We're home from vacation, now it's time to relax

From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

It was, to be sure, a vacation straight out of a Family Circus comic strip.

And while our recent tour of Atlantic Canada included all the seafood and scenery the region is noted for, it wasn't without a notable sigh of relief that we wearily pulled into the driveway a little after midnight last Thursday at the conclusion of our epic 19-day mini van excursion.

We had hoped the idyllic summer weather experienced here at home throughout June and July – the same extended heat wave that gave Prince Edward Island potato farmers fits – might continue for the duration of our trip.

It didn't.

It soon became a question of whether the rain would last all day, or be interspersed with spells of sunshine accompanied by lusty ocean gusts. Of course, preschoolers being the hardy little specimens they are, Drew and Griffin couldn't understand why our daily routine of hunting down playgrounds and kid-safe beaches had to be curtailed simply because of a little torrential downpour or a single digit wind chill factor. And anyone who has raised kids knows that keeping the little darlings cooped up in a mini van or one of those cramped overnight cabins all day makes for the kind of holiday which quickly becomes memorable for all the wrong reasons.

But we managed to push on undaunted, with my intrepid wife Susan spending the majority of our road time tending to the endless food, drink and entertainment requests of our two young travellers. A borrowed cooler which plugged conveniently into the cigarette lighter turned out to be a godsend, offering forth a steady stream of milk and juice-filled baby bottles, premade peanut butter and jam sandwiches, carrot sticks, and other chilled kiddie treats.

Our accommodations turned out to be the biggest adventure of the trip, both in terms of lining up same, and adjusting to thimble-sized kitchens, outdated amenities and anemic shower heads. Obviously, the same people hired to write menus for those restaurants which promise haute cuisine but deliver overdone Spam are responsible for the sea-side cottage descriptions in the tourist guide booklets.

There were, thankfully, a few notable exceptions. One was a two-bedroom log cottage next to an Indian reserve in Richibucto, New Brunswick. Not only were we treated to a weekend-long pow wow, providing us with some unique video footage, but we arrived just as the New Brunswick lobster fishing season was opening up. Drew and I were waiting at the nearby wharf to greet Garfield Barlow, the Micmac Indian who owns the cottage in which we were staying, when he returned with his loaded up lobster boat. We walked away with two of his finest crustaceans, along with precise cooking instructions. Susan and I put the kids to bed, and proceeded to indulge in a most memorable feast.

Another treat was our long anticipated crossing of Confederation Bridge, truly the Mother of all Bridges. Spanning the 13 kilometres of water separating New Brunswick and P.E.I. like a majestic concrete rainbow, it can only be described as 'awesome.'

Running into Stouffville's Wes Brown and family while checking out cottages for future P.E.I. junkets was another ironic surprise. But for the most part, unlike fellow *Tribune* freelancer Kate "Euro-trash" Gilderdale, who left a trail of high fat cheese wrappers, French pastry crumbs and empty vintage wine bottles in the wake of her personal *Tour de France* earlier this summer, our holiday legacy was one of spilled milk, pull out couches and McDonald's Happy Meals.

Of course, Kate was wise enough to put away the baby carriage upon reaching the standard quota of two offspring almost two decades back.

We'll try again next year.

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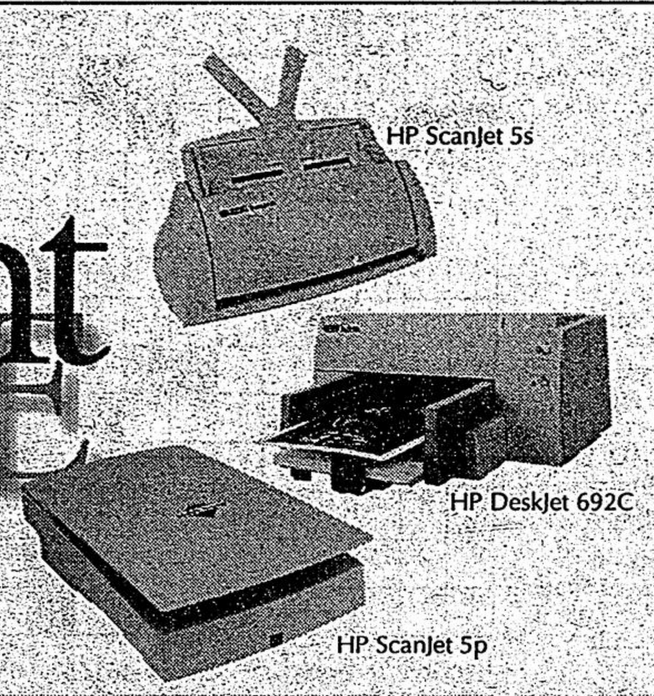

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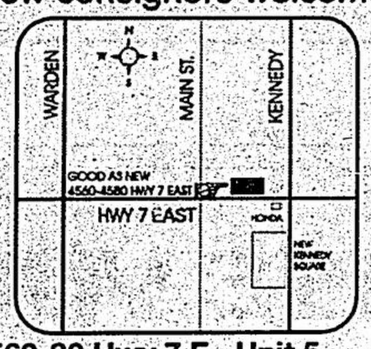

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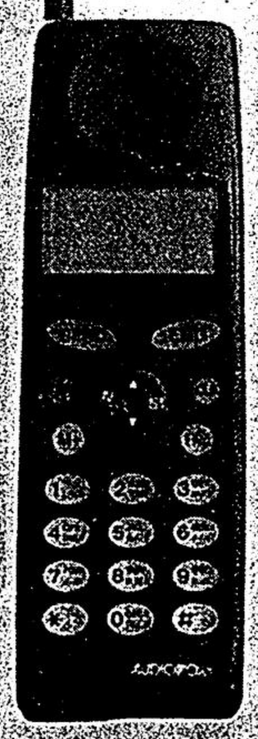

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