

LETTERS

Staying hopeful for St. Giles

Re: Former St. Giles United Church to be sold after a decade of debate, July 29

In a twist of fate, friendsofstgiles.ca learned in Ward 3 Coun. Nrinder Naan’s June 30 community update that the building we have been trying to save since it closed 11 years ago, is now listed on Realtor.ca for almost \$3 million! A surprise to us all for sure, as there is not a sign on the building to indicate, as is the normal custom.

Taxpayers, you and I have paid for countless police checks, fire hazard calls, roof climbers, hydro issues, break-ins, cleanups from industrial dumping, and a squatter community tent group in the back alley for *all* this time.

If sold, the city will collect taxes for the first time ever. It appears New Vision United Church has need of more money to continue renovating its music hall and the previous grant of \$900,000 from the city/taxpayers is not likely to be repeated.

So, they are finally giving up the ghost of St. Giles, and selling. Too bad it took so long, and is now in such a sorry state. We can only hope our dream of an active and much needed community centre/satellite library/mixed and affordable income housing centre may still occur, with an adaptive reuse, incorporating the beautiful shell of this stately structure that did so much good for so many, for more than 100 years. Our neighbourhood has suffered with her decline for far too long.
Janet E. Long, Hamilton

We need housing now

Re: Condo bailout is crony capitalism, July 31

Marco Navarro-Genie has strong opinions on the purchase of condo properties by the feds, but neatly avoids the subject of the status quo: What happens if nothing changes? The prices of those unsold condos ain’t coming down. Our country continues to enjoy both a huge stockpile of empty homes *and* homelessness side-by-side.

While I understand his glee at forcing developers to simply eat their losses, lets be real. If those developers were going bankrupt and forced to divest themselves of those empty skyrises at bargain-basement prices, it would have happened by now. One only need look around at the plethora of vacant buildings in Hamilton to appreciate the truth; property owners will happily sit on empty properties for decades with no profit. While his argument of trying to drive housing prices down makes some sense in the abstract, we need places for people to live *now*. Waiting around for a market correction that may come in the next decade helps no one.
David La Rush, Hamilton

Put a deposit on plastic bottles

Re: Battery makers settle after missing targets, July 30

It took the threat of major fines for three of our biggest battery manufacturers to agree to recycle more in exchange for lower penalties. Even though consumers have already paid recycling fees for years for proper disposal. All while the Ford government has chosen to hamper recycling efforts by lowering targets and refusing to expand blue box collection in multi-use buildings or in public spaces. So logically, Ontario needs to bring in a refundable plastic beverage bottle deposit program like most other provinces. Left to their own volition, manufacturers are not concerned with being environmentally responsible regarding their own product and end of life disposal.

Plastic recycling is an abysmal 19 per cent recovery, thus there needs be an incentive to ensure a higher result. A nominal deposit may encourage the purchaser to return them or they will definitely be rescued when it’s set out in the blue box by our local nocturnal entrepreneurs.
Amber Morrison, Hamilton

Chickening out in Jerseyville

Re: Order to eliminate backyard hens stirs debate among Jerseyville residents, July 29

No chickens allowed in Jerseyville? How ludicrous! People in New York City have chickens. Aside from being pets, being able to provide more food for ourselves is a good thing.
Loreen Richer, Alberton, Ont.

Happy to show gratitude

Six mornings a week, every month, every year, I find The Hamilton Spectator has been promptly delivered to my home. Regardless of the darkness of the night, the snow-filled, uncleared roads and sidewalks, the ferocious wind-driven rains, through the unbearable cold of winter and the sweaty humidity of summer, The Spec carrier has fulfilled their duty.

Then I think about how after a recent mediocre dinner at a restaurant, I was handed a bill for \$120. Then I am expected to include payment of a tip of at least 18 per cent (including on the 13 per cent tax) to someone already earning a decent wage and whom I may never need to see again.

So, I thought about my faceless Spectator carrier, and how I owe them more than a thought of gratitude. The next day I left a generous bonus and thank-you note at our door. I encourage readers to consider doing the same, as a display of mid-year appreciation.
Greg Parker, Grimsby

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THOMAS FROESE

Playing hockey in this 2012 scene from *East Africa* is Thomas Froese and his wife Jean Chamberlain Froese. Writing about their 25th anniversary and marriage, Froese notes, “It’s never perfect. I have gaps. She has gaps. Together we fill each other’s gaps.”

How a chance meeting turned into a 25-year bond



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Before the hockey photo, there was this other one.

There’s an attractive young lady on a boat. She’s a worthwhile catch, according to my friend who’s showing me. “That’s Jean,” he said. I was intrigued.

She’s leaning against a wall on this houseboat, looking into the camera with a certain energy, like she’s sure of something. Anyone could see it, this aura about her, even though these things are hidden.

So I phoned her, as reporters do, cold. Why not? Invited her to a group camping weekend. She couldn’t come, but soon I was writing about her travels and work as an obstetrician, a baby catcher, helping vulnerable mothers in hard places, overseas. I wrote plenty, so my editor asked, “Are you dating this woman?”

