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PREMIERE ISSUE

THE THORN



On the Herald Strike...All is well

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A letter was sent to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment expressing concern regarding the number of acrimonious and violent strikes in Alberta. It was suggested that a review of Alberta Labour Law might be appropriate in view of the erosion of Union rights, and the employment of scab labour. The Minister responds...

As the Minister responsible for labour matters, I am concerned when there is a disruption at the workplace. My role is to ensure that Alberta's labour legislation provides a sound framework for employers and unions to bargain collectively.

In Alberta, we are fortunate that employers and unions are able to negotiate fair and mutually beneficial agreements without resorting to strike or lockout. In those few cases where the parties find themselves in a strike or lockout situation, the Alberta Labour Relations Code attempts to find a balance between the rights of both sides and establishes rules to protect those rights, including the way strikes or lockouts and picketing are conducted. Even when there is a workplace dispute underway, I still believe that the parties themselves are the best source for innovative and creative solutions that result in better, more enduring settlements than

those that are imposed upon them.

The Labour Relations Board, a neutral third party, determines any questions the parties may have regarding the exercise of their rights and corresponding obligations including questions about the obligation to engage in good faith bargaining.

In addition to providing the legal framework for collective bargaining, the government offers the services of provincial mediators and facilitators to assist unions and employers in finding mutual agreement to their issues. We will continue to encourage the parties in this dispute to resume negotiations and reach an agreement. Continued best wishes.

Cordially, Clint Dunford, Minister

(See David Climenbaga's response on page 2)

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This issue's contributors



Jerald Blackstock is a picture framer and artist.*



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**Photos by Christine Misak*

SUBMIT!

The Thorn welcomes your submissions and letters. Send articles, graphics or photos to The Thorn, 1111 Memorial Drive N.W., Calgary, AB., T2N 3E4, or e-mail us at the.thorn@home.com.

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Who are we?

I Read The News Today

... Oh Boy

THE THORN is an entirely volunteer endeavour dedicated to providing thoughtful analysis on the issues affecting life in our place here in the world, Canada, Alberta, and Calgary. We love this place. It has been described as God's Country. We agree. We believe that by frankly covering life, news, issues and events, "goodness" will happen. Our mission is to provide an analysis that differs from the mainstream press. Together with reading the views presented in newspapers such as The Herald, The Sun and The Globe, you now have an alternative that speaks from the community. Because other newspapers are privately owned they do what it takes to improve the bottom line. Because The Thorn is the voice of the community, it does what it must to improve the community.

We are new and still finding our way. This issue of The Thorn is in print. Subsequent issues might be an E-Zine on the web or they may be in a different medium.

Our contributors come from all walks of life. In this issue we have the ideas of a student, The Minister of Labour, Herald workers, a computer gamer, our favourite bartender, a mom, and sources within government and industry whom we have decided to keep secret so that we can continue to get the inside scoop: the truth. We give you the voice of the worker rather than the president, CEO or public relations department. We do not pay anyone. We can't. But we do offer a few lines of bio phrased in such a way as to promote the interests of our contributors.

Another difference between The Thorn and the private media is that we not only write about people and events, but our contributors write their own stories. "Straight from the horse's mouth" so to speak.

We do not censor our writers. We accept all articles for consideration, in good faith, on the understanding that they are truthful. It goes without saying that we neither endorse nor vouch for the articles in The Thorn. We find them interesting and thought provoking. We hope you do too.

MEDIA

Re: The Herald Strike A reply to the Minister

By David Climenhaga, SAIT instructor

Dear Mr. Dunford,

Thank you for your reply to my Dec.14 letter to the Premier regarding the labour dispute at the Calgary Herald. It was also a pleasure to meet you in person at the recent meeting of the Canadian Industrial Labour Relations Association in Calgary.

Alas, as the continuing and harmful nature of this bitter strike amply demonstrates, Alberta's labour legislation does not provide a framework for employers and unions to negotiate fair and mutually beneficial solutions to collective bargaining disputes. Nor does the Alberta Labour Relations Code provide a way to achieve the same goal. And the Alberta Labour Relations Board most emphatically does not act as a "neutral third party" in labour disputes.

On the contrary, what the Calgary Herald strike shows is that labour legislation and the labour code provide a framework that facilitates employers who wish to ignore the democratically expressed wishes of their employees to be represented by a union. That many contracts are concluded successfully in Alberta is more a testament to the goodwill of most employers than any imagined benefits of the legislation. It remains my belief that some form of first-contract arbitration would go a long way to level the playing field with companies like Hollinger/Southam that are prepared to go to any length to avoid dealing with a union.

Be that as it may, that is not really the point of this letter. Rather, a more immediate concern is the really outrageous approach to the Herald dispute taken by the Alberta Labour Relations Board. In no way can the board be imagined to be a neutral third party in this dispute. On the contrary, it is not too strong a sentiment to say that the board behaves at almost every turn as if it were in bed with the Herald. When the company declares that the board must jump because picketers are delaying employees' cars for as long as six seconds at the plant gates, the board responds by answering "how high," and within 24 hours grants virtually all of the company's wishes. When the company practices economic terrorism against strikers by refusing to pay holiday pay owed, overtime worked, or

by trying to deny employees' the right to make additional money elsewhere during the strike, the board drags its heels, sometimes for months.

For example, we are told in the matter of the recent hearing into the employer's attempts to prevent strikers from earning freelance income that no decision will be made until April at the earliest. This is clearly complicity, if not outright collusion, with the company's attempt to starve strikers into submission. The board's actions speak of a complete bias in favour of the company, even if they are not technically corrupt.

Canada's Constitution promises that our society is founded upon the principle of the rule of law. This does not seem to be the case in the province of Alberta, where the law is applied unequally, unfairly or not at all. For this reason, I hope profoundly that these issues can be moved into the jurisdiction of the Court of Queen's Bench as quickly as possible, where the case will be heard by impartial and disinterested federally appointed judges and not toadies of the provincial regime. Sir, when I say my prayers at night, I thank the Lord that Canada is a federation in which at least the national government can be depended upon to honour its constitutional obligations.

Finally, your letter makes reference to the services offered by provincial mediators and facilitators. I would feel more confident in this possibility if these people were public servants and not "privatized" contractors who must depend on the good graces of corporate managers for their continued employment.

In conclusion, I believe the Calgary Herald strike is harmful to Calgary and Alberta, and, indeed, is a national embarrassment for this province. I believe Alberta's labour law and regulatory environment have contributed to this ugly situation. And I believe the actions of the Alberta Labour Board in this matter have been execrable.

As Minister of Labour, the time has obviously come for you to take an active and responsible role in helping the parties find a fair and mutually beneficial solution.

Yours very truly, David J. Climenhaga

Divide And Conquer...

Random Thought Guy

Divide and Conquer... the strategy of the ancient conqueror, every B grade "slasher" movie and present - day newspaper mogul. Time warp to the 14th century and William the Conqueror; "*I know what you did last summer*"; *Halloween I* (through infinity) and *Aliens*; and finally back to Conrad Black and the Calgary Herald: *Clash of the Titans II*. The common thread is that they all exhibit the same *modus operandus*.

