

Graffiti phantoms slip up at 'home of homes'



MAJOR'S CORNER
Maj. (retired)
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I want you to know that generally I am at home with my club. In fact, that is why I refer to it as "the home of homes."

However, I have become tired of the fatuous remarks I hear around the place. The other day as I was about to bring a silver yum-yum to my cracked lips I heard a

mem as he passed me say, "If Mother keeps drooling, it is assisted living no matter what she says."

I put the martini down sadly and stared at the baroque ceiling. I think his mother deserves better than this cruel cut, especially a public one.

For the record, there are now a few mems planted here who have thrown self-consciousness aside and proudly wear drool cups attached to soft collars. One chap goes so far as to show up each week with a different coloured cup and then looks hard at fellow mems as if daring them to say something.

Far too often I also hear mems making comments about their wives. Now most thinking chaps really do not

want to be made aware of the inner workings of others' marriages as it is enough for us to deal with our own — things such as "Since my wife stopped shaving, it is not unlike being married to my brother-in-law." These are secrets that must be kept behind the high wall of marriage; besides, it puts one off lunch.

As I am speaking my mind this Sunday morning, I feel the country should reconsider the noose as a way of stopping graffiti. Normally I am quite proud of the way Canada has done away with the death penalty, but waking up after a Saturday of back-breaking painting the front yard fence to see an insult upon said fence makes one yearn for the old trap door. My

particular outrage read "Kill the rich."

First of all, we are not rich, not by today's standards, we simply have a nice house and savings from various jobs over the years. The hard cheese for me is two doors down nests David Derivative, a banker who redefines slippery and has made millions.

Why pick on me and not him? Not very Christian, I agree, but it is frustrating that the idiot street artist could not even deface the correct house. Bah.

I recall that we at one time had a problem with graffiti at the club, especially the south wall on Humbolt Street. I think the scrawled message was along the lines of "Eat the fatties," lacking in originality but still.

The poor club had to repaint more than a few times, which began to play havoc with the exchequer. However, over the horizon at a fair trot came our savior, Mrs. Hynde-Quarters. Her unusual solution was to paint the wall in question with vaseline, which brought more than a few guffaws, but the perpetrators were stared down by her friend, the vast-bosomed Mrs. ffrangington-Davis.

Several reputable painting companies refused to have anything to do with the job as they felt it would somehow demean their craft. So the stupefied wine steward and a barman were press-ganged and handed long brushes with the pregnant waitress holding the ladder.

Nothing much happened for a week if one discounts a few outraged crows, until the night of the club "sing-along." Just as the Brigadier started the fourth verse of Paddy's Donkey in his shaky baritone, something shot by the window, followed by another something. A third phantom caught his belt on the window latch and was left looking at us and we at him.

A dismissed waiter and two friends were taken into custody but slipped from their cuffs because of the petroleum jelly and are now rumoured to dwell in an up-Island cave. We have had no further trouble with graffiti at the club, just my fence. Shame on you. majornigelsb@gmail.com twitter @TheYYJMajor

As I approach 89, I count my blessings and look ahead



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I think it was W.R. Spencer who said a man needed three things to count himself truly blessed — a good wife, good children and good friends. Having shared all three, I stand among those thrice blessed.

Good fortune had more to do with my well blessed life than any personal effort on my part. I took each blessing granted with grateful thanks and much joy. And I still do.

I know I'm one of the lucky ones as I look down what has been a long road of life and see a traffic light blinking amber warning that I'm approaching a major intersection. Having run into similar warning signals in my close to 89 years "on the road," I'm wondering if this latest amber will turn to green as I draw closer, or if it's going to flash a sudden red and end my journey.

My thoughts are not gloomy. The road already travelled has been a great one. A bit bumpy at times; one or two major potholes when loved companions or old friends could no longer walk with me. But by and large a wondrous journey — and one which continues wondrous — and joyful.

I remain truly blessed. I have a small enchanted garden I can sit in and smell the flowers while watching birds, drink, flutter and splash in a bird bath that welcomes them with fresh water every evening. Once



LYLE STAFFORD, TIMES COLONIST

From the Oak Bay Marina, the sunset affords a magnificent view of Mount Baker in Washington state. The walk from San Carlos Avenue to the marina is not a bad stroll for octogenarians, with its well-spaced benches that become more important as time goes by.

in a while as dusk creeps in, a raccoon family pads silently and barely visible beneath the bushes, presumably heading for an Oak Bay beach and a lick of salt.

Each morning this past spring and early summer, I have patrolled the front garden and driveway and cursed, less than cheerfully I confess, the latest deprivations of a small but voracious family of deer. One night they consumed all our carefully nurtured tulips, another every potted pansy and then, I assume for dessert, every rosebud as it emerged.

But even as I muttered

curses on all fawns and their mothers I understood how blessed I was to live in a city where deer wandered the night streets — and were far less dangerous than the footpads lurking in the side streets of other cities. And I confess to being amused as I noted deer have no colour preferences for tulips, but dark blue was the preferred dining hue for pansies. And daffodils were left untouched and geraniums only nibbled by spotted fawns who didn't know any better.

I realize how blessed I continue to be when I take a walk along the waterfront

from tiny San Carlos Avenue to the Oak Bay Marina and back. Not a marathon hike but, with well-spaced benches, not a bad stroll for octogenarians.

Benches become more important as time goes by. Willows Beach is great for that. A steady walk from one end of the promenade to the other with a mid-afternoon pot of tea and a side order of fries — or even a scone if you're diet conscious — at the Kinsmen's Tea Room.

I hope the Kinsmen know their efforts are missed when they shut up shop for the winter when hot choco-

late or a mug of tea or coffee would mark the perfect end to a windblown walk.

Another favourite, well-blessed walk is from anywhere along Dallas Road to the breakwater where the Ogden Point Café serves the best soup in town. We time that walk for between 11 a.m. and noon with a \$5 cup of chowder or the soup of the day for lunch. It's a blessing.

Then there's Beacon Hill Park, a year-round delight, rain or shine. At risk of being burned in effigy, I still think that great park would be enhanced with a tea room similar to Willows. An

enhanced blessing for sure.

My pace is much slower than it was, but it is still a pace — and I'm thankful for my reasonably good health and my ability to still appreciate the blessings of my good fortune.

And to be still able to recite to myself a couple of lines from Tennyson as I continue to stroll — as slowly as possible — to a final exit: "So many worlds, so much to do, so little done, such things to be."

And I hope to be able to keep walking until I've crossed another item or two off my bucket list before the light turns red.

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