

points of view

Shovelling it

THE OTHER day I did something that no one who knows me would ever have imagined me doing. I wore out a shovel.

I'm not writing about this as testament to the power of positive thinking. No, there is also a lesson or two to be learned from my experience.

First and foremost, a shovel is not a pry bar. Second, if you use one as such, it can snap, mid-handle and while the lower part will remain lodged under the roots of the dead shrub you are trying to extricate, the upper half will flip up and fly backwards until it is stopped by something hard and immovable – in this particular instance, my forehead.

I'm not proud of whacking myself in the forehead with the broken end of a heavy hickory handle but this needed to be divulged so you understand why I uttered the next question.

Which was, "Jenn, how about we go buy another shovel?"

She looked at the still rooted shrub, shrugged and said, "Sure."

Believe it or not, there is good news to be found when you wear out a shovel. Two things immediately come to mind: you get a break from using one; and, when you are buying the next one, you now know the characteristics that make a good shovel so you can ask the sales associate intelligent questions like, "Do they make shovels with soft handles?" Or alternately, "Where do you keep the shovelling helmets?"



steve galea

Loon Tales

It turns out the answer to both questions is no. Sure, ash is marginally softer than hickory but for the purpose of forehead whacking the difference is negligible. Also, if you explain to a sales associate why shovelling helmets should be a thing, they will strongly try to discourage you from shovel ownership.

Luckily, Jenn really wanted that dead shrub out of the garden – so we were willing to risk another head injury.

Better yet, the shovel was on sale for \$12.99, which meant I wouldn't feel so bad if I broke another one.

This got me thinking about how shovels are underappreciated. The difference between a top-of-the-line shovel and a cheap one is right around \$300. I'm guessing this is because they have gone as far as they can with shovel technology. Basically, you need a shovel blade and a handle. There are no moving parts unless you try to pry a dead shrub out of the ground.

Out of curiosity, I looked up a top-of-the-line shovel to see just what I was missing. It turns out they have non-magnetic, non-sparking, corrosion resistant blades, and lightweight fiberglass handles – because they are specialized for picking up hazardous material – not unlike shrubs, I suppose.

Otherwise, a really good yard work shovel for the non-professional hole-digging enthusiast is probably \$40 more at most. For that money, you get a tool that will dig holes and move dirt and landmines your dog created. You will also be able to enjoy leaning on them when no one is looking.

I'm not sure a more expensive shovel will do any of that any better. In fact, I believe with shovels it is a classic case of "It's not the tool, it's the craftsman."

Basically, you're not going to get any better at shovelling by spending more money on one. Shovel makers don't want a guy like me to reveal that, but sometimes, you just need to call a spade a spade.



pic of the past

The *Bobcaygeon Independent* announced the discovery of gold in Haliburton in its May 13, 1898 edition. "We are all in great spirits. It will be just lovely to have a Klondike within a mile of our Town Hall," it read. The mine was near what is now Skyline Park. It turned out that the mine was mostly filled with pyrites. You can see more information about this photo and more in *Haliburton: A History in Pictures*, available at the Haliburton Highlands Museum.

letters to the editor

Decision-making approach hurting many

Ms. Scott:

In 1969, the late Jimmy Breslin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning American columnist and author, wrote a great little book called *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight*. It was a bestseller and it was about ineptitude in leadership and those who blindly follow. A very funny, touching read.

Your Queen's Park "Gang..." are neither touching nor funny. Last week's reversal on the plan to retroactively reduce municipal funding by some \$177 million is just the latest in a litany of poorly thought out, but impactful, strategies the Ontario PCs have had to "walk back" since they were given the keys to Queen's Park. The list is too long to recite here but speaks volumes.

Doug Ford says "this government listens" but in reality it plans very poorly and then reacts, almost exclusively, to outraged, affected citizens. Reasoned, mature organizations, on the other hand, make decisions by consulting, debating, weighing consequences and then implementing new initiatives in the most prudent, sensitive manner

possible. The Ford Government is leading with a wrecking ball and in so doing is alienating and hurting so many.