In the 14th century, William defeats Harold at The Battle of Hastings. William (the Conqueror) uses the stirrup, archery and his "smarts" to defeat the English at a small hill in the countryside. Technological advantage, the use of human nature (pure stubbornness on Harold's part), outlasting the opponent and the theory that "united we stand, divided we fall..." play integral parts in Harold's defeat. Home field advantage *isn't*, and the idea of right and wrong doesn't come into play.

Regarded as masterpieces of cinema B, "slasher" movies use the same plot. Each antagonist engineers the separation of individual members of the group in focus, to accomplish the dastardly deed. Not one victim seems to use a single intelligent thought to combat the antagonist, until the end, when the "heroes" use their knowledge of their opponent's weaknesses to outwit the antagonist. Funny how that seems vaguely familiar in the REAL world.

Fast forward to Conrad Black and the plight of the Calgary Herald Writers' Union and see how history repeats itself. The battle [picket] lines at the Herald have been drawn. In the clearing, Conrad Black refuses to do battle on a level playing field. Black uses technological advantage, human nature, out-waiting his opponent, and unlimited resources. The key idea is that divided, the writers will fall... Rumours running amok, innuendo, and crossed battle lines (electronically as well as physically) all contribute to Black's goal: a union-free, "profitable" newspaper. Black's union-breaking techniques are not new and, history being history, will rear its ugly head.

I call this conflict *Clash of the Titans II* because history has indeed repeated itself. In the early 90's Conrad Black made his move to gain control of Southam Inc. and one of its gems: the profitable Calgary Herald. Members of the CNPTU #1 (Canadian National Printers Trade Union) fought the same battle on the same skewed playing field. One group in particular, the Electronic Maintenance (EM) staff, whose responsibility it was to bandage and help an aging computer system pump out a daily newspaper, fought a losing battle.

The divide and conquer method was strategically applied to this department in particular because within the guidelines agreed upon by the Southam Group and the CNPTU, the EM's sole responsibility was to maintain *any* computer typesetting system within the Calgary Herald. This agreement was seen as a limiting factor of the Black master plan.

The first step to implement Black's plan was to physically separate the EM from the rest of the CNPTU by relocating the EM to another part of the building (divide). The second manoeuvre was to offer one individual a special place within the master plan if he renounced his affiliation to the union. The third step was to then electronically isolate the EM by placing stickers on all the computer systems informing users to contact non-technical personnel, and supplying these non-technicians with an unlimited resource of "swappable" personal computers. The fourth and probable final step was to dangle the proverbial "financial" carrot in front of the remaining EM staff (conquer).

Many of the EM staff clung to hopelessly disconnected ropes while being referred to as "union scum" by many of the non-union staff. It was quickly forgotten, however, that a settlement with the CNPTU at contract negotiation time gave workers minimum benefits and pay scale with which to *start* bargaining with the company. The Herald staff enjoyed probably one of the best benefits package in the industry, including daycare. They should have been grateful and supported EM's plight, or at least lent moral support.

With the new millennium, the Calgary Herald writing staff should hope for a miracle to help them get their first negotiated settlement. That they should stick together is an understatement; History does not have to repeat itself—B grade movies are for entertainment only, after all.

Fresh fears over the safety of genetically modified foods surfaced last year after new research revealed that food allergies relating to soya increased by 50 per cent. A study by Europe's leading specialists on food sensitivity found health complaints caused by soya - the ingredient most associated with GM foods - have increased from 10 in 100 patients to 15 in 100 over the past year. Researchers at the York, UK Nutritional Laboratory said their findings provide real evidence that GM food could have a tangible, harmful impact on the human body.

Herald Employees Strike

By Andy Marshall

(President, Local 115A,
Communications Energy and
Paperworkers Union of Canada)

The Calgary Herald recently devoted a large block of a news page to a story about a striking employee and his alleged actions of placing two business-card-sized, removable union stickers on a paper box in Kensington.

The paper did not use the term “alleged”, and led the story with a prominent, four-column headline: “Herald striker may be charged with vandalism.”

The story named the employee, deputy news editor Terry Inigo-Jones, and highlighted a quote in large letters from Herald editor-in-chief Peter Menzies that “certainly this kind of action can be a firing offence.” From the play of the story, one would have thought a murder had been committed.

The story then went on to describe alleged acts of vandalism to 600 boxes around the city. The next day, the paper ran a similarly prominent story about clusters of nails allegedly placed on Menzies’ driveway, including a photo of such a cluster.

The article then proceeded to repeat its case against Inigo-Jones and quote a University of Manitoba professor on the topic of violence during strikes, thereby implicating the employee in acts of violence tarnishing further his reputation.

The next day, Inigo-Jones, without ever having been contacted by the company, was fired.

The use of its news pages to perpetrate such propaganda, as well as to publicly vilify an employee, shows the depths to which this once-respected newspaper has sunk.

This incident shows exactly why newsroom employees in the Communications Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) are now in their fourth month of a strike against the company, along with their colleagues from the Herald’s distribution centre. The latter are members of the Graphic Communications International Union.

The strike, which began Nov. 8, is hardly about money. It’s not even so much about issues such as seniority that have divided the two sides at the bargaining table.

It is really about employees fighting to maintain journalistic standards at one of Conrad

Black’s 600 world-wide franchises without the constant threat of being summarily fired. It’s about a group of workers struggling to hold on to their basic democratic right to form a union in order to defend themselves.

The company has resolved to block any kind of protection against indiscriminate firings. It insists any collective agreement will be based on the assumption that its managers are good people and employees must put their trust in them.

It’s hard to trust a company that acts the way it does. This is the company that said in a headline “just 200 people” showed up for a union rally when it was in its interests to downplay community support for the striking employees. Then, when it was in its interest to inflate crowd numbers for an Alberta Labour Relations Board hearing into the conduct of the same rally, its representatives testified 800 people were present.

This is the company that repeatedly contends the average pay for intermediate and senior reporters is \$63,000 when it knows this is not the case. Average gross pay for the newsroom is about \$52,000. This is still a good salary. But by eliminating a clear pay grid for newer employees, the company’s agenda is to reduce top pay to below two-thirds current levels.

Conrad Black is bleeding The Herald to pay for the National Post adventure, costing Hollinger Inc., the publisher of The Post, more than \$60 million a year. Sights are set on crushing both striking unions.

This same company has spewed out a constant barrage of propaganda claiming that employees who have not crossed the line and defected from the union by a certain date will be fired, knowing this to be illegal under the labour code.

This company has announced changes in the newsroom that will mean fewer numbers. At the same time, it is busy hiring new people into positions that closely resemble those held by people on strike.

The CEP has had to turn to four different law firms to keep up with the volume of acts carried out by this company. Despite the relentless intimidation, just 10 of the 106 people who actively participated in the strike at its start, have crossed back to the company.

Although some Calgarians have written off any hope for the strikers against the Hollinger juggernaut, the employees remain determined. They know they must stand up to the bully.

The thrust of the strike campaign has been to encourage Calgarians to stop reading the Herald. Scientific surveys show readership levels have plunged by tens of thousands. The press run numbers have dropped by 12,000 to 14,000.

Now the strikers’ campaign is aimed at warning advertisers of these lower numbers and suggesting they either cancel their ads or ask for major rebates.

