the experience with enough of my marbles left to produce the definitive arachnophobe's self-help book upon my return to civilization as I know and love it, i.e. sans spiders.

Where I live, spiders are the exception rather than the rule and they seldom measure up in size or creepiness to their ghastly hairy British relatives, a large contingent of whom used to reside in the family coal cellar in beautiful downtown Woodford Green. Once in a while one would migrate up the drainpipe into the bath or basin,

where it would lurk furtively, until you staggered in, eyes half-closed, and turned on the tap, whereupon it would engage in a sinister scuttle guaranteed to cause cardiac arrest in all but the stoutest of souls.

My father, who was almost as much of a wimp as I was when it came to spiders, was forever being entreated by me and my mother to effect their permanent dispatch. Unfortunately, my elder brother was a rights activist for all-creatures-great-and-small before rights activists were invented and decreed the demise of even God's most microscopic creations.

Whenever we were driven to engage in a spot of genocide, we had to wait until he was safely out of the house to begin. Otherwise, he would insist on capturing his 8-legged buddy in order to release it unharmed into the mean suburban streets. This exercise consisted of running around the bathroom, jar in hand, in hot pursuit of his quarry, which would immediately secret itself in a crack in the wall and bide its time until it could get me alone again. I'm just praying that, with my English heritage, I will be as attractive to a French spider as Gilles Ducape is to Preston Manning.

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