One evening we were to meet friends at a ball game, but nobody showed. So we enjoyed dinner and Victoria Day fireworks before, that night, I showed her the newsroom. That summer she invited me to a wedding. I’m no socialite, or singer, but at the reception I decided to go to the podium and sing for everyone about a cow’s love for steak sauce. To impress Jean. Imagine! Crazy.

Later, she’s in the Middle East, in

Yemen. When I told my editor I’d visit her, he almost swallowed his gum. Jean’s friends gave me Air Miles points. No cost. I’d never had friends like it. I eventually told my newsroom colleagues I was leaving to marry and work in Yemen. They looked at me with blank faces.

My friends wished me well and everything, but couldn’t believe it either. I’d been single forever. Take your time. Don’t chase love for wrong reasons. That was me. Now some mystery was knitting together this deepening friendship.

It’s still there, this friendship. Not that marriage doesn’t need some tigers of the heart and the loins. It does. But you need to fit intellectually and emotionally and spiritually. Even socially, although some of us need our quiet space.

It’s never perfect. I have gaps. She has gaps. Together we fill each other’s gaps. This is relational gap theory. I’m no expert. Who is? But on Wednesday we celebrated our 25th. It can be done.

Thursday, by the way, was World Friendship Day. Just saying.

Twenty years before our wedding, Charles and Di, the tumultuous royals, wed on July 29. I didn’t know this 25 years ago when I asked that paper’s publisher if I could run some special editions with a fun story for our upcoming engagement.

“Give us \$100 to change the press plates,” the publisher told me. “OK,” I said.

The half made-up story of Jean and myself as children was head-

lined “Royal Wedding!” It filled the front page. Actors read the newspapers in a theatre lobby. Radio announced it. Complete strangers were happy to help with it all, my engagement surprise. Later I discovered the Charles and Di coincidence and didn’t know what to think.

Life speaks in strange ways. You’re eating your cereal, or standing in the shower, or walking down the sidewalk, and some ordinary moment shows you something new. Something fresh.

One day when I was single I imagined the acronym G-O-A-L-I-E. It was like a quirky prayer for my future partner. “G” for a woman with a godly, that is generous, heart. “O” for outgoing. “A” to be attractive to me. “L” to genuinely love life. “I” for intelligent. “E” for equally attracted to me.

Years later, in *East Africa*, someone took a photo of us playing hockey, hard at it. Those games with Ugandan friends were the best times. And there’s Jean in net. Much later, in a quiet moment, I saw, really saw, that photo. It seemed sacred. I’d found my goalie. Somehow. Go figure.

One minute you’re looking at a pretty woman on a boat. The next, it’s your 25th and you’re telling the world how mystery rules. And how you can’t imagine life without her.

Happy Anniversary to us.
THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT THOMASFROESE.COM AND THOMASFROESE.SUBSTACK.COM.

Grateful for an unexpected response



PRABHNOOR KAUR
OPINION

They say you don’t truly know a community until you need it.

About a month ago I wrote about my immigration journey in the Waterloo Region Record, and the uncertainty surrounding my post-graduation work permit, which was set to expire on July 12.

I expected readers to have opinions. I didn’t expect them to fill my inbox.

In the days that followed, dozens of emails arrived from people across the region and Ontario. Some wished me luck. Others shared their own immigration stories. Many thanked me for speaking openly about an experience they said too many people go through quietly.

I read every message. Several readers also wrote letters to the editor to express their support.

When I submitted my work permit extension application on July 10, many of those messages became part of it.

I included letters of support from

community members who believed my work and my commitment to this community deserved to be considered.

My post-graduation work permit has now expired, but because my extension application was submitted before that happened, I am authorized to continue working while Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada processes my application.

So, for now, I am still here; still covering council meetings; still asking questions.

While my own situation is now in the hands of immigration officials, thousands of international graduates across Canada continue to face the same uncertainty I wrote about last month.

Many completed their education, followed the rules and built careers here after Canada encouraged international students to stay.

Today, some are finding themselves unable to remain in the country despite taking the very pathway they were once told to follow.

In several cities, graduates have gathered in protests. They have called for more certainty and asked governments to recognize the investments they made and the lives they have built here.

That uncertainty hasn’t disappeared simply because my own application is pending. But something else happened during the past month that I didn’t expect.

On June 29, I wrote about the hateful comments I received after I posted a video about immigration changes. Some comments questioned whether I belonged here and others told me to leave Canada altogether.

But the response to my column showed me another side of this country: readers who took the time to write thoughtful emails, people who disagreed with one another on immigration policy but still believed compassion had a place in the conversation, strangers who reminded me that behind the headlines are real people trying to build honest lives.

Canada has never been perfect. No country is. But one of the reasons I chose to build a life here was the belief that hard work matters. Canadians are willing to judge others by their character rather than where they were born.

During the past month, many readers reminded me why I believed that in the first place.

I don’t know how my application will be decided, and I won’t pretend otherwise.

What I do know is this: when I shared one of the most difficult moments of my life, this community answered with kindness. And for that, I will always be grateful.
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