Because the only language this company will understand is economic pressure, a coalition of unions, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Council of Canadians have launched a boycott of the National Post across the country. Unions and citizens Canada-wide are pledging support for this important struggle.

The CEP encourages all Calgarians to join in this effort. For more information about the strike, call strike headquarters at 207-1554, email at cepu115A@heraldunion.com or see the web page at www.heraldunion.com.

Danielle Smith Exposed

Bob Keelaghan

Few people have heard of the Canadian Property Rights Research Institute that operates in Calgary. It describes itself as a “non-profit, non-partisan, public policy research and educational Institute” devoted to advancing the philosophy of private property as one of the basic tenets of a free society. It plans to do research on the history of property rights as they may relate to proposed government legislation.

In the December 18 edition of the Calgary Herald, there was a curious unsigned editorial about the C.P.R.R.I. and its failed bid to secure charitable organization status from Revenue Canada. Since the group’s inception in 1997, it has been seeking charitable status so it can issue tax deductible receipts for solicited donations and be exempt from taxation. It was turned down because it was deemed to be a political interest group. The anonymous editorial author complained of Revenue Canada’s bias in turning down the C.P.R.R.I.’s application while a left-wing organization such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives was given charitable status. While initially describing the Institute as “non-partisan”, the writer later describes it as “conservative-oriented” after accusing the government of left-wing favouritism. (The unintentional irony of the editorial is that an organization committed to researching theories on property rights for land owners and private


corporations as well as promoting private ownership is asking for charitable status.)

The question arises: why would an editorial writer at the Herald take a special interest in an obscure organization like the Canadian Property Rights Research Institute? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that one of the founders of the C.P.R.R.I. is Danielle Smith, who, until being hired by the Herald as an editorial writer, was the Executive Director for that organization. Smith is infamous for being one of the outspoken members of the Calgary Public School Board that was fired by Department of Learning Minister Lyle Oberg in November 1999. Before forming the C.P.R.R.I. in 1997, Smith worked as a researcher for the Fraser Institute, a Vancouver-based think-tank that espouses mostly right-wing political views. When asked about her relationship to the December 18 editorial, Smith said she did not write it because she would be guilty of conflict of interest due to her involvement with the C.P.R.R.I.

Is it still not a conflict of interest if other members of the editorial staff who work with Smith wrote the piece? If he/she works in close contact, is it not reasonable to assume that Smith would be a primary source of information on the activities of the C.P.R.R.I.? Given that the writer took a one-sided position on the issue, is the writer presenting an argument that would be nearly identical to that of Smith's? The tone and content of the editorial is very similar to a C.P.R.R.I. press release found on their web site (www.canpri.org). Taking this into consideration, the editorial in question appears to be free advertising for the C.P.R.R.I.

Peter Stockland, the Calgary Herald editor responsible for that page, did not make himself available for comment.

In addition to the ethical considerations of having the editorial staff promote an organization to which one of its writers is closely tied, a question remains regarding the accountability of a writer who does not sign his or her name to an editorial. Who is to be held responsible for what is written? Is the Herald acting as an amplifier for a right-wing interest group?

 I recently discovered e-mail: I followed your instructions to the letter and am pleased to report I made the calendar "Y to K" compliant as follows: Januark, Februark, Mak and Julk. Sundak, Mondak, Tuesdak, Wednesdak, Thursdak, Fridak, and Saturdak. Sincerelk, Mark

CHOICES

Midwife Crisis

Jude Williams

I don't consider myself to be much of a political activist - with two young children, I hardly have the time. Yet there is an issue burning for me, one that personally affects me.

When pregnant with my first child, I was fortunate to be able to locate and be in the care of a physician who supported the concept of 'low intervention' during child birth. Having heard many negative birth stories from other women within my personal network, I was determined that my own pregnancy/birth experience would be something that I would be actively involved in—not just a helpless by-stander.

As it turned out, my labour was straightforward. The nurse on duty was somewhat uncomfortable with the labour & birthing position I had chosen, however my physician, knowing that my need to be in control of the situation had higher priority than the comfort level of the nurse, shrugged her shoulders and said, "I've never delivered a baby in this position before, but I can't see there being a problem." Thank you Dr. Judy Patterson - too bad there aren't more physicians with your confidence out there delivering babies!

When I became pregnant with son #2, my doctor advised me that she was no longer doing deliveries. My options were:

- find a family doctor who delivered AND supported my low intervention ideas (a rarity these days)
- be referred to an Obstetrician
- find a mid-wife.

The first two options are covered by Alberta Health—the last one is not.

None of the following were to be a part of our experience: medication, episiotomy, forceps, electronic fetal monitoring, amniotomy, induction, shaving or enemas. Knowing my preference for zero intervention at the birth my physician highly recommended that I seek out the services of a mid-wife. My partner and I looked at the high cost of this service and decided that although it was a lot of money, it was the only option available that offered what we were looking for in a birthing experience. It turned out that my doctor had many good experiences with a mid-wife who was formerly a delivery nurse. At the same time a friend of mine (a CRHA Administrator) sang the praises of another mid-

wife whose care she had been under during her last pregnancy. I KNEW we were headed in the right direction.

From that point onward, there was no sitting around the crowded waiting room of my physician. I was not exposed to the illnesses that waited to be contracted, nor was I tying up my doctor's already busy schedule. Throughout the pregnancy, I met with either one of my mid-wives on the same prenatal schedule as I would have with a physician. I received thorough, professional care, delivered in a personal manner by birth specialists.

When the time of the birth arrived, one of the mid-wives arrived at our home to check me out and from there it was on to the Birth Centre—yet another expense! (Mid-wives are not allowed to actively take part in a delivery in a hospital. There are no guarantees that they will be able to in the future, although the issue is currently on the table.)

Our healthy baby was born with little complication, and we were back home less than three hours after the birth. As this was a second birth, the mid-wives reduced their visits to our home and came by every second day vs. the daily home visit that is more common for first time mothers during the first week. The follow-up check-ups also ran along the same time lines as those of my own physician. To summarize the experience for us all—mother, father & babe—it was very rewarding.

So why am I "hot under the collar"? I got exactly what I wanted, didn't I? Yes I did. However, I had to go outside of the regular health care system to get it, because this kind of care is not covered by Alberta Health. Only those who can afford this service, or are willing to go into debt, can take advantage of it. Is this not a symptom of a "have and have not" health care system?

In a world where "choice" has become a way of life, should we not be allowed to go shopping for our health care professionals? We are the ultimate consumer advocates when it comes to buying a TV or an automobile—why not advocate for something that far exceeds material goods in importance? Isn't the healthy birth of a baby important? Shouldn't parents have a say in how their children enter this world? And if so, shouldn't the health care system (which is mandatory) to which we Albertans belong, cover the cost of the care we choose?

Choice is something many take for granted. Stop and think about all of the things that you



do in your daily living that involve choice... Now think about that choice not being there. Choice, and the change it brings, does not come about over night. There must be a demand for it. I remember back when, to withdraw money from the bank, account holders had to go to the bank when it was open and stand in line. Banks, over time, made the ATM available to satisfy consumer demand. The customer demanded flexibility in banking and got it, or business would have been taken elsewhere. Should it not be this kind of thinking that drives health care, i.e. government? Yes, it would be a good idea to go shopping with your vote in hand in the next provincial election. Support those that support your ideas!

