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Comment & Opinions

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to the editor
to the address below

EDITORIAL

We are a sorry lot regarding patriotism

Where are all the flags?

There is a decided lack of community spirit in Canada, and there always has been. We tend not to go in for showy displays of nationalism or sentimentality. But we could take a page from the American's patriotism handbook. There isn't a store, a public institution or home that doesn't fly some type of American flag on Independence Day. Most of the rest of the year, you fairly trip over them, no matter where you might travel in the United States. They are not afraid to show their pride.

And yet, when Canadian ambassador Ken Taylor secured the release of American hostages in Iran, there were probably more maple leaf flags flying on that July 1 in the U.S. than there were in Canada.

We have the number one country in a row four years running. But no one would know it. Instead of flying our flag, which consistently rates in the top 10 of most admired designs of flags in the world, we set about trying to change the words to songs like 'The Maple Leaf Forever' and O Canada to be more politically correct.

We are a sorry lot.

Fly the flag this weekend. It's worth it.



Driving in Italy was a harrowing experience

Well, it's been a month now. The uncontrollable tremors in my hands have vanished. I don't seem to be gibbering spontaneously or throwing my arms over my face any more. I haven't had a savage flashback for three nights in a row. I think perhaps I'm ready to talk about it.

Driving in Italy, I mean. I spent two weeks last month in the rolling hills of Tuscany, about an hours drive from Florence. Well, about an hours drive in sleepy, conventional Canadian terms, I mean. In terms of Italian driving I was probably about six and a half minutes from Flo-

rence. Although the trip seemed to take several lifetimes.

It's difficult to find words to describe driving in Italy. I'm a bit of a leadfoot myself and I've seen my share of automotive Armageddons. I've been sideswiped in Montreal and rear-ended in Vancouver and



Basic Black

Arthur Black

tailgated in New York and I've even braved the 401 outside Toronto at the start of a holiday weekend.

But none of that prepared me for Italy.

First of all the roads — as in most of Europe — are much narrower than we Canucks are used to. And twistier, with lots of hairpin turns and sudden junctions.

And then there are the Italian drivers.

I can say quite sincerely that every Italian I met on my holiday was polite, friendly, helpful, generous, kind and thoughtful.

Until he or she got behind the wheel of a car. The act of driving an automobile transforms the average Italian — signor or signora — into a ravening marauder. A speed freak. A power monger.

The mission of every Italian driver is to pass your car. Right now. And they will. They will pass you on turns, in towns, on hills, in tunnels, on blind curves. Once I was passed on a two-lane bridge.

By a dump truck. Italians do not signal when they pass. Nor have they heard of Elmer. The Safety Elephant or the old one-car-length-for-every-ten-kph adage. They believe in zero car lengths between vehicles. At any speed.

As for tailgating — you couldn't call what Italian drivers do just before they pass you 'tailgating'. Italian cars attempt copulation with your car.

The official speed limit on the Autostrada — Italy's superhighway system — is 130 kilometres per hour, but if you tried to observe that limit you would die very quickly. Most vehicles routinely maintain at least twice that speed. The rest go even faster.

It's no better off the Autostrada. Oh, the drivers ratchet it back a bit — just enough so their cars don't fly off the road — but they still hare along at speeds guaranteed to give a North American driver a heart attack.

The only thing worse than being on an Italian road in a car is being on an Italian road without a car. You get the impression that for most Italian drivers, pedestrians are simply an exotic form of potential roadkill. My guide book actually offered this road crossing advice: "Walk out slowly and confidently" it says, "glaring at the traffic and maintaining a determined pace. The traffic should stop. Or at least swerve."

Would I ever go back to Italy? Listen. Italy is easily one of the most beautiful places I have ever visited and the people — once you divest them of car keys — are a total delight. The food is wonderful, the scenery is spectacular, the art treasures are priceless and the wine is grand. Would I go back to Italy? In a heartbeat. And a Sherman tank.

Stouffville has a ton of civic pride

Dear Editor,

This letter is in reply to K. Abbott's regarding civic pride.

The Webster's Dictionary described "Pride" as a sense of personal dignity, a feeling of pleasure because of something achieved, and this town has a ton of it!

We simply do not have the revenues coming with large corporations helping with the taxes to pay for those added extras.

This small town is practically run on volunteerism, and I have seen those fine people accomplish a lot in the seven years I have been living here.

If you feel that the shops need a paint

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job, why don't you form a committee to help them out.

As for the plants, you have in my opinion, thoroughly insulted the local nursery who generously donated them.

Yes, I agree with you Unionville and Markham look beautiful. However this small town has more pride than people like you will give us credit for.

You probably feel the "guys" over at Schell Lumber should be in tuxedos.

C. Hird
Stouffville

Residents distressed by state of downtown

Dear Editor,

We applaud the letter of K. Abbott recently printed in your paper.

As life-long residents of Stouffville we are distressed by the deplorable state of the downtown area. Each morning as we walk we notice garbage strewn in front of the stores. Do the merchants no longer take pride in improving the appearance of their establishment. Is the council so obsessed

with spending time and thousands of dollars on new town offices, libraries and indoor swimming pools that they cannot afford \$1,000 for beautifying the business area. I am sure the taxpayers would approve such an expenditure for some hanging baskets and first-grade plants for the planters.

Lloyd and Bea Jennings
Stouffville

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