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EDITORIAL

Time to bring the hammer down

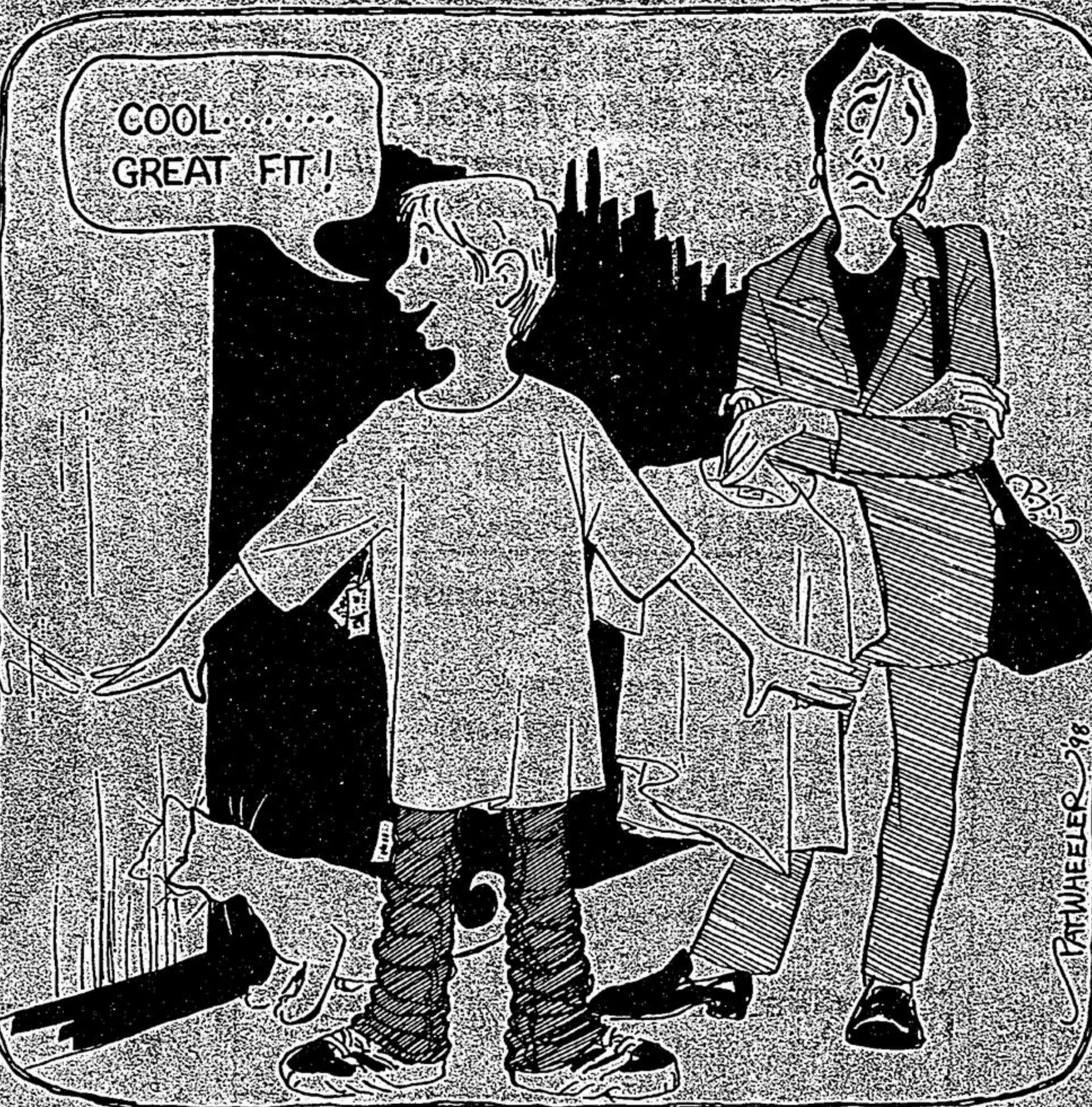
The debate of whether we should toughen up the toothless Young Offenders Act has been in the news since it was enacted in 1984.

The YOA was supposed to protect teens in trouble and to ensure they received a fair shake from the law - a sort of 'kid glove' approach to punishment. But in effect the act has been nothing more than a laughable excuse for kids to commit crimes and get away with it - with little more than a slap on the wrist. Despite what some people say, teen crime is on the rise and society is fed up with kids who break the law over and over again.

Society is actually making it easier for kids to thumb their noses at authority and it is becoming more and more obvious that the hammer must come down.

Parents are not blameless in this kiddy crime age and need to be held accountable for what their children are doing and where they are spending their time. Most parents today are far more lenient than those of the past when it comes to discipline and let's face it - it's not working.

It's time to put the fear of God back in our kids so they know if they do something wrong they'll be punished. If parents can't do the job then society will have to do it for them. It's time to start protecting the victims of crimes and if that means being tougher on kids, then so be it.



I had to visit my first true love: Mickey

The first time I laid eyes on Mickey was the Christmas of '49. Mickey was driving a red car made entirely of rubber.

I had to love my Mickey from afar. He wasn't mine. Santa Claus had given my little brother the Mickey Mouse car. I got a doll. I didn't like dolls.