So...you've read these words and you've decided that you too like the idea of choice—especially in the area of childbirth. As stated in a document I recently received from a Calgary based mid-wife, “The future of Midwifery care in Alberta is at stake. Many midwives are being forced out of practice or are moving to other provinces where Midwifery is funded and expanding. If Midwifery is to survive in Alberta, we need you, as the consumer, to make your voice heard.”

If you think Alberta Health Care insurance premiums should cover a woman's right to come to term in the care of a qualified midwife, rather than by more intrusive options, please see the sidebar for people you can contact.

If you support midwifery and would like to see this service available to all Albertans who want it, at no extra charge, please let your voice be heard.

Here's what you can do:

- a) Join the **Midwifery Consumers Group**, by contacting
Krista Thompson
(403) 938 3410
e-mail:
lylethompson@sprint.ca
Birth Unlimited (403) 237 8839
e-mail: lolly@cadvision.com
- b) Subscribe (free) to the **Midwifery Consumers of Alberta** list at <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe/MidwifeConsumersAlta>>
- c) Repeatedly write, Phone, Fax, Email the following paid public servants:

CALGARY REGION HEALTH AUTHORITY

- a) Regional administration
(403) 541 3670
FAX (403) 541 3681
- b) Chairman of the Board:
Jim Dinning (403) 541 2625
- c) Chief Operating Officer:
Al Martin (403) 541 3672
- d) Chief Operating Office, Acute Care: Howard Waldner
(403) 670 1401
- e) Chairman of Medical Advisory Board: Brian Stewart
(403) 541 3449

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

- a) Minister of Health & Wellness:
Halvor Johnson
(780) 427 3665
FAX (780) 415-0961
#228, 10800 97th Ave.,
Edmonton, T5K 2B6
- b) Deputy Minister of Health & Wellness:
Lynne Duncan
(780) 422 0747
FAX (780) 427 1016
22nd Flr, TELUS Plaza North
10025 Jasper Ave.,
Edmonton, T5J 2N3
- c) Midwifery Demonstration Project
1 877 643 7765

Our City, Our Cars

Darcie Sheridan

Despite the hype, nothing changed the day the calendar rolled over this year. It would have made life infinitely more interesting if the apocalypse had indeed arrived. A little collective chaos and breakdown of societal order might have allowed us to re-think and re-vision what life could be like, if only we were to let go of some of our entrenched ideologies and life patterns.

Take housing, for example. The great North American dream is to own a single-detached house, with that important side yard to separate us from our neighbours. A man's home is his castle. We all want a castle. Why?

There was a planning theory book from the last century by Patrick Geddes with the ominous title, *Nothing Gained from Overcrowding*. Before the debut of sanitation, overcrowding in cities led to enormous public health problems relating to disease, pests and the like. These concerns have been largely eliminated in advanced technological societies. Yet the dream of avoiding “overcrowding” is stronger than ever.

Another influential thinker from the 20th century was the renowned Frank Lloyd Wright. While he is probably best remembered for his startling innovations in architecture, Wright profoundly influenced town and country planning with his modish ideas about development. To Wright, North America offered a fresh canvas for the emergence of cities and towns. His seminal idea was known as “Broadacre”: every house should be set upon an individual parcel of no less than one acre. The immensity of open space was seen as an infinite resource to disperse the multitudes. Overcrowding could be eliminated.

Wright's legacy can be observed in the Calgary region, where our rural municipal districts such as Rocky View and Foothills consider minimum 2-acre lots a virtue. These municipalities believe they espouse “country residential values” which are appropriate to the “rural” setting. No deviation from the minimum is permitted; no “urban” type development is allowed.

In fact, this type of country residential, low density growth is perhaps the most costly and destructive form of urban development—the epitome of “sprawl”. By devouring arable farm land and making the distance between city-dwellers and their food supply ever greater, sprawl creates a need for more extensive

highways and shipping routes. While the “country residential” dwellers are supposed to use wells and on-site septic disposal, the wealthy would-be country folk quickly tire of the rural lifestyle and its headaches. They demand extensions of municipal water and sewer service—extensions which are paid for by all the taxpayers, not just the residents who benefit.

And of course, the distance between home and anywhere else is vast. Walking to a neighbour’s house or the store is not an option. Who wants to walk anyway? Country residential dwellers want to get some use out of that SUV they plopped down fifty grand for. The faux-rural lifestyle exemplifies the concept of “auto dependency”. There isn’t a single trip such residents can take without using a car—or truck, or minivan, or SUV.

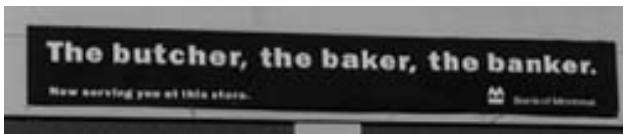
Urbanites, who have alternatives, are not much better. The lifestyle and the urban fabric in Calgary makes a car an essential, not a discretionary possession.

As we now observe the growing panic among Calgarians about the fact that it is no longer possible to criss-cross town in 15 minutes or less, it is clear that most residents have not examined the consequences of their lifestyle and transportation decisions. The true costs of sprawl and auto-reliance have not been evident until recently in Calgary. The road system had so much excess

capacity nobody thought there could ever be traffic problems. Now that problems have begun to emerge, the solutions are elusive. People have made their choices about where to live and work; these facts are not easily changed. Even more difficult is changing expectations about mobility, or attitudes about how to get around.

Is it necessary or desirable to live 10 kilometres or more from work? Are there ways to reduce the need to drive? Is using public transit an option? Or to go way out on a limb, could you walk or cycle to the store that’s a kilometre away, instead of driving? We do have alternatives. If everyone made a resolution for the new century to reduce their personal auto trips by even 5%, it could have a significant impact on the system as a whole.

So the next time you’re sitting in gridlock downtown, take a look at how much faster the pedestrians are progressing. They are also getting some exercise and experiencing the city at a different pace. As you sit in a jam on Memorial Drive, observe the elegance of the cyclists on the riverside pathway as they swiftly pedal along the ribbon of the park system. The solution to our “transportation crisis” may be much simpler, and cheaper, than constructing yet more mega-roads. The old fashioned modes of transport may enable us to progress into a new era by borrowing a page from the past.



...The Blockbuster?

Deb Cameron

Nine years ago I returned to Calgary, to my roots, and to an old neighbourhood, Hillhurst-Sunnyside. A short walk to work allowed me to sell my car, and everything else I needed or wanted was right down the street: florist, coffee shop, hair salon, restaurants, bakery, movie theatre, book store, card shop, bank, and lo and behold, a retail grocery store that was small, friendly and service oriented.

Well, change was inevitable, I guess. Traffic has increased, there are more strangers on the street, stores have changed hands or closed completely, and the grocery outlet was torn down.

The new retail grocery outlet is twice the size, bright, less friendly, stocked with more stuff (actually everything I can buy down the street) — and now a place where I get in and out of as quickly as possible.

