

Our words, promises and handshakes

by MARK PAVILONS

There are times that I miss the way things used to be.

I don't want to sound old-fashioned or stuck in the past, but there is a lot to be said about many qualities that people held dear, just a couple of decades ago.

In my youth, we assumed that almost everyone was honest. And it wasn't that long ago when a person's word meant something.

I'm not saying that today people lie, cheat, brag and exaggerate, but they do. Today's promises tend to come with a caveat or a condition. I get it, we're busy, have too much on our plates and often just can't make a firm commitment.

There's nothing wrong with admitting you can't meet a deadline, or do something on short notice. Our schedules tend to be so tight these days, that just one delay or missed appointment is like a domino effect, toppling our entire day. But, there are solutions if you look for them and place your faith in your fellow men and women.

Our newspapers have small staff, so we can't always make it to every single meeting, photo opportunity or celebration. The public is more than happy to pitch in, supply some information and even take photos on their smart phones. Together, things get done, they get covered and they get in the paper. And that makes everyone happy.

This reminds me of 'Scottie,' the engineer on the Starship Enterprise, who always told the captain that tasks take twice as long as they actually do. That way, when he gets it done early, he looks good! None of us are repairing space ships or warp drives, but it's not a bad thing to keep in mind when giving your boss an estimate.

I spoke to some local professionals recently at the Chamber of Commerce awards night. They have known and experienced the pace of life, and realistic expectations from people on our country's east and west coasts. When told that repairs, estimates and renovations may take longer than expected, the Eastern Coasters simply take it in stride and go with the flow. If you tell a customer in the GTA you may be an hour or two late, they'll go off the rails.

I don't really understand the correlation between the size of an urban area and its lack of patience. If someone can explain that to me, I'd appreciate it.

There's no question that we southern Ontarians have missed something along the way. We don't take breaks; our vacations are short, and we work to pay the bills. We stress over everything.

Our counterparts take time to pause and reflect and maybe even play hooky from work now and then. They spend more time with family and friends and just hang out.

There was a time when that was the case for me and my group of friends. But that was 30 years ago!

When was the last time you sealed a deal or contract with a handshake?

Lucky for me, it was just a couple of weeks ago.

A used car came along that I just couldn't resist. I wasn't actively shopping for one, but my current ride is on its last legs. I figured better to be safe than sorry. I had visions of my car breaking down at the side of some dark, deserted road one night.

As it happened, the same person who sold me my current car came waltzing into the office on an unrelated matter. He mentioned in passing he came across a gem of a car. This 2005 Buick Century was meticulously cared for by its owner and never saw a winter. It has 35,000 original kilometres!

This was the quickest transaction of this magnitude I ever made. I didn't need a lot of convincing and I felt I just couldn't pass it up.

I didn't have the money available to give to him up-front, so we came to an arrangement and it was sealed with a handshake.

Richard Branson said in business all you have is your reputation, so it's important that you keep your word.

Enough said. Thanks to Norm at King Road Auto.

There was a time when this simple act was enough.

It even worked at the grocery store, with a tradesperson or even at the bank. Try that today with your mortgage specialist!

I remember my parents telling me that when they were starting out living in Roncesvalles, they had a tab at the local grocer, who kept track on a piece of paper. They paid when they could, no worries. That's just how it was.

Those days are long gone, but if you look around, you might be pleasantly surprised. I have found that our insurance company staff have been very accessible and accommodating, much more than anyone I have used in the past. Kudos to the staff at Desjardins in King City and Anna Raeli.

I have always been a firm believer in giving credit where it's due. I also believe that one good turn deserves another.

In my line of work, I can't always please everyone all the time. But I tell everyone, quite frankly, that if I can help you I will.

I see my role as helping to promote everyone in the community, since we all have a vested interest in King's success. We need to support one another much more than hinder, cheat or criticize.

In this digital age, I fear that a handshake, smile and promises are fading from the landscape. Say it ain't so!