

The Dog Days of Summer

By **Sherlyn Roman**

Here in Caledon, with a few of our bigger events behind us and not much on the radar until the end of July, we find ourselves smack dab in the middle of the so-called 'dog days of summer.' This has me thinking first of all, why are they called 'dog days,' and secondly, is it getting hotter around here or what? I'm not just talking about the temperature either. With electoral heat ramping up exponentially in the US and the recent attempt on Donald Trump's life, the heat is rising both literally and figuratively. In no particular order, here are a few things that have me thinking about dog-like days.

Astronomy fans may already know that the 'dog days' of summer have celestial roots. This period between July and early September is linked to the time the constellation Canis Major, the principal star of which is Sirius, appears in the night sky. The ancient Romans referred to this time as "dies caniculares" or "days of the dog star," which it would appear, has now simply become dog days. It's a time characterized by heat, humidity, thunderstorms, lethargy and yes, apparently also by mad dogs. Now you know.

Speaking of mad dogs, madness and storms, for some it may feel like madness is exactly what we are witnessing south of the border. In the heat of a July day, the perfect storm of a visible sniper on a rooftop, pointed out by concerned rally attendees, was still somehow able to take a shot that grazed the ear of Donald Trump. As assassination attempts go it was pretty damn close and is a sign of the chaos that appears to reign in the US right now. As we learn more about Project 2025 and the Heritage Foundation, with the case of the stolen confidential files stacked in a Mar-a-lago bathroom now dismissed by a Trump-appointed judge, President Biden's ongoing struggles, and an already iconic picture of a bloodied Trump raising his fist after the shots rang out, I think we should all be very, very concerned. The US is in serious trouble.

As for the lazy, hazy days of summer, it appears some cliches are more true than others. I bumped into an acquaintance who, like me, experienced a health scare earlier this year. They are taking some time off to re-evaluate life. I'm attempting to do the same with limited success, but why is that? Why does it so often take a major health scare for us to slow down, and 'stop to smell the roses.' Summer is the perfect time to do that yet humans are depressingly similar; running on the perpetual hamster wheel with a million excuses as to why we're so busy, promising ourselves we'll 'take a break when?' I've got news for you; your health will force you to take a break, but it won't be the beach vacation you hoped for. Do whatever your funds allow for now, whether that's a short, local staycation or a long-dreamed of vacation. I hope to soon take my own advice. After all, the world is a dumpster fire so we should enjoy it while we still can!

Speaking of dumpster fires, now more than ever might be a really good time to think about what's good, instead of what's not. Even if right at this moment you can only think of one good thing 'the power of one can be astronomical. Just one voice, one comment, one card in the mail (remember mail?) can have such an uplifting effect on one's psyche. One compliment, one sincerely expressed thank you, one 'here, let me get the door for you,' is sometimes all it takes to change the course of one person's day. What does it cost us to be nice? Absolutely nothing but the impact? Immeasurable. Kindness is sadly lacking in many of our interactions with people these days, particularly so on social media. It's hot outside, tempers and temperatures are rising 'try kindness instead.

Finally, the dog days of summer also have me thinking about the weather. Surprise! It's something Canadians are VERY good at talking about, or more specifically, complaining about. In the winter, of course, it's the cold and snow that has us griping, and in the summer it's the heat.

Why anyone would complain about heat when for six months of the year we're freezing I have no idea, but that's just me. Although, to be fair, perhaps these last few years of dangerously hot heat waves are concerning and worthy of complaint. We seem to be stuck in a cycle: excessive heat, buckets of rain, lots of thunder and lightning, and repeat. Can you say climate change? It's real and it's worrisome. That said, and I might be dating myself, does anyone else remember the days of old when weather was just 'hot,' or 'cold,' and 'rain' was just rain? There were no heat warnings, or alerts, no 'severe thunderstorm warnings in effect,' nor even dire

warnings of rainfall amounts ? ?up to 10 mm predicted!?! By the way, that's a whopping 1 cm of liquid, or for those still converting to imperial, about half an inch. Hardly the stuff of legendary, epic storms.

Nope, back in the day all we had was weatherman Dave Devall whose big trick was being somehow able to write the temperature backwards on an acrylic glass panel so that it was visible to us viewers on our TV screens. Talk about a party trick. Sometimes he'd even draw a cloud or some rain. I don't recall being warned very often, but if Dave said something was bad, you listened. These days, with every type of weather coming with its own alert or warning system, and our phones pinging constantly, I think we're becoming a tad complacent. But that could just be the heat talking, it is after all, the dog days of summer.