Just the other day I was in the produce area closely examining apples when a bank employee interrupted me and proceeded with an “in-the-

face” introduction of the new banking services offered in the store. Now I might be a dinosaur, but shopping for a mortgage or mutual funds and apples just didn’t make sense to me. I will give the bank one point though. I did remember the incident.

I know grocery stores are retail outlets but butcher, baker, and banker? What next, laundry? And will it be ironed by the time I finish shopping?

Then I received a notice that my local bank is closing and amalgamating with another branch downtown. I like the “personal touch” and customer service I had become accustomed to, and immediately went looking for a bank that offered this service. I found one—with a video outlet attached to it.

The neighbourhood I moved back to has certainly changed, and time will only tell if the change is for the better. . . or does it only matter to me, because I know it has changed.

The Way the Wind Blows

Farmers finding that genetically modified (GM) seeds have blown on to their land from neighbouring fields could face massive fines if Monsanto wins a test court case. A farmer in Saskatchewan is being pursued by Monsanto for both damages and profits. GM canola plants from Monsanto seeds were found growing among his crops. The farmer believes that the seeds blew on to his land.

The farmer never signed a contract to grow Monsanto’s GM canola and says he is not liable. His fields run along a road linking a grain silo and a rubbish dump, where used seed sacks are thrown away. The prairies can be windy and cut crops are often blown on to neighbouring fields.

The farmer has spent thousands of dollars on legal fees and will have to pay a massive bill if he loses.

Monsanto has hired Robinson Investigations, a private firm founded by former police officers, to question farmers and take samples from their land. Farmers complain of “intimidation” and “bullying”, and fear they could lose their farms.

Monsanto has also set up a toll-free “snitch line” where people can tell Monsanto that growers are using their technology without paying for it. But many growers claim that the line is being used to settle old scores.

A spokesman for Monsanto Canada defended the pursuit of farmers, calling the tip-off line and the investigations a “deterrent”. He said the private investigators were instructed to be polite and behave in a civil manner.

And in other news...

Genetically modified food has been banned from the staff cafeteria at Monsanto Co.’s UK headquarters by the company’s own caterer in order “to ensure that you, the customer, can feel confident in the food we serve.” Monsanto played down the staff cafeteria policy, and denied it was an embarrassment to have a GM ban at the head office of a company manufacturing genetically modified crop seeds.

And this just in!

Guess who is new head of Monsanto public affairs! The new head will be Tony Coombes, from Corporate Affairs at Safeway (he used to be head of *environmental affairs*).

No Globalization Without Representation

Robin Hansen

With all the media attention surrounding the violence that occurred in Seattle during the World Trade Organization's (WTO) ministerial summit last November, it is important to recognize why over 100,000 citizens from around the world were protesting. What was most heartening about my Seattle experience was the unification of supposedly diverse interests. Union songs were heard amid legions of people dressed as sea-turtles. Most inspiring was the realization that peoples' concerns with the WTO and the global power structure that it presents are not divided along lines of political left or right. Rather, it is a question of the priority of concentrated wealth and power over human values and a living earth.

The WTO views environmental degradation, cruel labour practices and human rights abuses as unworthy of binding legislation. Thus, the WTO is challenging a Massachusetts state law concerning Burma that was identical to anti-apartheid trade legislation of the 1980's. What would have happened if the WTO had had such power during the 1980's? Would the South African trade embargo have been challenged as a barrier to trade? Perhaps Nelson Mandela would still be in jail. The millions of Burmese citizens oppressed by a brutal military government are deemed by WTO rules to be less important than European and Japanese investors in Burma. Through the WTO, the European Union (EU) and Japan are able to overthrow a law supported by the Massachusetts electorate. The compromise of democracy is exactly what is at stake.

Photo Robin Hansen



At a time when the world's richest nations have vastly overshot greenhouse gas emissions targets agreed upon at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the 1997 Kyoto convention on climate change, WTO rules outlaw trade discrimination on grounds of environmental sustainability. For instance, in 1997 the US weakened its Clean Air Act regulations that limited pollution-causing gasoline contaminants after a WTO challenge from Venezuela. Humanity cannot survive outside the natural world. Should not our global economic guidelines respect this?

Public health is also at the mercy of WTO decisions, as evidenced by Canada's suit against France's ban of asbestos. Also, twenty year patent laws restrict millions from access to basic medicines, especially in developing



Photo Robin Hansen

countries, and continue to weaken our Canadian Medicare system. Major health organizations recognize this and many doctors and other health care workers protested in Seattle.

WTO decision-makers are swayed by the palpable influence of money in global politics. How mysterious that Chiquita Brands International donated \$500,000 to the US Democratic party, just days before the US complained about the EU's promotion of small farm banana production in its former colonies. Holding only 8% of the EU's banana market, Caribbean small farm producers will soon have little choice but to grow marijuana, the only viable crop once banana production is wholly controlled by multinational fruit companies.

In another example of national law being dictated by a multinational company, Gerber was declared as the sole exception to a 1983 Guatemalan law aimed at decreasing infant mortality and following World Health Organization guidelines. The Guatemalan government was sufficiently intimidated by threat of a WTO complaint to grant Gerber special status in 1995.

These and other concerns, including the patenting of life forms, hold frightening implications for the future. Increased poverty and increased monopolization of production bring questions about the control of supply to the foreground. As genetically modified foods are allowed to go unlabelled, the kaleidoscope of issues relating to profit over life becomes even more dizzying. The rights of investors and corporations ought not to have greater influence than the rights of everyone as global citizens.

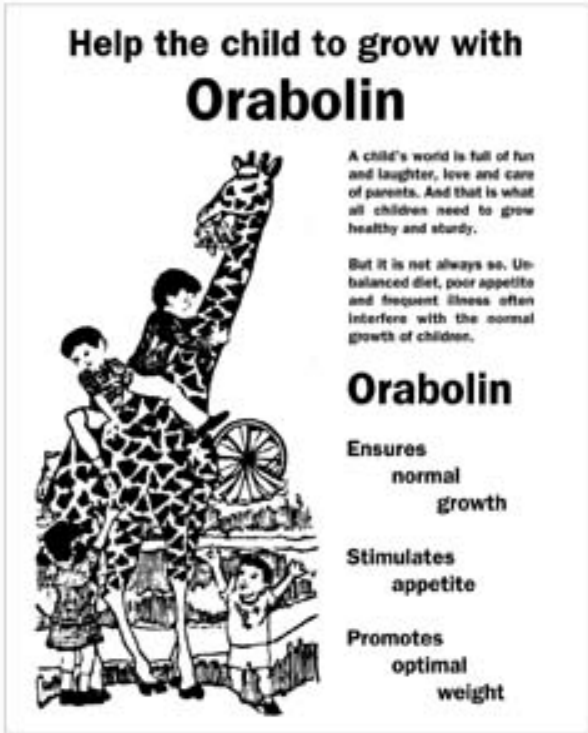
For Pete's Sake

Francine Bissett

A new century—a new millenium—a “fresh start” but did anyone bother to advise Calgary City Hall? Megabucks have been spent on an organization review—a review that just didn't change a thing. Oh yeah, directors are now general managers, commissioners are now executive officers and department names are more “up-scale”, whatever that means.

