

editorial opinion

Hors d'oeuvres by Lynn Orr

Dog days and grouches

Why August got tagged as the "dog day month" hardly seems fair—either to the eighth month of the year or to man's best friend.

The label implies time spent leisurely basking in the sun or hiding from the sun, but inactive time nonetheless. I always think of some wooden porch with a large yellow house under the floor when I think of dog days. Or my childhood collie panting in the coolest part of the house.

Unfortunately, if you're house-keeping or on the job, presumably working in either case, inactivity is out. And that's where grouches come in. If there really is such a thing as dog days, then the working wheels ought to slow down to accommodate muggy weather when you don't want to work or good days when you want to play. But the world, at least the U.S. part of it, doesn't stop for August. And consequently, it's real competition for February as the most non-producing time of the year.

Persons looking forward to vacation are antsy and grouchy because they're not yet out there fishing or swimming or roaming. Those who've used up their vacation time wish they were back in the anticipation category.

HOUSEWIVES are stuck with crabby children who are generally bored about this time. And it's too hot to dust and vacuum or heat up the kitchen cooking. I'd be willing to bet that August is the top month for the fast food places.

Although assembly lines are often shut down about now, the ones that are running must be unbeatable in terms of "worst place to be in 93 degrees." Construction workers often find this the busiest time of the year, and my brick-laying brother-in-law tells me it's a tossup between August and January for most miserable working conditions. At least in January you know you'll get some time off for inclement weather. But who stops the job because of heat?

Crabbiness is the end result of this mess. Tempers flare; minor problems become major hurdles; and the Tigers don't help the situation.

The only truly happy people (those on vacation) aren't around to cheer up the rest of us.

The French, of course, practically disappear in August, almost totally vacating the cities for the countryside, and I'm starting to think that great Gallic tradition stems from preservation. What would happen if the volatile French faced August the way the rest of us face it? It might be 1789 all over again.

If you read to the end of this column looking for solutions, you're read on in vain. I have none. I don't know if the American system could stand the financial strain of closing down for a month. I don't approve of tranquilizers. And I'd never wish for winter weather.

Let's just do away with the hypocrisy of dog days, since only dogs had that luxury. And I'll try to get by without biting off anymore heads.

tinkering around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Adults in kids' clothes

I met Axle but I get the vague feeling that it must have been around the Fourth of July because I remember fireworks and crowds. And since I was 10 at the time, I can't think of any other human situation that fits that description.

Axle just sidled up to me and started talking away. Even at the age of 10, I had the uneasy feeling that he was really interviewing me. I was just looking around you. When your family wanted to rent an apartment, they searched for a long time. Remember? Tell me why they searched for six months.

"Well, they couldn't find a place they liked and could afford and one that would allow pets," I answered.

"You left something out. Remember, you were 12 years old and had a dog. And one apartment manager said that your family could keep the dog but..."

"But that I had to go," I finished.

"Yes, a lot of places won't allow children but that's just because some adults like to have it quiet and want to make sure that no one walks over their lawn or puts soap on their windows for Halloween."

"See, if you were born fully grown, your family wouldn't have that problem," he pointed out.

"Obviously," I said, hoping to be sarcastic.

"OK, try this example. Remember when you were 16 and went to the store to buy a new dress because you were going to visit relatives out West?"

"YES, I vaguely remember," I said.

"Remember how it took you a full half-hour to get waited on because the salesladies kept on passing you over for older customers. And when you did get someone to take your money, finally, she was rather curt about it," Axle said.

"But that's part of being a teenager. When you're little, you're cute. When you're an adult, you're an equal. But when you're a teenager, you're in between and no one really knows what they want from you," I said.

"But if you never had a childhood, you wouldn't have that problem," he said.

"And besides, when you're a teenager, you don't have as much money as an adult, and why should stores waste their time on someone who's

child. But since at home only a few persons had what you call a childhood, it was dispensed to make a study of it."

"WE WANTED to make sure that we were correct in assuming that childhood has precious few benefits by studying your system," he continued.

"Well?" I asked. "Does it?"

"Why you yourself know it doesn't. Why look around you. When your family wanted to rent an apartment, they searched for a long time. Remember? Tell me why they searched for six months."

"Well, they couldn't find a place they liked and could afford and one that would allow pets," I answered.

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not as profitable?" I asked. "That's why you get the best service when you go shopping with your mother?"

Axle was about to reply to this when I continued. "Look, you said that there were some people in your home who were children. Well, was it so bad?" I asked.

"Actually, they got to be children by accident and we treat it as a rare but short-lived form of madness. We just isolate them and give them things to keep them busy and out of everyone's way. When they progress to about what you call teenagers, we let them out with the stern warning that they shouldn't associate with adults."

"BUT BY THAT TIME, they don't want to be with adults. They seem to enjoy standing in groups on corners and staring at passers-by. At 10 o'clock we send our law enforcement persons out to herd them back to their barracks. If they promise to behave, we allow them to go to a movie or drink coffee in a restaurant. But since there are very few theaters and restaurants which want them, we find it more convenient to let them stand on corners," he said.

"For the most part, our scientists have developed a way to circumvent childhood. It works like a more sophisticated form of learning in your sleep by listening to a tape or record," Axle said.

