

Getting testy before writing road exam

While most people tend to think positive while contemplating the new year, I see but gloom and doom.



Roaming Around
with Jim Thomas

No, it's not the economy that's negating my nerves. Nor predictions of a long winter, a wet spring, a sizzling summer or a frosty fall. I cope with crisis I can't control. This problem, however, I want to manage but can't. It continually wakes me up amid pools of perspiration.

The dilemma? A few months down the road, when I reach the big 80, I'll face my first written driver's test.

Even pondering so stressful a situation fills me with fear. For what if I fail? My wife would need to chauffeur me everywhere — to Tim Hortons; to ScotiaBank and to church, not to speak of twice-weekly deliveries on four paper routes; attending monthly school council meetings; working part-time at the O'Neill Funeral Home and doing daily student crossing guard duties on Millard Street.

My life would be shattered, not to mention my ego.

While an age-old CCM could help, this mode of transportation will fall far short when roads are covered with snow.

I'll have to walk. Even worse than local restraints, extended holiday trips will be forever ended. For Jean holds a keen dislike of traveling the 400 series highways and night-time driving is far from preferred. So there goes future sojourns south of the border.

We'll become year-round cocooners.

While book-learning's one thing, the act of driving's another. I'd rather the latter. In my opinion, it's where the rubber meets the road that really counts. Rules and regulations are mostly memory work.

And that, for me, may be my downfall. For, trying to remember do's and don'ts contained in a 195-page Ministry of Transportation handbook, is a feat that could conquer most modern-day Einsteins, let alone a non-lettered journalist fortunate to have completed Fifth Form.

Contrary to what a judge may conclude, I consider myself an above-average driver. Since 1989, when an errant deer provoked a head-on crash, I've incurred nothing more than one trivial parking ticket, a record of which I'm extremely proud. But this will mean nothing if I flunk an upcoming test.

No, I haven't yet received the brown envelope. But I know it's on the way. Maybe a few days or a few weeks. Regardless, time is short.

In preparation for the eventual, I dropped by the Stouffville license bureau Friday and picked up an MTO guide. While pricey, (\$14.95 plus tax), it makes for intriguing reading, full of information most motorists think they know but probably don't.

It's the first thing I peruse every morning and the last thing I peruse every night. It's my bible.

Even the introduction, which many might ignore, I find intriguing. It spells out the causes of most crashes — following too close; speeding; failing to yield; improper turns; running red lights and changing lanes. Then it adds: "Statistics show new drivers of all ages, are far more likely than experienced drivers to be involved in serious or fatal collisions."

Some comfort in that, but not much.

People, including an older brother and sister, claim the test's a snap.

"Just read up," my sister says. "You'll do OK."

"Multiple questions," my brother explains. "Commonsense answers."

Awe, yes. But everyone reacts differently under pressure. I wilt; my brain turns to mush.

Even worse, the test measuring system, I'm told, is all metric — centimetres, kilometres and kilograms. I'm still of the 'old school', utilizing inches, miles, feet and pounds. Unless the instructor allows me to write the conversion chart on my shirt cuff, I'll never attain the accuracy level required. So, I'm beat before I start.

While pessimistic concerning my chances, I intend to keep cramming, hoping against hope sufficient facts will sink in to warrant a gold star.

If not, the old CCM will be my main mode of transportation, chains on the back and skis on the front.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER!

Everything is now back to normal after the holidays and our big kitchen is in full production. They're making lots of our Beef Stroganoff for this week's feature. We begin by cutting lots of sirloin into julienne strips, browning it in our 'Tilt Skillets' (which are very large fry-pan looking gismos, each of which will hold about 50 lbs of meat at a time) and then make that wonderful sauce which we serve it in. We're in the comfort food business and this is comfort food — delicious as can be — at it's best.

Reg. \$17.95
Serves 3-4

25% OFF THIS WEEK

FILLETS TILAPIA

If you are headed south for a break, and your bikini is looking like it shrunk a bit, get some of this fish. It's a low-fat fish, and depending on how you prepare it, it could be part of a low-fat dinner. We'll help with a couple of recipes, you'll need to do the rest.

Reg. \$9.95/lb

25% OFF THIS WEEK

P.S. Have a good trip!

CHILI CHICKEN

Folks, if you haven't had this dish yet, you must. It's very intensely flavoured, very savoury, one version mild and the other spicy. It's made with boneless chicken legs (I'm a leg man), peppers, sweet onions, sesame seeds, honey, soya and garlic — and the spicy version will have chili flakes. It's great with rice!

