

Stouffville Tribune

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Frank Daggett

You can't legislate character, but you can set good example

Am I alone in being tempted to park in a space reserved for the physically challenged in a crowded parking lot?

I'm sure many drivers have had the urge to take advantage of choice parking provided for those who really need to park in close proximity to their destination.

After all, you reason, you only have to run in for a minute, hardly time for someone to ticket you or tow your vehicle. Who could possibly be inconvenienced?

On one occasion, I broke the law. It was after I bought a used car from a relative.

While searching through the glove compartment, I found a parking permit that still had three years left on it.

I didn't think much about it at the time, figuring if the previous owner needed it, he would get in touch.

So I left it in the car.

A few weeks went by before I showed up at an event where there was absolutely no parking, except, of course, two reserved parking spaces.

SELFISH ACT

Out came the sticker and in went my car to the choicest parking spot on the lot. A selfish act befitting George Costanza of Seinfeld fame, I'm sure.

It was the one and only time I took advantage of the situation and it's not something I care to repeat.

The response I receive when telling this story is disapproval, confirming what my gut told me all along: it was the wrong thing to do and showed no respect to those who need the parking for more than just convenience.

A recent letter to our newspaper — from an expectant mother upset by someone taking a courtesy parking spot reserved for pregnant women — reminded me of my least courteous moment.

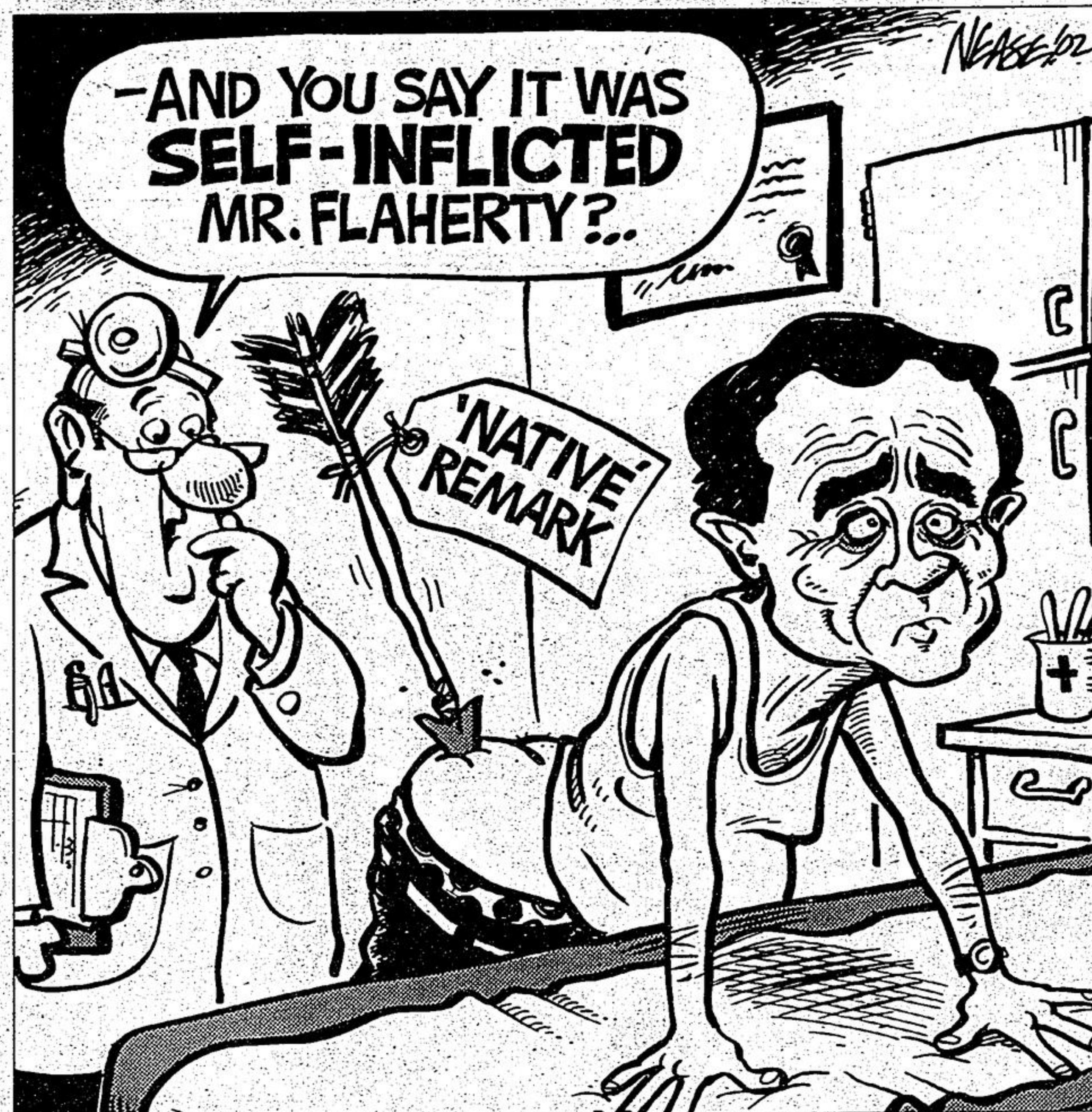
While I cannot relate to what a mother-to-be feels like, I do respect the effort some stores make to set parking spots aside for expectant moms. It is their hope, of course, other people will extend the same courtesy.