"Just think of all the problems we avoid this way. We don't have to worry about hiring a babysitter or paying taxes to finance kindergartens. We don't have to worry about teenage marriages or juveniles drinking alcohol."

"And, we don't have to listen to the super-loud radios playing unharmonious music especially geared to a younger market. That means we don't have loud obnoxious super disc jockeys. You won't believe how surprised I was when I discovered that these were grown men acting that way in public," Axle said.

BUT I HAD HEARD ENOUGH. Dismayed and disbelieving, I left Axle leaning against the garden wall and hurried into the house.

"Wait, wait," shouted Axle. "I want to tell you how we solved the problem of where to put our senior citizens. See, we build this fortress on the outer edges of the city and..."

I didn't hear the rest. You don't listen to madmen.

My Cup of Tea

by Loraine McClish

Brailleists add human touch

This week's mail brought several personal notes and a couple of press releases from local Brailleists, which means the local residents who make up the Nardin Park Braille Transcribers are revving up for their one-a-year classes.

It's a year around no-vacation group which gathers all the newcomers it can find to begin a long session of hard study which will eventually assist the unsighted in becoming a more active part of a world they can't see.

One of my pieces of mail begins: "Imagine your life without books, no best sellers, no cookbooks, no magazines, no instruction manuals, or no textbooks for your children."

"My correspondence mentioned text books, and granted this has got to take priority, and does. But a very poignant note was struck when he mentioned, as an aside, that she had a request to put a love letter in Braille."

"My Braille friends can't say no to my request, so those little things in life that are treasures to each of us takes on another priority for the Brailleists dedicated to making the visually handicapped's life a little more pleasant."

"AND TO MAKE the blind person's life a little more fun, creative, and productive, requests are answered for cookbooks, bus schedules, music notation, sewing patterns, maps and food lists."

It all adds up to helping the blind get out and get along a little more independently. A big adjunct bonus to the textbooks.

The Brailleists are always on the lookout for a something new, and every year about this time, I hear of a new request that will be a standard item for the next year.

The something that's never been done before for this time around is high school graduation diplomas, given to seven blind students who completed their education in public schools.

An irony that comes out of this is expressed very well in one of my letters: "Please, can you help us? It's really a vicious circle you know: the more publicity we receive, the more people contact us for Braille materials; the more requests we have for Braille materials, the more new volunteer Brailleists we need to get the work out; and the more volunteers we need, the more publicity we need to attract the public."

BRaille IS an essential part of the everyday life of most blind people. They use it for pleasure reading, for education, for information. They use Braille notes for marking temperature settings on the stove, for labelling canned goods.

They use it for color-coding clothing in dress coordination, for labelling medicines, for phone numbers, for telling time, for correspondence and documents.

Unpaid volunteer Brailleists produce at least 75 percent of the Braille available in the United States, and if they didn't, there would be precious few textbooks, not to mention the likes of a love letter or a favorite recipe or a piece of music.

If you have a free afternoon on Sept. 20, the transcribers will show you how it's done, serve you some tea, and tell you how you can help. The time is 1 p.m. in Nardin Park United Methodist Church, on Middle Belt and 11 Mile.

The Farmington Area Arts Commission is thrilled to report that as a result of the cooperation of yourself and many, many others, our first Children's "Art-In" was a resounding success.

We had 650 children from the ages of two to 15 visit our tent with their parents and participate in one or more of the available activities.

It could never have happened without the support and, or assistance, such as you contributed.

Beverly L. Ellis, chairman

FINALLY, AFTER growing up with Axle, he finally 'fessed up on my 18th birthday.

"Axle, what's with you?" I had asked, perturbed with him because he didn't feel like cruising up and down Woodward, and he was the one who had a car.

"Axle," I continued, "somehow, you never really fit in. You were always charming the adults by being adult, even when you were 10. It was cute when you were 10, Ax, but this is too much."

He just leaned against the brick wall that cut our backyard off from the alley and smiled in that awfully superior way of his.

"Well, it always amused me the way you acted like a child," he smiled.

"But Axle, what did you expect," I began, again. Before I could begin another tirade, he interrupted me with an explanation.

"Where I come from, they've done a wonderful thing—they've abolished childhood. It was so convenient, too," he said. "But then, on Pluto, we only do things which are convenient."

I began to worry about Axle.

"It's true," he said. "I never was a

child. But since at home only a few persons had what you call a childhood, it was dispensed to make a study of it."

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First Art-In was success

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Beverly L. Ellis, chairman

From our readers

P.S. The article in the Founders Festival supplement was great. Thanks especially.

Coverage aided church art tour

Editor:

Thank you very much for your coverage of the (Our Lady of) Sorrows Art Tour and Ice Cream Social in the

Observer. Your story and Harry Mauthe's pictures did much to make our event a big success.

Many thanks.

Eleanor Dreyer, Art Tour chairman

Thanks to Police

Editor:

I would like to commend the Farmington-Farmington Hills Police, and anyone else responsible on the fast, efficient handling of the traffic after the show at the Founders Day Rodeo, Friday, July 22.

Sure wish the Detroit Police could have observed this—maybe I wouldn't hesitate again to go see our Tigers play ball if getting out of the parking lots wasn't such a traumatic experience.

MRS. GUY ARNOLD JR.
Farmington Hills

Farmington Observer

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