Reg. \$12.99/lb
You'll find this dish at our prepared food counter.

25% OFF THIS WEEK

CREAM OF ASPARAGUS SOUP

My wife has always told me that anything green is good for you — and asparagus being green, must also be good. Along with the asparagus, we use our chicken stock, lots of sweet onions, celery and dry white wine. How does my wife know so much about food? She has a BA in nutrition, an accreditation just barely adequate to run the short order kitchen at our family home which caters to our three kids who have the pickiest appetites on the planet, or so it seems to me.

Reg. \$6.99
Serves 3-4

25% OFF THIS WEEK

RED POTATO & EGG SALAD

Long before I (Thomas MacDonald) was born, my Mother, Aunt, Grandmother (Doreen) and Grandfather took a train down to Detroit annually for a Tiger's weekend home stand at the old Tiger's stadium; my Grandfather being a rabid Tiger's fan. At a Woodward's department store they ran into a salad bar and proceeded to try the red potato and egg salad. Falling in love with it's delicious flavour, they copied the recipe and brought it back to the Village Grocer. After years of experimentation and tweaking, my Grandmother has crafted a salad which she claims to be better than the original. Find out for yourself while it's.....

Reg. \$1.19/100g

1/2 PRICE THIS WEEK

Just so you know.....

the sweet diminutive lady who has worked behind our meat counter for many years — and previous to that, at Young's Market — is retiring this week. We all wish Sharon a great retirement — but she has promised a cameo if we get in a jam, as we sometimes do.

CITRUS — SALE —

This is a great time of the year for citrus. Although it's available pretty much year-round now through shipping — I think the product from North America is just as good as it gets — and it takes a lot less time to get to us. Not only do we have nice premium size Navel Oranges — mostly from California, we have Satsuma Mandarins which are small and sweet — and nearly seedless, and also we've got my family's fave, Cara-Cara Oranges, also sweet and colourful — from California as well. Further, Moro Oranges, which are a blood orange, and like the originals, are a bit tart — and Tangelos, which are a more pear-shaped orange with a looser skin — but very juicy and pretty darn sweet. In addition to this, we'll have some nice 32 size Florida Grapefruits which we've been enjoying at home.

All these will be on sale this week at.....

99¢/lb

— MIX AND MATCH —

— Also we will be expanding our fresh-squeezed repertoire to include all but the satumas.

CHORIZO SAUSAGES

I'm thinking that most of us in business are, looking for ways to 'Spark it up' during these winter doldrums. These, on the other hand, will spark up your dinner. They can be eaten just as they are or grilled and cut into chunks for a pasta or stew.

Reg. \$3.99/lb

25% OFF THIS WEEK



WHAT'S BAKING! THIS WEEK

Our Bakery too is back to normal — and our regular repertoire is back — plus a lot of lemon items for this week. We'll be making.....

LEMON MERINGUE PIES ~ Many of you know that I have a little corner office in our bakery — and as I'm writing this, our sales rep who looks after all the neat napkins was in my office — and noticed all the lemons that we were zesting and juicing — and asked what would we possibly do with so many of those. She was surprised — and actually thrilled to find out that we actually use them to make Lemon Pies — unlike almost any commercial bakery. It's out folks — we actually use lemons! — and lots and lots of them. It's the harder, and much more time consuming way to do things, but the result is well worth it. Anyway, these are my fave pies. Large Size \$10.95 Each

LEMON SLIPPERS ~ These are a lemon-puff pastry dessert that's open-faced — and a bit decadent I think. Reg. \$2.99 Each

EVAN'S LEMON COOKIES ~ These are made with the same batter that we use to make our lemon loaves. I know that they are amazing because I used to clean up all the overflow drippings that naturally occur in the manufacture of lemon loaves. One day I got the bright idea (I thought anyway) that if you purposely made these, they would be cookies — which we did — and then half-dipped them in chocolate just to put my trademark on them. Reg. \$7.95 Container

LEMON SCONES ~ These are delicate with a medicinal injection of lemon curd. Reg. \$1.69 Each

DOUBLE-ICED LEMON LOAVES ~ I'm the architect of these as well. Time was, I thought that the best part of a lemon loaf was the icing, and when I took a lemon loaf home, I'd cut it horizontally and put an extra layer of icing in. The word got out and here they are — and still as popular with me and my dessert-loving kids. Reg. \$6.99 Each

Now it would be hard to characterize a lemon feature as sweet, but to make it less tart, we'll be offering a sweet deal.....

25% OFF THIS WEEK

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