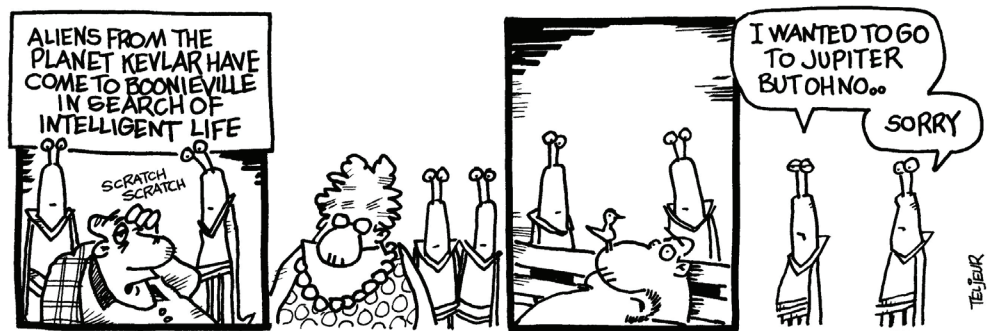
We know there is a deficit that needs to be addressed. We know the Liberals (and the PCs before them and the NDP before them) made some poor economic decisions. We get it! What we don't get and won't stand for is this slavish, "bull in a china shop," ill-informed and single-minded attempt to change the bottom line overnight at the expense of some very vulnerable people and some incredibly important programs.

The members of the PC caucus should go away together for a weekend and have someone who understands leadership principles and governance to explain what the government should really be doing and how to go about doing it effectively. You've all wasted too much of our time ... and yours.

Sean Pennylegion
Haliburton

More letters to the Editor on page 8

BOONIEVILLE



points of view

Another thing I'm good for

ON FRIDAY NIGHT, after Midnight Madness, Jenn, our co-worker Debbie and me were talking when I suddenly noticed their eyes staring beyond me with looks of abject horror.

Their faces contorted. Their eyes nearly jumped out of their sockets. They raised their hands in front of their faces and high-pitched screams emanated from both as they dodged and ran around in circles.

I'm not very good at subtle clues, but I began to suspect something was amiss.

"Is everything OK?" I said. As if to answer that question, a fluttering darkness blotted out the light from the ceiling lamp.

"Yuck! Eeeek!" one of them articulated.

"Gahhh! Bleech!" added the other.

I turned, expecting to see the Creature from the Black Lagoon or, even worse, kale.

Instead Jenn yelled, "It's a bat! Yuck! Eeeek!"

But we quickly determined that while it was the size of a bat, it was actually a hawk moth.

"It's a moth!" I said.

"He's right; it's a huge moth! Gahhh! Bleech!" Debbie said.

Then, they looked at me and screamed, "Get it!"

I'm not an anthropologist but, it suddenly occurred to me that this is probably the very reason why ancient women decided to let men hang around in the first place.

I can even envision some ancient cave woman saying, "Sure, Grog farts, burps, and smells generally bad. And yes, he makes a mess in the cave, drinks fermented things and thinks he knows everything but he's really good at getting rid of moths and stuff. Gahhh! Bleech!"

This hypothesis was immediately supported by the fact that Jenn and Debbie suddenly succumbed to their shouting directions on how to defeat the ferocious moth.

natural instincts and began shouting directions on how to defeat the ferocious moth.

"Tackle it. Gahhh! Bleech!" one yelled.

"But don't hurt it! Yuck! Eeeek!" commanded the other.

It was at this point I also realized why polygamy never took hold in moth-infested areas.

In the next few seconds there were times I was chasing the moth and there were times the moth was chasing me.

Through it all, however, I was being instructed by both women who stood nervously several feet away, ready to close the door and sacrifice me to the great moth, should things get really out of hand.

In all of the commotion, the moth landed under the deepest, darkest part of the desk.

The women then gathered courage, pointed boldly to it, looked me in the eye and said, "Go get it!"

It was at that moment I began contemplating an alliance with the insect.

Instead, I said, "Get me a Tupperware container and a sheet of sturdy paper."

Perhaps one day when there is a civilian medal of heroism specifically awarded to those who showed exceptional valour when dealing with huge, belligerent moths, people will recount what followed.

Until then, know that I entered the darkness under the desk, understanding full well that this day might be my last – should the moth charge and cause me to bang my head on the drawer above.

I remember it in pieces. The dust bunnies. The darkness. The confined space. Seeing my reflection in the moth's multi-faceted eyes.

Since you were not there, I will tell you that I rebuffed its charges three times before finally subduing it with a Tupperware container. Then, I slipped the paper beneath the container and slowly slid the great beast out into daylight.

Once in the light, I rose with my vanquished adversary and said, "Open the door, for I mean to release my valiant foe."