Promotion from within; not a fresh face to be seen and certainly no new

Bilingual Poster for Third World Development



Translation:



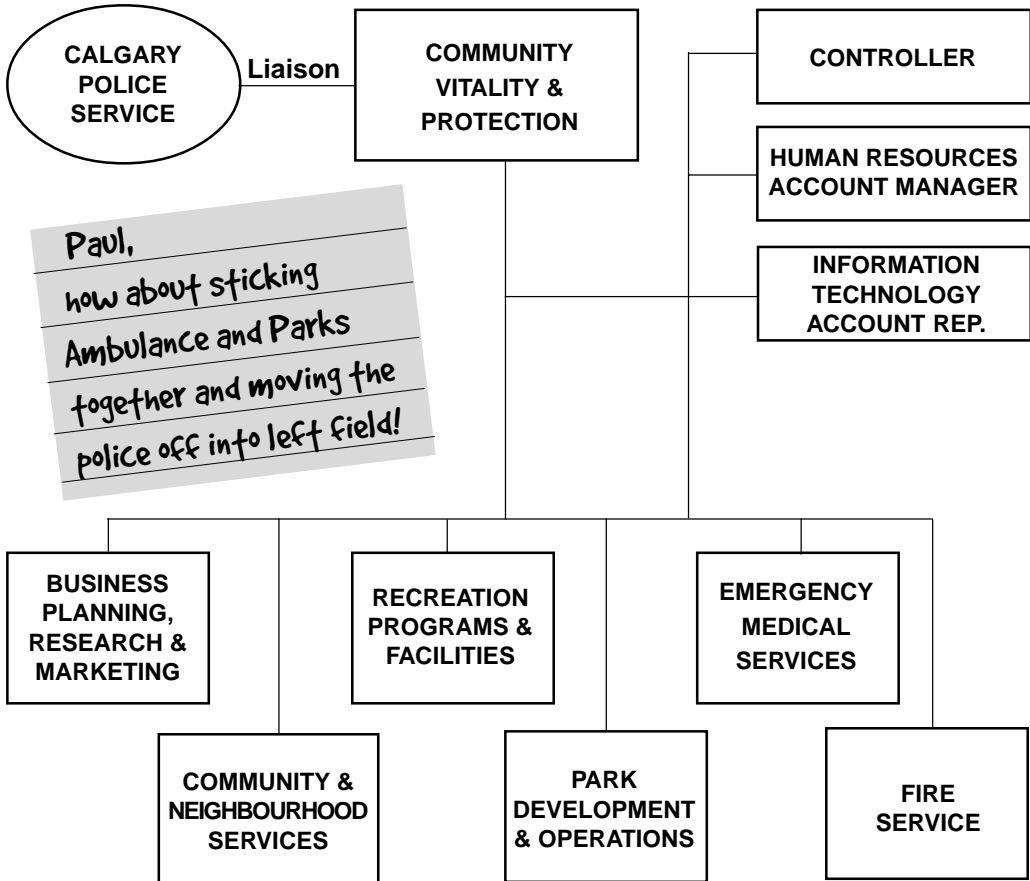
Orabolin is an anabolic steroid. The advertisement on the left of this poster appeared in a publication which was circulated at a conference on The Role of Rural Doctors in Child Care which took place at Dhaka's Children's Hospital in May, 1981. It was sponsored by the World Health Organization and The Bangladesh Ministry of Health.

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ideas to start this new century. The City is not unlike a fortress—keep everything the same for Pete's sake. And, talking of Pete and his Principle, people will be promoted up to their natural level of incompetence—promotions, different job titles, and raises will be given to people who should have been replaced.

Change at this fortress cannot happen as long as the same people continue to manage; changes have to happen at the top or to those close to it. This review was an opportunity for a major corporate restructuring, whether golden parachutes were given or not—this was a time to be creative and think 'out of the box'. Well, the box is still the same, the contents are older and no wiser, and the ribbon and paper is certainly tattered.

I guess no one cares. Pension plans are intact, benefits are in place, managers smile in meetings, and the rank and file continue in whatever manner they think will get the job done, or not.



De-Constructing the Commode

Jerald Blackstock

Ever decide to do a renovation in your home? In your bathroom? Perhaps then you know well the trepidation and fear that the experienced renovator feels at this massive undertaking.

On the surface, the bathroom is a smallish room. In our case smallish is a kind term, as our donicker is something like three feet by four feet, after the previously installed tub surround shrank an already inconsiderable facility. There should be no problem with this puppy, you think to yourself, as you survey the lack of expanse. And, truly there is not, if all there is to consider in your renovation is painting this Lilliputian surface.

But the real fun begins when your wife decides to replace the existing toilet with one that matches the previously mentioned dirty yellow tub surround. This means you have to remove the existing commode, or commit *Better Homes and Gardens* fashion crime. The nuts and bolts of this operation means getting face to face with the gizmo and actually removing the nuts and bolts. This is not a happy prospect, since last time you destroyed the trap under the sink by using large and heavy tools on plastic pipes and such.

After careful tampering and fidgeting the nuts slowly remove themselves from the bolts, and you breathe a sigh of relief. Then, with a mighty heave, you cart the receptacle off to the garage where it will lie in state, to be used for some future project of questionable artistic merit. I mean, after Duchamp, what else can be said?—about a toilet, that is. Perhaps a statement on recycling? A bit vague, but perhaps a place to start an ongoing discourse and social commentary with a back yard installation.

Now that the creature has been successfully dethroned from the bathroom, it dawns that it will take a weekend to paint the place, and a replacement strategy is required. Walking to the service station four blocks away has been ruled out by Feminine Executive Order. Didn't even make it to committee, that one. So it's off to the camper to get the portapotty that the in-laws gave you when you first got your fine tawny piece of ancient used recreational vehicle.

It's a good unit, this portable potty. Sternly made by serious Germans who value cleanliness and a germ free environment. It actually flushes into a sealed container that has

encompassing space called the "spare room".

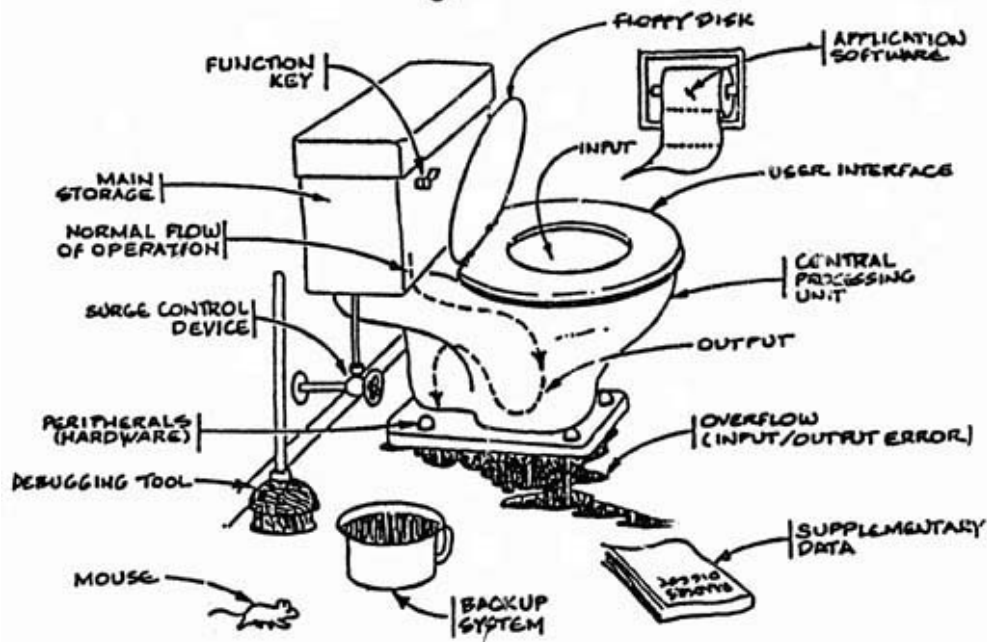
You know, that room that's the catch-all for such things as the computer, the library, and left over storage of things that won't fit in your kitchen. On the net, some men refer to this room as the cave. You see phrases in chat rooms like, "da bitch haz no respect for da cave." Visions of illiterate, henpecked, American gang members dance in the mind, evoking descriptive comments like 'spam-suckingtrailertrash', (well, at least for me they do). The descriptive personas that are worn in chat rooms, called *avatars*, are generally tiresome renderings of heavily muscled men and overly endowed fantasy women. These are