But if people choose not to show such courtesy, they are not breaking the law, only showing their true characters.

In fact, the parking issue is a good example of how character affects our daily lives. York Region is working to become a community of character and even where we park our cars defines who we are.

You can't legislate character, just as you can't arrest someone for stupidity. But as we all try to set standards and examples of good character, maybe we should start with the simple things in life.

Besides, the walk will do us good.



LETTERS

Boys might lag behind girls because most teachers are female

Re: Boys lag in school: experts, Jan. 17.

What a relief it was reading about the latest research on the gender gap that exists in elementary schools.

The article covered both the biological differences between female and male students and the need to modify curriculum.

However, one critical factor as to why boys lag behind girls in grading was missing: the vast majority of teachers are female. This can't be a coincidence.

Without meaning to, female teachers have a tendency to relate more to girls.

Perhaps a more boy-friendly curriculum, as discussed in the article, would help women teachers relate more to their male students.

By the time students attend university, males no longer lag behind females in grades. Part of the reason young men catch up likely has to do with maturity.

But let's not forget: the vast majority of professors are men.

JEFF HARMSEN
NEWMARKET

Teachers' refusal to take tests is extremism gone too far

Re: Teachers refusing to take their tests, Jan. 17.

I did something that I previously thought unimaginable. Upon reviewing the Jan. 17 front page, I was compelled to hide the paper from my children.

Teachers and their union bosses have been complaining and either defying rules or outright breaking the law for about seven years now.

As taxpayers, we have been forced to bankroll their salary increases and \$75 billion pension plan while receiving precious little in additional value for our money. It has been annoying and frustrating, but we have tried to put up with it.

However, this business of teachers refusing to take their tests is extremism gone too far.

It is an absolute outrage that these so-called public servants openly say that they

won't take their tests, apparently because they don't feel like it.

Have these people even begun to think of what kind of this message this sends to children?

Just when concern for student dropout ratios is on the front pages, these selfish people are putting their own personal and political interests ahead of being role models for students.

Can anyone possibly imagine telling a struggling student that its OK to skip a test if they don't agree with having to take it?

How about respect for school rules like no smoking? Aren't students supposed to obey whether they agree with it or not?

The disrespect some teachers and their union bosses have for their job responsibilities and the rule of law shows more than ever just how bad things have become.

More than ever, bureaucracies like the public education system prove to us that their top priority is the best interest of the teachers and others who work there.

It shows just how out of touch they are with the real world and how poorly they would fare if they actually had to work in it.

People like the unnamed Unionville teacher quoted in the story should resign immediately, and not get paid one single penny for doing so.

Parents and students expect nothing less than responsible public educators who respect the rules and provide positive examples of how to behave in society.

FRANK GRAY
UNIONVILLE

Children being raised without respect for private property

Re: Cranky grown-ups should be kept away from children; a column by Rick Vanderlinde, Jan. 5.

The way I see it the community (or should I say the parents) are raising children who will grow up without respect for other people's property.

I've witnessed children literally plowing through shrubbery in search of a lost ball.

Why is it that someone who works hard to keep their property looking nice becomes the Grinch and the wicked old witch of the neighbourhood when they complain about road hockey players?

And guess what? We are not all childless couples. We didn't allow our own children to run all over our neighbours' property.

J. WRIGHT
UNIONVILLE

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