They did so and as soon as I was out onto the veranda of the Echo, I heard the slamming of doors and the locking of locks. Then I released the moth.

And somewhere beyond the front door, I heard muffled conversation.

It sounded like "Yuck! Eeeek!" and "Gahhh! Bleech!"



steve galea

Loon Tales



pic of the past

This week's Pic of the Past dates back to about 1930. It was taken at the trail station in Gelert and shows Andy Anderson, who was born in Sweden, the oxen Buck and Bright and two other men also from Gelert: J.B. Sedgwick and John Francis. This photo was previously published in the *Echo* more than a decade ago, courtesy of Myrtle (Francis) Walker and Marion Sedgwick.

letters to the editor

Tag Day smiles light up the Highlands

To the Editor,

A few days ago I had the privilege of taking part in the Haliburton Hospital Auxiliary "Tag Day." This annual event provides a wonderful boost in auxiliary funds which are then used to purchase much needed equipment for the Haliburton Hospital. Tag Day is also a perfect opportunity for us volunteers to connect with so many of the wonderful residents and visitors in our community.

I am always touched at the generosity and kindness of our many donors. It's so gratifying when people smile as they give. This year I met a lovely woman who made a donation and then expressed concern for me and that I stay hydrated in light of the high temperatures we have been experiencing. She disappeared into the store and returned just a few minutes later with a bottle of cold water. A small gesture perhaps but it came from a huge well of kindness and compassion. Thank you, Heather.

There were many young families passing by and so often Mom or Dad would involve their young children in the actual giving, encouraging their little ones to put their money in the collection box. Almost every child smiled when thanked and I couldn't help but think what a wonderful life lesson in giving those parents had taught their child.

It's always so nice to welcome back the many summer residents who love our community as much as we permanent residents do. Almost without exception, the cottagers are a happy and enthusiastic lot, so delighted at being back at the cottage. Many cottagers, at one time or another,

have needed medical care at the hospital.

One donor shared that she had broken a bone just two weeks ago and couldn't say enough about the wonderful care she received at the Haliburton Hospital. We hear countless stories along that line from them and it truly spurs us on in our volunteer activities. I send my heartfelt thanks to all.

Judy Skinner
Haliburton

The Night Sky

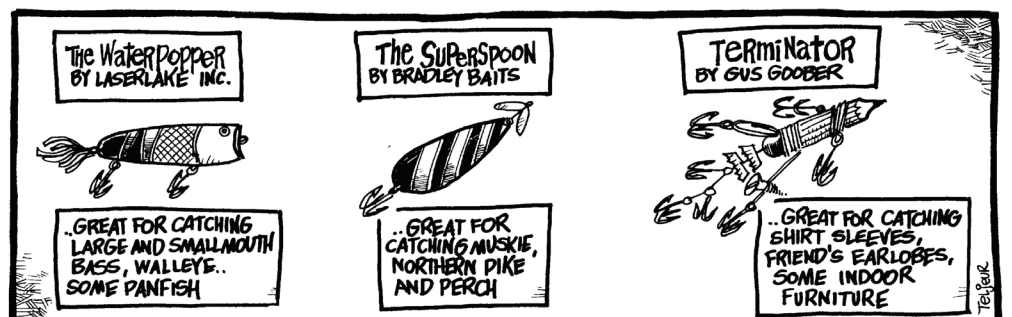
A visitor from space swept across the sky last week, a meteor. From the analysis of its path, pieces of it may have reached the surface of our planet dropping across an area near Cardiff. Also called a falling star, the meteors we see in the night are small, usually the size of a grain of sand. Some that blaze bright may be the size of a pea but every so often something a little bigger comes along and survives the collision with our atmosphere dropping to Earth. It is estimated that 44,000 kg of meteor material falls on earth each day, most of it no more than heavy dust.

The moon moves across the sky this week meeting up with Jupiter and Saturn shining in the south.

The Haliburton Forest astronomy program runs Friday nights July and August. Visit www.haliburtonforest.com or call 1-800-631-2198 for more information.

Brian Mould Haliburton Forest Observatory

BOONIEVILLE



points of view

It was a cold and non-warmy night

LAST WEEKEND, Jenn and I were backcountry backpacking at Bruce Peninsula National Park. The place is beautiful, isolated, peaceful and rugged. On one night, however, it was also particularly cold. Here is a breakdown of the events that ensued.

