

Facing adversity with nonchalant indifference



MARK PAVILONS

Lately, I've found myself being more apathetic, or at least mildly indifferent, to the goings-on around me. A few unforeseen expenses, car repairs and events unfolding not as expected, have left me somewhat deflated. Along with that loss of air pressure is a feeling of 'que sera, sera.' The sentiment, 'in for a penny, in for a pound' has also sprung to mind on more than one occasion. But, I refuse to be held hostage by stress, depression and life's challenges. I prefer keeping my mental dimmer switch on 'mellow medium.' I am altering my behaviour, opting instead for a detached and unconcerned approach. Today, money just doesn't seem to have the same value as it once did. Sure, it's just as hard to earn and save as it was decades ago, but it just doesn't seem worth very much. When I was a teenager, \$20 could get you gas for your car, a meal at a fast food restaurant, AND a six-pack of beer. For a young person in the 1980s, \$100 was a lot of money. Today, that barely scratches the surface of a person's daily requirements. You can't leave a car repair shop with a bill under \$500. A dinner out with the family will ding you for at least \$250. A new faucet for the bathroom, anywhere from \$80 to \$300. A current basement project has revealed the cost of lumber and drywall these days. My two daughters recently returned from a trip to Squamish, BC to see the sights and sounds of the west coast. Being on their own for two weeks really taught them a lesson in frugality. They were constantly dismayed at the cost of taxis, a simple outing, or ferry ride. I was aghast at the cost of a shuttle from Abbotsford to Squamish. Granted, it's a 90-minute drive and there are no direct bus trips between the two. Paying for the girls to get away from it all put a definite dent in the savings account, and pretty much sidelined any chance for the rest of us getting away this summer. I guess the 'summer of COVID' will be one to forget for many Canadians. Travel was simply not an option for many. Those lucky enough to have a cottage may have had extended holidays, depending on their work situation. For me, the highlight was sitting on the front porch, soaking up the setting sun, eating a bowl of meatballs. You know the ones - the pre-cooked frozen variety that you can put in the microwave. But there's always one or two that hide among the warm ones, still hard as an ice cube. The sunset was nice. This all may be construed as whining or complaining. But I'm merely painting a personal picture. Like art, our own individual stories are quite subjective. Not everyone gets it, or even cares. For us, it was also the summer of car chaos. Our reliance on the automobile is awful. My oldest daughter graduated from university and desperately wanted a set of wheels. Her tastes are, shall we say, unique. The end result was perfect for her, a compact car in 'Spirited Green Metallic.' Battery died. Also has to re-fasten a heat shield. My son had a very personal encounter with a deer one night in July. The end result was that his car made its departure from this earth and he is, alas, motionless, like poor Pluto after it got kicked out of our solar system. Car shopping can be quite the chore. It's frustrating at times. One would think responding to ads on Kijiji or autotrader is easy. Not so. 'Buyer beware' has never been more relevant than it is today. I have seen ads for cars that don't even exist, with scammers trying to squeeze a downpayment from someone before actually connecting. When car shopping, the term 'too good to be true' is definitely right on. My eyes widen when I see cars with low kilometres, only to be informed that the 100,000 kilometres are on the second engine, and the car itself has 300k on it. I have driven more than a dozen cars in my life and never once have I had to replace an engine or a transmission. Never have I driven more than 300,000 kilometres in one vehicle. I'm not sure where people are going, but to put on 30,000k a year on a car is shocking. And there's people who say they rear-ended someone and had the bumper replaced, but the car has never been in an accident. My wife's tried and true mini-van, which has seen our family through countless moves, vacations, long drives with the dogs, and adventures to university and back, was past due for many needed repairs. As a

veteran car owner, I'm well aware of the need for auto repairs. But why do they come all at once, like a hailstorm on a beautiful August afternoon? Who has \$3,000 lying around, itching to give to their favourite mechanic? Not many. And herein lies another of life's unnoticed dangers. How many cars are driving around with engine lights aglow; with loose bumpers, wheel nuts, mufflers, etc.? We hear of wheels flying off on the highway, often ending in tragedy. The reality is, vehicle maintenance is expensive and many people and small businesses these days just can't afford it. I know that's no excuse, but think about it. Does someone spend \$400 on a tail light lens when their hours have been cut back? Does a family give up back-to-school clothes in favour of new brakes? These are real world decisions made, or neglected, by real people, every day. Life is serious, challenging and expensive. Try to stay calm. I am happy to share my dismay with the rest of you. May I suggest taking a nonchalant, supercilious stance? What have you got to lose?