

COLUMNS

He who dies with the most toys might not always win

Allegedly clever sayings are everywhere.

Sarcastic T-shirts at the mall.

Helpful signs in home decor stores, including the always classy: "I'm outdoorsy in that I like getting drunk on patios".

Back in the 1970s, I received my teenaged inspiration and direction off bumper stickers.

They were on Gremlins and Trans-Ams. Dressed-up mini vans and block-long Winnebagos. An imperial gallon of regular went for \$52 cents.

And when you pump petrol for a living – yes, kids, that was a career – you see 'em all. From 'Keep on truckin' to 'We survived the Wisconsin Dells'.

The service station owner lived by the saying on the back of his shiny, always new pickup: "He who dies with the most toys wins" – or something selfishly similar. He worshipped the latest in snowmobiles, boats and trailers.

The scent of gasoline still takes me back to those glory days, but they're as long gone as my jump shot and hairline.

Today, I'm inspired by email signatures, business cards or hearing someone else's mantra.

Norm Clements, who has operated the Stouffville Country Market since the 1980s, is no stranger to performing kind deeds in Ontario and elsewhere on our planet.

Legend has it that he started the National Sports empire selling hockey equipment from the trunk of his car.

Norm's voice mail prompts callers to **do something nice for somebody else** that day.

Things were going quickly and swimmingly as we breezed through the agenda at a meeting of a community group.

"**But there will be hiccups,**" a board member reminded us with a smile.

And there were.

The well-played suggestion was a nice take on the cliché athletes often spew out.



Off The Top

with *Jim Mason*

"We're up three games to zero in the series and they haven't come close to scoring," it goes during intermissions or scripted pre-game interviews.

"But they're a good team over there and we know they can come back. We can't get too high or too low."

In the catastrophic wake of Hurricane Katrina, former New Orleans resident Jimmy Buffett wrote the song **Breathe In, Breathe out, Move On** with Matt Betton.

That's tough love if you've lost your belongings, family members and maybe hope.

But the saying's found on tattoos and bracelets.

A fellow vacationer, after watching another cruise ship passenger react inappropriately to a situation, told me he lived by his company's "5-Second Rule". **Pausing before responding**, via email or otherwise, saves substantial grief, he advised.

The warnings of incoming hiccups and reminders to be just plain nice to your fellow earthlings are far better than that of a former co-worker.

"Always expect the worst and you won't be disappointed," she'd repeat, a dark cloud and lightning following her every move.

I haven't found that one on a bumper sticker.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune. Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor

Time to slow down – a little

At what stage in life should an individual reduce his activities?

I mean firmly decide that, with existence on planet earth close to termination, it's time to stop and smell the roses. While loathe to admit it, I've reached this juncture. It's likely the most difficult decision I've ever had to make.

Although personal tasks are undoubtedly minimal compared to those practised by many others, I enjoy each to the same degree. It's difficult to let go.

Performing the role of a five-day-a-week crossing guard is a prime example. Despite the busyness of the Millard Street and Glad Park Avenue intersection, I love it — one of the most enjoyable occupations ever experienced. I look forward to each and every school day with immeasurable pleasure.

Greeting children, their parents and grandparents has given me a new lease on life. Hopefully, I'm able to continue this endeavour when the fall term rolls around.

Writing this column, now spanning 65 years, has been gratifying also. Contemplating subject matter motivates my mind and elevating the thought process onto a monitor keeps me in tune with a customary keyboard.

While aging fingers aren't as agile as they once were, a seven-day spell between workouts gives me plenty of time to complete assignments.

Although functioning as a school crossing guard interrupts my role as a greeter at the O'Neill Funeral Home, general manager Patrick LeBlanc still regards me as one of the 'family'.

I wish this form of camaraderie to continue, remain-



Roaming Around

with *Jim Thomas*

ing 'on call' when assistance is required.

With respect to volunteering, I have several ventures currently on schedule, none of which I plan to vacate.

Currently on the front burner is the 'Stouffville Cares' Community Concert scheduled for Stouffville District Secondary School, Sunday, May 1 at 7 p.m. A cross-section of town talent is involved, including a student choir from St. Mark Catholic School under the guidance of Susan Whitebread. The evening's emcee is Sun-Tribune editor Jim Mason.

All proceeds from the \$10 adult-only admission fee will go to assist Stouffville's recently arrived Syrian refugee family. Hopefully, parents Faisal and Nariman Fandi along with daughters Hanin, 14; Ranim, 10; Farah, 7 and son Thae, 12, can attend.

Due to the profound focus of the event, the York Region District School Board has waived the customary school rental fee. Steve Hoover, head custodian at SDSS, has promised full staff support.

Next in line is the June 29 Music Festival at Stouffville United Church. The Music Town, Ontario award, received last year by violinist Matthew Eeuwes, will again be presented.

The evening will be highlighted by Stouffville's own 'Men of Note' male voice choir under the direction of Oksana Vignan.

Last but certainly not least is the 24th annual 'Student Music Scholarship Concert' already set for Nov. 18 at Stouffville Secondary. A student, accomplished in instrumental or vocal music will be awarded a \$500 bursary. Last year's recipient was Ashley England of Stouffville.

Passionately added to these involvements are twice-weekly volunteer duties at Stouffville's Parkview Home plus Sunday obligations at St. James Presbyterian Church.

So something had to go.

Following consultations with wife Jean, it was agreed one of four Sun-Tribune newspaper routes should be withdrawn from my schedule. But which one? The most westerly of residences was finally agreed upon. So, with cap-in-hand, I called in at the office to announce my abdication of this responsibility.

But I couldn't bring myself to ask, despite the fact I'd temporarily taken on this task as a 12-month fill-in favour 15 years and two dog bites previous. But time had taken its toll. Three weeks ago I bit the bullet and gave notice. I've since been replaced.

For me, the decision's a bitter pill. Homeowners on Rupert Avenue West, Gleggall Lane and Maystone Court have been wonderful with only two complaints over all this time. Christmas tips in forms of cards, chocolates and cash have also been gratefully received.

So all I can say is "thanks".

Jim Thomas, 86, is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 65 years.

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