

April the cruelest month but January not far behind (29, 12, 12)

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My goodness, when you wrap up your career and become a retired senior - the days, months and years tend to race by like some of the fleeter horses that I bet on at the now retired Fort Erie Racetrack. Sad to see the racing industry gradually fold with all the spin-off jobs in smaller communities, but it seems that casino gambling is now de rigeur.



Yet another year has duly arrived, but not with near as much fanfare and dread as Y2K, a little over a decade ago. Then, we all waited with baited breath, hiding in our basements with our hordes of canned goods, semi-automatic weapons and whatever else we thought might get us through impending disaster that was sure to arrive. Turns out, even our computers were healthy, and life went on.

Despite poet T. S. Eliot's belief that April is the cruelest month, January is certainly not such an easy month either. There is the issue of bloated tummies, despite sincere resolutions to go easy on the cookies and liquid cheer. The tree has been jettisoned on the lawn where it lurks amidst wind, rain and snow, looking quite feeble like a fish out of water. The refrigerator, believe it or not, still has trace elements of turkey meat that needs quick attention now that the chocolate bars have all been consumed. (Our eldest brought chocolate treats from Switzerland!)

Football playoffs and Bowl games take their toll; nobody wants to venture outside anymore in the frosty air to take down light bulbs, and why were they put out anyway? The house needs work but certainly not decorations, particularly the type that adds to the already heavy duty hydro bill. Speaking of bills, the credit card exuberance that you enjoyed for a few frantic weeks of spending like a drunken sailor now comes home to roost like hens or chickens or with big spenders, Canada geese.

Nobody wants to venture near a mall again for at least six months, and yes, we know that you simply must go to return certain items that don't fit anymore (see Swiss chocolates), items that were purchased – you haven't the faintest idea why – items that are truly dumb. After all, who really needs a fish fashioned out of rubber that moves its lips and sings songs? Really!

Now is the time not only to come to terms with your asset-debit imbalance but also when we are routinely assailed and cajoled into purchasing RRSP's and for the grandparents, those thoughtful educational savings certificates for the dear grandchildren. Did you know that four years of University currently costs \$66,000? That's in Canada. Did you know that your brilliant grandkids will have to fork out well over \$66,000 for only one year at Harvard where they are surely destined if they have picked up a slight trace of your DNA?

This is also the time of year when you begin to think about your upcoming duty to pay federal (and provincial) taxes to keep the clowns happy and amused in Question Period, that short, paradoxical episode each day when nobody answers questions and you may readily observe how much value you are getting for your hard-earned dollar. Well, get ready to pay more for the Speaker to hire a few referees in pinstriped shirts to keep a modicum of order inside the raucous House.



T. S. Eliot also said, "An election is coming. Universal peace is declared and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry." He had a unique way of characterizing just who is the mouse and who is the cat, don't you think.

As if our ballot means anything anymore when a majority can be had with a minority of votes. Gees, 40% would give one a landslide and do you recall with some affection, the post Mulroney debacle when the PC's as they were named in those days, only garnered two seats out of 295! I wonder how Kim Campbell feels after Christmas. Take heart my friends, February is not far off.