meant for titillation of course, leading to computer sex crimes against humanity. But, for me, I can't seem to remove the thought of 300 lb., sad, lonely people sitting in their trailers masturbating in front of computers. It sort of spoils the ambiance, but it is a good place for cultural anthropology research if nothing else.

So into this bastion, this high tech male sanctuary, goes the sturdy little porta-unit, forever more turning the

mysterious and secretive "cave" into a place of constant interruption and public utility. There are advantages, however. Reading material is readily available in abundant supply. One does not have to interrupt conversation for very long on the Internet in order to use the facilities, as they have become very handy indeed—always a benefit to the true chat-room junkie. And the window, of necessity open, provides an invigorating breeze—something not often found in today's modern bathrooms, due to the smells percolating from the 'little guy', tending to remind one of ones own—how shall we say—naturalness. An interesting contrast, and comment on, the fantasy *avatars* and illusionary worlds of the vast and ever growing repository known as the Internet.

Understanding the Technology



© 2000 Jerald Blackstock

been treated with a formaldehyde solution. Our porta-crapper is small and squat, an appropriate size and shape for the job at hand. It consists of a water container in the top half for flushing, and a holding tank in the bottom half for emptying when full. And of course, it possesses a lid and liftable seat to round off your portable potty-ing experience.

So far this sounds like your average toilet. It has all the same gizmos and functions as your regular 'throne'. But there are some major differences that one experiences during the water closet deconstruction process. The bathroom, being under renovation, has no room left over for the portable pisser, so it is dispatched summarily from that fine place of fans and other amenities to that all

And, speaking of repository, it soon becomes obvious that one of the main differences between the temporary unit and its larger cousin is that the moveable appliance needs to be emptied on occasion. The occasion being, of course, that it is full. The de-positing of the re-positing device has to take place under the auspices of the sewage system. This is something that users of disposable diapers never seem to take into consideration. As we speak, land-fills grow ever full with disease-causing human waste.

Being filled with landfill social con-science, you now take it upon yourself to interact with the local sewage system using the hole in the floor left by the departed device. This takes place first thing in the morning, before the necessary ablutions that make up the morning ritual, because the stern engineers who constructed the unit have decreed that, after a certain level has been reached, *It Shall Not Open*. Very Old Testament these engineers; no leeway whatsoever.

This draining process is easier said than done. The holding tank, when disconnected from the upper unit, when full, weighs approximately 200 pounds, or so it seems, as you valiantly lift the unit and transport it to the hole in the floor. After removing the rags placed in the hole to stop the sewer gases from emerging, any thoughts of coffee or God forbid, breakfast, vanish from your mind. The tank has a nozzle that swings out, with a cap on it. Dressed appropriately in rubber gloves, with the latest concoction of anti-bacterial, bleach-containing *Fantastic* at your side, you gingerly swing the nozzle out and unscrew the cap. Smells of formaldehyde and other such sweetness now add themselves to the sewer gas percolating up from the hole in the floor. Carefully you tip the little rascal towards the waiting orifice, and as the liquid rushes out, gurgling madly, you remember that physics and trajectory were never your strong suit.

Unfortunately, it is no gentle stream that babbles gaily through Robert Frost's idyllic view of nature that ensues. Rather, it is a torrent of some considerable force that overshoots the hole and begins to pool rapidly and head in the direction of your new sheepskin slippers. You place the tank on the floor, squarely in the middle of the greenish mess, and dash for the kitchen to get the paper towels that you forgot because you have yet to have had even a sip of morning coffee and

felt its wonderful, mind clearing effects.

After the first mopping-up operation, some consideration is given to the question of *aim*. Also, a liberal supply of paper towels is strategically placed around the whole hole. So the next time the tank is lifted and the pour begins anew, you find that this time your aim is much better, due to practice and all that. It's just that a new problem has arrived on the scene. Remember all those paper towels that were stuffed down the hole because it seemed like a logical place to put them after the first clean up? Apparently—and I have this on the best, first hand authority now—regular toilets sends gallons of water into the pipe, because it is *required*.

After the second mopping-up operation, and a quick call to the sheepskin store for new slippers, buckets of water are gently poured down the offending receptacle. OK, now you are really getting on to this. Lift the unit back into the air for a third time, pour it down the hole, and listen to the satisfying *glug glug* as you contemplate the exacting engineering of solid waste removal. More paper towels are dispensed for the minor spills and splashes, bleach containing solution is sprayed with diligence, more wiping and more pouring of water ensues, and a sense of satisfaction convinces you that you are indeed becoming a home renovator. That is, until you meet your blushing bride ascending from the basement.

Your darling nuptial partner has a dark look on her face and something else as well. It's green in places and looks remarkably similar to the solution that you have been pouring down the hole in the floor. Apparently, and again I have this on the best of authority, there is a place in the basement where the sewer pipe for the toilet meets the floor through a rough cut out opening. Hence there is a wax ring normally used when connecting a toilet to this aforementioned sewer pipe. Probably, the need for a wax ring was first discovered the hard way in the dark past by someone else's wife as well.

A bit of renovation advice: should someone be looking up at this opening in the floor at the exact moment when someone else decides to follow the dictates of stern engineers, first thing in the morning, before coffee, the consequences could be dreadful. Take my advice: If, in the future, you decide to renovate *your* bathroom, bring along a sense of humour.

You Can Teach an Old Dog New Licks

Linda Kitchin

I make my living as a guitar, mandolin and fiddle teacher. My students come from all walks of life and have varied interests and tastes in music. The majority of them are adults and adolescents rather than children. I try to persuade parents to consider very carefully whether their children are truly committed to the regime of studying a musical instrument.

Unfortunately, there are too many people who have the wrong idea about playing music and the ability to do so. They believe that one must start at a young age in order to be "good at it". This concept possibly crosses over from other areas of life, especially the world of sports where the early development of agility, strength, and speed are essential to performance before a person's body starts to naturally slow down.

