### COLUMN

# You can't keep an old thrill-seeker down

m a thrill-seeker. Not behind the wheel. Only as a passenger. Such wasn't always so. At the controls of my father's 1935 Ford, I gained the reputation as a modern-day Jimmie Johnson. From a standing stop, I could top every teenager in town, even guys propelling straight-eight Buicks and Rocket Oldsmobiles.

But alas, this celebrity status came to an ill-fated end when the transmission's second gear collapsed, allowing only shifts from low to high. With such a disconcerting occurrence, I rapidly realized my street-racing reputation had plummeted into an inglorious abyss of embarrassment.

But not my spirit. To this day, I still enjoy the sensation of speed as long as it's executed safely and someone else is doing the driving. Wife Jean for example. She's an excellent chauffeur, but much faster than me. I'm merely the navigator, seemingly relaxed with both eyes closed as telephone posts flash past at a rate of one per second. She, however, has that



**Roaming Around** 

with Jim Thomas

hassle-free feeling that I'm sound asleep when, in fact, I'm too frightened to look.

On the 400 stretch of highways I'm what one might call a lollygagger, one who sticks close to the inside lane, sometimes wedged between two 18-wheelers. As uncomfortable as this may seem, at least I escape the weavers who thoughtlessly swerve back and forth in order to gain extra minutes out of every mile.

Putting the subject in proper

perspective, my wife and I had the pleasure last week of accompanying a daughter and three grandchildren on a day trip to a location of their choice. The options were: a ferry ride to Centre Island; front row seats at a Blue Jays game; or an afternoon of fun and frolic at Canada's Wonderland. As expected, they chose the latter.

I ask you, parents and grandparents, have you ever accompanied your kids or grandkids to this wonder of wonders? No? Well, do it and soon, before school begins in September. But beforehand, a word of warning. Don't just turn them loose once inside the gates. Instead, join them, as I did, even on the rides. It's sure to be an experience you'll never forget. And neither will they.

Our first thrill-a-thon came aboard a pendulum-shaped object called the Psyclone. Although somewhat exciting, it was nothing with which my innards couldn't cope. So it was on to the next, a sky-high roller coaster branded the Behemoth. This, I must admit, was nothing short of spectacular, featuring an initial drop of 230 feet

at an angle of 75 degrees. From the very top I could clearly see Lake Ontario to the south, Woodbridge to the west, Newmarket to the north and Markham to the east. While I tried to select a prominent landmark in Stouffville, shortage of time and sheer shock prevented further checks of the horizon.

The first descent, consuming 3.9 seconds, measured 125 kilometers an hour. Little wonder the female guard at the gate questioned my gallantry as I passed through the turnstile.

"Are you sure you're OK with this?" she asked. "Do you have a medical history such as a weak heart, high blood pressure or a bad back?"

I assured her (creating furrows across her forehead), that all would be okay. Thirty minutes later, (that was the length of the lineup), I wished I hadn't. The ride was exceedingly fast and extremely rough for even the most physical fit of seniors. But I survived.

Fortunately, I had the presence of mind to remove my partial plate, otherwise it might now be worn by a gluttonous goat somewhere in the environs of Vaughan.

While tempted to tackle the Leviathan, Canada's tallest coaster, (306 feet and 148 kms an hour), I reconsidered after observing some pale faces and wobbly knees of those who'd gone before.

Misadventures aside, my cravings for speed were satisfied, so much so, I want to return. That is, if three grandkids are brave enough to accompany me.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.

#### CORRECTION

#### Committee member mis-identified

Jim Thomas' column last week on the Young Life organization contained errors.

Trish Bowden is a resident of Stouffville who is a member of the organization's committee.

The Sun-Tribune regrets the errors.

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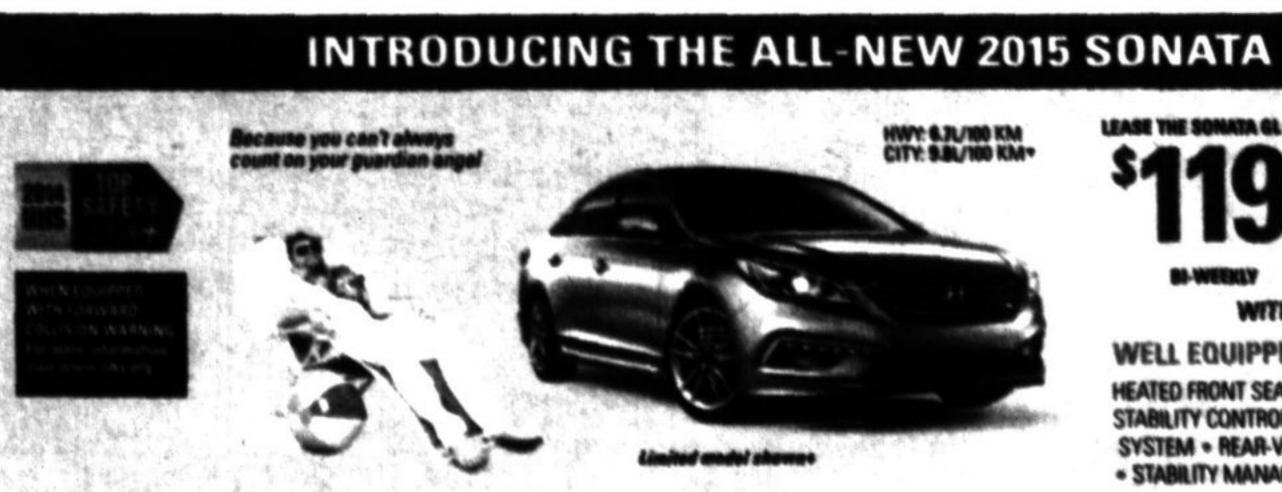
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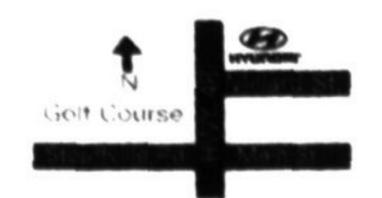
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