

## Bill Rea ? Vacation blues

One of the many frustrating things about life is the way that things to which we look forward seem to take their own sweet time coming, and then seem to be over just like that.

Don't you find that vacations are a lot like that?

I ought to know, as I spent last week doing nothing, like you're supposed to when on vacation, with a couple of exceptions. My wife and I spent part of the time away north of here, so we were able to eat quite well, get in some swimming, went out for a quick paddle in a kayak built for two (I think that was a first for Beth) and generally tried to spend our time doing as little as possible. We got in some reading, and I spent a couple of days up there trying to get caught up on the household books. I made some progress, but there's still a lot to be done.

Oh yeah, I also worked.

Caledon council met last Tuesday. It would have been possible to get a colleague to cover for me for part of the meeting, but the truth is the timelines just weren't going to work, so I worked.

We were up bright and early that morning, hopped in the car, stopped for coffee in Barrie, arriving in the council tables in plenty of time for the closed session to start, and it went on for the better part of an hour. Beth was with me. She didn't want to stay up north all by herself for the day. Besides, we had taken her car on the trip north, so I didn't have the authority to tell her she couldn't come. Even if I had the authority, there's no way she would have let me exercise it.

Beth had a few errands to run, which included checking that all was well with our house in our absence (a major impediment to my relaxing when I'm away from home is worrying about what's going on at home when I'm not around).

Besides, the rain came down in buckets that day, which would have ruled out any outdoor activities. It was even too wet to go swimming.

The meeting went a little longer than I had anticipated, which just demonstrates that my skills at timing things is about as good as my ability to predict election results.

During the day, and in the days that have followed, Beth has received lots of accolades. Not much for the guy who worked on his vacation time.

Don't worry. I knew what I was getting into.

Don't worry too much about Beth either. She did marry me, but she had a pretty good idea what she was getting into as well.

Welcome to inflation

The vacation time that I have just devoted the last several paragraphs describing in mindless detail included a weekend at home. You married men reading this will appreciate what I'm about to describe, as Beth handed me a banker's box and a recycling bag, and directed me to bring some order to the disordered chaos that was one of the upstairs rooms. It's mainly been used as a dumping ground for paper, mostly of a financial nature, for several years. Demands of work forced me to let certain bookkeeping chores slide for a number of years. That was the explanation for the work on the household books I was doing up north, during the days I wasn't covering council (with Beth's permission, of course).

So, brandishing the banker's box and recycling bag, I went upstairs to do as I was bid (after 16 years of marital bliss, I can assure you that I have learned my place).

The amazing thing about paper, especially the stuff you've let pile up for a couple of years, is just what you're going to uncover. And one of the great problems in that situation, if the piece of paper contains writing, you are obliged to read it, hoping that gives some clue as to why you kept it. And sometimes it doesn't.

But one thing I came upon was a Visa statement, dated Aug. 5, 1997. How the hell that stayed out of the shredder I'll never understand. But the trip down Memory Lane that it represented was, to say the least, intriguing. To say the most, I would simply ask how many of you could get nostalgic over a 17-year-old Visa statement?

Oh by the way, in keeping with the practice I have followed since I started packing plastic, that bill was paid in full and on time.

The bill was for \$1,328.89. And before any of you shrug that off, I should mention that it covered all of the expenses for my vacation that year. I should also point out that in those days, my holidays, when I actually travelled anywhere, was usually for four or five days, and took me to a place I could get to by car. And in those days, I was not in the habit of sneaking back to work to cover council meetings (but I wasn't working in Caledon in those days).

I remember that holiday well. It was a little more than a month after Beth and I became engaged, and we actually started serious wedding planning on the balcony of our room at the Ameri-Cana resort in Niagara Falls (that's where we set the date).

The whole tab for the four-day holiday for two, according to my Visa statement at the time, came to \$795.82. That includes

accommodation and meals, including dinner atop the Skylon the first night we were there (at almost \$100, with no appetizers or desert, and me having a beer, I remember thinking it was damned expensive). And I have not factored in gas. We took Beth's car because she had air conditioning in those days (I was far too cheap for that). But I'm sure I would have been enough of a sport to have put the gas for Beth's car during the trip on my Visa, had the need to gas up reared its head (according to the dates on the Visa statement, it didn't). But remember, I was enough of a sport to take my beloved wife to a Caledon council meeting during our vacation last week.

And while we're on the topic of gas, the Visa bill of which I have been writing about had five such charges. In those days, I drove a Geo Metro, which was about the best you could have done in terms of fuel efficiency. I'm in the habit (probably a bad one) of letting the tank in my car get very close to empty before getting gas. Thus, when I gas-up, I usually get a full tank. And if memory serves, it took a little more than 30 litres to fill the Geo-Metro's tank.

Get ready to yearn for the good old days! During the period covered by the Visa statement we've been dealing with, I got gas five times, and the highest amount I paid for 30 some-odd litres was \$16.02. When was the last time a sum of money like that filled your gas tank? Have I ruined your day yet?

And for you older folks interested in nostalgia, the statement indicates I laid out \$15.51 for something at Eaton's. I have no idea what that would have been, and I can't contact Eaton's to find out.

Don't you wish you could still shop at Eaton's or get a tank of gas for less than \$20?

I wish I was still on vacation

