

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Start with bully not victim

Re: *If you're being bullied, live with it*, Nov. 20

I am a Grade 10 student. I am also a former victim and witness to a bullying. I do not believe ignoring and allowing a bully to continue his or her taunting is the best solution.

Furthermore, while Izzy Kalman can devise countless "don't be a victim" techniques, he fails to pinpoint the source of bullying problems — the bully.

A victim can ignore bullies, walk away or seek parental intervention.

However, bullies won't experience a sudden change of heart and immediately cease taunting.

With the loss of one victim, they will most likely seek another. Assisting the victim does not eliminate a bullying situation.

The \$23-million school anti-bullying programs, funded by the province, should include the traditional guidance counsellors and teachers, and how "victims should deal with bullies" programs, as well as ways to detect early signs of bullying behaviour and how parents and teachers can deal with and prevent bullying.

CARMEN WONG
THORNHILL

Cycling on left side safer

Re: *Cyclists 'targets' on York roads*, Nov. 12.

It is fearsome and unnerving to ride a bicycle on the right side of the pavement. With motorized vehicles whizzing past you, usually exceeding the speed limit.

A few months ago a young boy cycling in the GTA was struck down and killed because the driver of a large transport truck claimed he did not see him. What is this telling us?

We have to start using our common sense. Since it is considered inappropriate, if not illegal, to ride a bicycle on the sidewalk, we have to determine how all vehicles use the road.

Non-motorized cyclists should ride on the left side of the road so that they can see the oncoming traffic and the motorized vehicles can see them. I can assure you, as a cyclist who rides on the left side of the road, it is safe and far less unnerving. Special lanes for riding on the right side of the road are no guarantee a cyclist will not be struck down by a vehicle.

Sometimes we should let common sense prevail, instead of outdated laws that are no longer protective of non-motorized vehicles in ever increasing and congested traffic.

LINCOLN JAMES
MARKHAM



Happy 80th birthday to a survivor

His is a story of perseverance and the triumph of human will in the face of adversity.

Nick Kristmann was born in 1925 in the village of Neu-Slankamen, in a historically troubled part of the world.

Formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later Yugoslavia, it is near the border of Croatia and Serbia.

His family was prosperous. Their substantial farm included a vineyard and delivered bounteous crops. Life was simple, but hard work was rewarded and the table was full.

The Second World War changed all that, for the Kristmanns were ethnic Germans. When Nick was only 17, he found himself in the German army and was sent to guard mountain passes — under-trained, under-equipped and under-provisioned through the winter cold. Ask him if

he saw any action and he'll say no, but he saw a lot of snow.

Captured by the Russian army, Nick spent four years in a Soviet prison camp at Stalingrad, subjected to hard labour on near-starvation rations. When he at last returned to his village, haggard and thin but a grown man, he learned he was now an orphan.

Dispossessed by the new regime, the remaining Kristmanns lost their land and home and fled to a depressed, post-war Germany. Talented at all things mechanical, Nick found work on a U.S. army base and also found a bride, Maria.

Meanwhile, his brother, Mathias, emigrated to Canada, becoming a farmer in the Holland Marsh. Nick was in a pub in Oberlinach in 1954, watching the news on that brand-new invention, television, when it flashed a scene of destruction: Hurricane Hazel. "That's my brother's farm!" he exclaimed, to the disbelief of



Bruce Annan

the other patrons.

Nonetheless, the Kristmanns — by now including children Hermina, Erika and Walter — were convinced to try a new life in Bradford. By 1958, when baby Veronica came along, Nick had decided the vegetable industry wasn't sufficiently lucrative to support his young family. He turned his skills as a plumber to the booming Toronto construction industry.

In 1960, disaster struck. On a

job site, a wall collapsed and fell on Nick. He became a paraplegic, fated to use a wheelchair the rest of his life. The then-Workers' Compensation Board helped him retrain and he spent decades as a camera technician. (This was back in the days when electronic devices were repaired, rather than thrown away and replaced.)

For 45 years, Nick has battled through continual health challenges, including multiple surgeries. But he has kept on keeping on, thanks to the merciful interventions of his own physician and the good folks at Southlake and Sunnybrook hospitals.

His condition requires considerable daily support, provided by a series of care workers. They're led by the cheerful ministrations of Mary Smith, who accompanies him to various casinos in search of the elusive jackpot. He tells his worried daughters, when they have trouble reaching him on the phone, that he only gambles once

in awhile. Hardly ever, really.

Life doesn't always turn out the way we expect and hope, but few of us face the challenges Nick has overcome in his eight decades. Yet those closest to him rarely hear a word of complaint about the hand fate has dealt him. There's an example for those of us who manage to feel sorry for ourselves, despite bountiful good fortune.

Nick hates attention, so his family won't be throwing a bash for his 80th birthday Dec. 9. But perhaps if you're driving in the Bradford area and see Nick in his motorized wheelchair, heading out for his daily Tim Hortons, you could give my father-in-law a friendly wave.

Happy Birthday, Nick. Keep rolling along.

Bruce Annan is a York Region writer and consultant. He can be reached bruce.annan@gmail.com. Comments regarding this column for the letters page can be sent to newsroom@econsun.com

LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. Submissions must be less than 400 words and include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and edit for clarity and space.

Letters to the Editor,
The Sun-Tribune
34 Civic Ave.
Box 154
Stouffville, ON
L4A 7Z5
jmason@yrng.com

EDITORIAL

Editor

Jim Mason
jmason@yrng.com

ADMINISTRATION

Office Manager

Vivian O'Neil
voneil@yrng.com

EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Shows manager

Bonnie Rondeau
brondeau@yrng.com

PRODUCTION

Manager

Pam Nichols
pnichols@yrng.com

ADVERTISING

Classified Manager

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acampbell@yrng.com

Retail Manager

Stacey Allen

sallen@yrng.com

Managing Director, New

Business & Flyer Sales

Dawna Andrews
dandrews@yrng.com

Managing Director,

Real Estate

Mike Rogerson
mrogerson@yrng.com

EDITORIAL

905-905-513-1717

Fax: 905-513-7525

ADVERTISING

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