Let the record show: My love for Mickey has passed the test of time. Two weeks ago, I decided to pay my first love a personal visit. I packed my bags along with the old boyfriend and headed for Disney World. And, oh want a world it is.

Children don't have a monopoly on Disney World. If the truth be known, Disney

was designed for me. While there, I kicked up my heels, whistled happy tunes and marvelled at the power of magic. Yes, Mickey Mouse is living the good life. His Disney World is a happy place.

Our first stop was Animal Kingdom. The centre piece of this park is The Tree of Life. This spectacular tree stands 14 stories high. Hand-carved animals adorn the mighty trunk and branches. Deep inside the giant trunk is a 3-D theatre showing a film on life from a bug's perspective.

While at Animal Kingdom, we visited Africa. When boarding an open-air safari bus, the guide told us to hold onto our hats,



Off the Record

Joan Ransberry

It was wise advice. Soon we were caught in a jungle war involving poachers. We were shot at. We were chased. I was scared. I was fooled.

When I saw the many free-roaming lions, elephants, zebras and giraffes, I wondered: do they know they're living on 100

acres just outside of Orlando, Florida. Magic Kingdom welcomed me with a parade. Disney classics including the Lion King, Cinderella, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Aladdin and The Little Mermaid were decked out in the most vibrant of colours. You could feel magic in the air.

When Mickey passed by, I waved, threw him a kiss and wiped a tear from my eye. A little boy gave me a dirty look. I stuck my tongue out at him.

In Magic Kingdom, Disney fantasies and characters come to life. While strolling along Mainstreet U.S.A., I nearly forgot I was a Canadian.

The best of Disney World is Epcot. It's a class act; the cat's pajamas and the cherry on the top.

I'll never forget Honey I Shrunk the Audience, an amazing 3-D movie. I'm still trying to figure out how they got a mouse to run up my pant leg.

The old boyfriend liked the antique cars parked at MGM Studios. And, when he fell 13 stories in The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, he smiled. At the same time, I felt all warm and fuzzy watching Jim Henson's Muppet done in 3D. We were both awed by the Indiana Jones stunt men and women.

Epcot combines fun and imagination with the wonders of the real world. We went for a stroll around the world. I regained my Canadian pride when I visited Canada's pavilion. The world showcase includes Mexico, Japan, Norway, Germany, U.S., Morocco, France, China, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Of course, besides Mickey, Disney World offers great live shows, great music and the finest of global food. Disney World is squeaky clean. Also, the staff likes people. They know the meaning of service and, as a bonus, they smile. Time did not permit a visit to Disney's three water parks or Downtown Disney. There's always next time. So, if I was asked to describe Disney World in one word, the word would be: Go!

Crash course on Seinfeld 101

When the question of where I was on the night of Seinfeld's Last Stand came up, I imagined myself loftily replying, "Nowhere near a television."

From the amount of pre-game coverage, I was beginning to think I was the only person on the planet who had not seen a single episode of the aforementioned show. This fact has nothing to do with the subject matter, or whether or not I regard Seinfeld as a Good Thing.

It's just that my addiction to the printed word (and strange foreign movies) means I hardly ever get around to watching the tube, and I avoid commercial stations in much the same way I avoid buying garments bearing corporate logos. The way I see it is that if I'm going to walk around promoting a corporation, they should be paying me for chess rental.

As it happened, two of my girlfriends had invited me out to dinner on the night of Seinfeld's swan song, to celebrate the fact that I had just survived yet another birthday and that they were still younger than me. One called me on the morning of our assignation and suggested that instead of going out, we should have a takeout at her place. I



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

immediately sensed that Seinfeld was deeply implicated in this sudden change of plans. "It's the last show," she said, pleadingly, before I had a chance to articulate my brilliant theory.

There was no need to elaborate.

Lynn loves Seinfeld and to have forced her out to a restaurant on the night of his demise - at her expense - would have been an act of extreme insensitivity, the kind of thing Seinfeld, Kramer, George and Elaine would do without blinking (I'm a fast learner, I just have a problem retaining stuff).

Besides, Lynn lives in a gorgeous house in the city where I could fall straight into bed without the bother of taking a cab, should the festivities become a trifle over-enthusiastic.

You could bring a book," she suggested tentatively. "Or I could record it and watch

it later." "No," I said expansively, now secretly fascinated by the unexpected opportunity to watch the show about nothing. "It wouldn't be the same. You have to be able to discuss it around the water cooler tomorrow."

Besides, I reasoned - since Hilary and Lynn had the good taste to choose me as a friend, it was bound to follow that their taste in TV would also be beyond reproach.

With a bottle of wine on standby and the mute button close at hand, my pals gave me a crash course in Seinfeld 101 during commercial breaks.

I was introduced to the backgrounds of such veteran characters as the soup Nazi, the virgin and the late envelope licker, and by the time the program was over, I felt confident that I could hold forth at the water cooler myself without fear of ridicule.

It was a wonderful evening. I enjoyed the show, upgraded my education and ate too much curry. Things were so splendid, in fact, that we ended up phoning another pal, who recently moved to New Zealand, and leaving an incoherent message on her answering machine. It was all I could do to stop myself from hugging my friends.

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