In reality, when learning a musical instrument, it is also necessary to develop agility, strength, and speed, but these are focused more in the hands and arms or in breath control. It can start at just about any time in a person's life.

There are two situations I like to avoid when taking children on as students. The first are the parents who want their child occupied between the time after school and supper. This is one of the worst times of day for any child to learn anything. The child has been in school all day, is tired, hungry, and needs to get some exercise.

Sitting down and focusing on a musical instrument is demanding. If the child does not come to me directly out of school and has had a snack, s/he is in a much more receptive state of mind to learn.

The other situation to avoid is where the parents push their child to learn a certain instrument because they themselves always wanted to do it. They live their lives through their children. Since children want to please their parents, they will go along with this.

Naturally a situation of this nature will not last long. If a child's heart isn't into something s/he is trying to do, she is being set up for failure. Children can convince themselves they are hopeless at music and may likely never try it again in any shape or form. Many parents went through this kind of tumult and they wrongly believe that music instruction is drudgery and toil but they are willing to put their kids through this.

Far too often I hear from my adult students

(see *music*, page 12)

Shot for the Day

Advice from the Bartender

Patrick MacIntyre

As with all advice this too should be taken with a shot of booze, four ounces of reflection, shaken over ice, then strained into a rocks glass and hurled against the fireplace. (I believe I'll have another beer).

Since the Millennium is upon us, advice for coping with impending doom can range from the specific (never pet a flaming dog), to the general (its not whether you win or lose, its passing that damn drug test). I think the latter might be a better way to kick off this column.

I don't want you to get the wrong idea about me, but I thought I would ease you into getting to know how thorny I can be. Write me if you need references.

I have met people from all walks of life in my time behind the bar. The majority of them become more than a regular source of income. They become friends. After years behind the wood of the bar, you become adept at reading people's moods. They come in crying; they are upset. Experience pays off.

Besides thirst and alcoholism, patrons also have bad days. Some people pour out their hearts right away. Others say that they are not the type to follow the stereotype and tell their barkeep... then find a way of getting you alone.

This is an advice column. So I will give some. Invariably people who are down find a belief in a higher power. PLEASE HELP!!!! How often, after a good day, do you say "WOW, GOOD DAY. THANKS!!!" If you do it more often you'll have more reason to do it more often.

Shot for the day:
TENNESSEE IGLOO – Yukon Jack, Southern Comfort. ENJOY !!!!

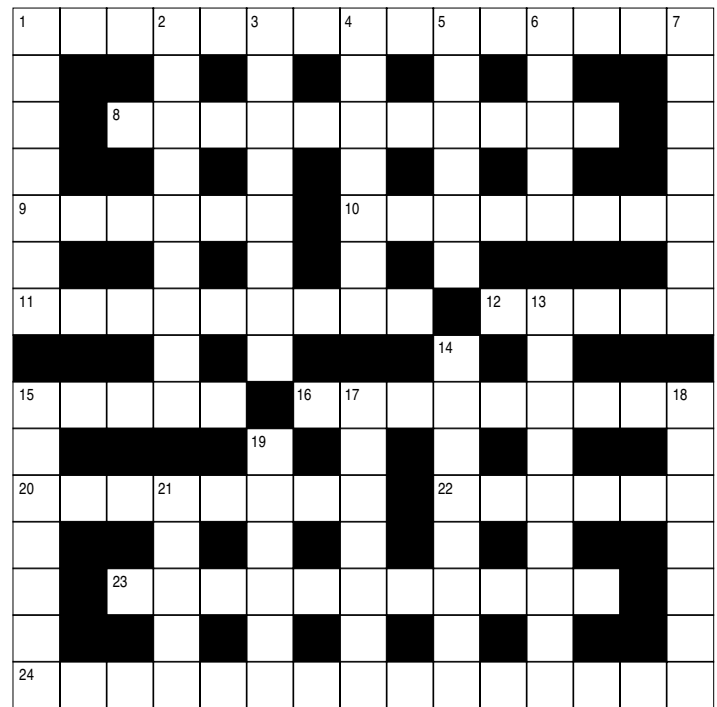
(music, from page 11)

the phrase "if I had only stayed with it, I'd be so good". Perhaps, but it is not necessarily so. Putting in the time is a lot different than putting in the work. There is a similar misconception that just because you are taking lessons that will make you a player. Again, not so: you must put in the work.

Now here is the good part. The "work" you put into learning a musical instrument does not have to feel like work. It can feel like play. This kind of feeling does not necessarily come about in the very beginning, but it does arise early on if a person finds joy in the adventure of discovery. I get a tremendous thrill when a student comes to me and says, "This week I felt I could really play." The ability to play music comes from an attitude more than from a physical skill. When a person realizes this, he can relax, have fun, and pursue the musical instrument of his choice.

Activists have dumped a mixture of Diet Coke, NutraSweet and Bovine growth Hormone-enhanced milk (from cows injected with genetically engineered hormones) at Atlanta's Cheshire Bridge Shopping Center. The demonstration, by the Pure Foods Campaign, was inspired by the Boston Tea Party. But while dumping tea was considered patriotic, dumping soda, sweetener and milk is considered a crime in Georgia. "Food slander" laws, in force in at least eleven states, make it a civil crime to criticize food products without a "scientific basis," explained coordinator Ronnie Cummings. "Industry lobbyists admit these laws are probably unconstitutional...their real purpose is to intimidate activists and concerned consumers."

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD by 49 across



ACROSS

- 1 Some custard tins disintegrate, causing widespread damage. (4,11)
- 8 I leave thievery with an afterthought, but perish the thought, nevertheless! (3,4,4)
- 9 Necessitate, late in changing. (6)
- 10 I permit no entry to the uninformed. (8)
- 11 Such a catchy tune may have you dancing in your seat. (3,6)
- 12 Boggle the mind with such a convoluted system. (5)
- 15 The marker loses direction quietly in return for an anemone or such. (5)
- 16 The old wisdom is extracted when one is suffering from this. (9)
- 20 In payment for future consideration, the lessor returns with a first class entry. (8)
- 22 Backs off, after a stormy outburst perhaps. (4,2)
- 23 Where parts of the stock market are finally rendered... (4,7)
- 24 ... and where the peace proposal might be read? (7,3,5)

DOWN

- 1 Not exactly your average nastiness! (7)
- 2 Sweetly sentimental school shortly followed by modified grain, with the last two letters coming up. (9)
- 3 In some competitions, the winner is usually held in such an enclosure. (8)
- 4 After nine months in some cases, the adherent prefers a diet of wood! (7)
- 5 You will be enjoined to give these alliances their due. (6)
- 6 They become possessive, as you might get your's. (5)
- 7 What the loser of the championship gets (and the indecisive author, sometimes). (2,5)
- 13 By arrangement, mistreat a couple of bones in the feet. (9)
- 14 Sounds like tea and treacle pudding would be a good recipe for this Swiss favorite. (8)
- 15 Up up, over the freeway, sounds like you are to be creating distress. (7)
- 17 Dante loses direction after joining the music class, and ends up becoming rather caustic. (7)
- 18 Potential accident protection provided by the relations between snoozes. (7)
- 19 It's best to turn away when faced with such an uncontrolled outburst. (6)
- 21 A characteristic displayed by elements, from silver on down. (5)