6:25 p.m.: Dinner is done, water collected and purified, food bag hung out of reach of bears. Backpacks put away.

Jenn says, "It's too bad park rules prohibit a campfire. There's not a lot to do now."

6:26 p.m.: I nod and reply, "We could always talk about how my fishing season went."

6:26 p.m. and 17 seconds: I look off wondering how to begin then turn to Jenn but she is no longer there. From inside the tent I hear the sound of a sleeping bag being zipped up.

6:30 p.m.: I enter the tent.

Jenn is resting comfortably with her head on her backpacking pillow. She is decked out in flannel from head to toe and is nestled in an insulated sleeping bag liner, which is inside her sleeping bag. I am reminded of a Russian Nesting Doll. All this is atop an inflatable mattress which keeps her three inches off the cold floor of the tent.

"I hope I will be warm," she says.

6:31 p.m.: I strip down to my Power Rangers boxer briefs and get inside my sleeping bag, which is separated from the ground by a quarter inch of material made in 1947 when the term insulation was

thrown around a little more freely. Having deemed a pillow unneeded on a backpacking trip, I place my head on a pair of smelly socks and regard Jenn with a look of moral superiority.

7:31 p.m.: I resort to my emergency cold weather survival plan to keep warm in the tent.

7:34 p.m.: Jenn demands I stop doing the Chicken Dance.

10:08 p.m.: Jenn observes that her 300 or so layers of flannel might not be enough to keep her at a level of warmth that is comfortable, although to be honest, I am not sure I heard that correctly over my chattering teeth.

10:09 p.m.: Jenn puts on more clothing.

2 a.m.: I finally get warm.

2:01 a.m.: Nature calls. I leave the tent to answer.

2:04 a.m.: I return and reclaim my sleeping bag. A combination of exhaustion from the day's hike and hypothermia allow me to drift off in slumber and dream of how comparatively warm Antarctica must be.

3:00 a.m.: I wake and remember that I packed a pair of insulated long johns and top for just such an occasion.

3:01 a.m.: Jenn wakes as I am rifling through my backpack and asks what I'm doing. I tell her about my long johns and top.

3:02 a.m.: Jenn goes to sleep quite pleased that my long johns and top fit her perfectly.

4:00 a.m.: She wakes and says, "That darn woodpecker woke me up." I do not have the heart to tell her that she is hearing my knees knocking.

She then complains of being cold, though judging from the layers of clothes she is wearing and the non-bluish tone of her skin, she has no idea of the meaning of the word.

4:01 a.m.: She suggests we zip together our sleeping bags so that she can exploit my remaining body heat.

4:02 a.m.: Having done so, she asks me to go outside and find a bear that might consider sharing its body heat.

4:03 a.m.: I begin telling her about the technical aspects of fly fishing for smallmouth bass.

4:05 a.m.: She falls asleep till dawn.



steve galea

Loon Tales



pic of the past

This week's pic of the past is of a teacher at the Gooderham Public School at the turn of the 20th century (the early 1900s). Mr. Watson sent this photo of himself to two of his former students, Meta and Viola Valleau, in December 1917. He complains that since he's not considered "a very good fighter" he is still teaching near his home of Trenton. "Saw Miss Dowswell yesterday," he writes. "She has quit teaching since mid-summer. Remember me to your parents. I would be glad to hear from you any time. Honest, this is the first [photo] I have taken of myself. Did you know who it was?" This photo previously appeared in the *Echo* in 2004 and was originally contributed to the paper by Barbara Taft, daughter of Meta Valleau.

letters to the editor

Thank you to those who helped

To the Editor:

As a Haliburton year-round resident, I've known for a long time how supportive a community this is.

Recently I experienced this first-hand. A tree fell on the power line near our home and the sparks ignited a grass fire which the wind quickly swept towards us. Immediately cars began stopping and people ran to our aid, shovelling and raking to try and stop the advancing flames. No water was available since the power was out and as we know the well pump does not run with-

out power. Soon our volunteer fire department arrived and began dousing the flames but people kept stopping and offering help. The police arrived to direct traffic and keep people safe. The fire was quickly controlled and the danger mitigated thanks to these caring people.

So I would like to send a big "thank you" to all those who stopped to help, to our tireless fire fighters and police. You truly showed how caring and supportive this community is.

Thank you.

Gord Forbes
Haliburton

BOONIEVILLE

