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*Ottawa Outlook, nee North Hero News and World Review …. ……. Mostly stuff no one else would print.*

Monday, November 15, 2010 c:/nhn&wr10, 10wc20 (2010 NHN&WR letter/story/poem/card #17)

**Still Got Wheels!**

 We have definitely just gone through a very stressful situation.

 Back in February Ken made an improper left turn which resulted in an accident. Him bad. In August Ken turned in his Vermont license and received an Ontario license. In October the computer caught up with him. A letter is received. We quote.

 *“Due to your motor vehicle collision and your related conviction of an improper left turn, you are required to take a three part examination consisting of written, vision and road tests.”*  The computer was also aware of Ken’s age and didn’t like it too much.

 Good Grief. Well, … so be it. We are allowed 60 days for successful conclusion.

 An official drivers handbook is acquired from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, (197 pages).

 An Ontario drivers Study Guide is acquired, (200 sample test Q&A’s).

 The imminent vision test posed no particular stress. Subject doesn’t even wear glasses.

 The vision and written parts were addressed first. Much study for the written. Finally ready, … off to the Ministry of Transportation. at 1570 Walkley Road, Ottawa. (We don’t tell them we got lost on the way). Written test had two parts, 20 questions in each part. Missed one in each part. Hey, … that’s 95. Eye test, no problem, so far so good.

 Now the road test is addressed. It has 10 components: Turns, Lane changes, Business/Residential, Stop Intersection, Through Intersection, Expressway, Curve, Roadside Stop, Three-point turn, & Parallel park**. PARALLEL PARK!** Good grief, … haven’t done that for years. Stress begins. Onsite family were very supportive from the start. There was no, *“Good, … this will get that old guy off the road.”* It was all, *“Don’t worry, you’ll easily pass.”*

Well, … what can we say except **“WRONG”.** Driving as he has done for years, Ken had 40 errors. He is given a copy of his examination record.. . it has a note appended, *“Not enough observation.”*  Ken’s license is downgraded , he can’t drive without a fully licensed driver in the front seat. Leaving the car, he takes a taxi home feeling he’s no longer a full-fledged, functioning human.

Once home, … after a stiff drink, the examination report is analyzed. Good Grief, there were 329 error boxes on the form. The vast majority of his errors (36) were: No Mirror, No Blind Spot Check. No traffic check The other four were split between Late Signal and Set Handbrake. Well, … wasn’t quite as bad as it first seemed. In one week we were back to take the test again. Very grateful to neighbor Peter Manly for acting as licensed co-pilot on the endeavor. The second try was successful. Hooray!!! We passed! Still, … an unbelievable 21 errors, all of the ‘look around’ category. And we thought we were driving along like a “Bobble Head”. Well, … lesson learned, be observant.

Other side notes;

Metric system gave us pause. i.e. :Parallel park instructions said *“pull up next to the car in front of the space, about 1 imeter away”.* How far away is that?

With the advent of airbags, 10 & 2 has been replaced by 9 & 3.

Speed limits are given in kilometers, big numbers on our speedometer are MPH.

*“Park”* is not good enough alone, set the hand brake.

*“Keep your eyes on the road”,* has been replaced by “*Look around “.*

We will not throw away the study material, in two years we will do an encore.

 In all honesty this whole gambit caused Lucile and Ken many sleepless hours’. even though this same possibility, a driver-less life style, had been a big factor in the Vermont/Ottawa move[[1]](#footnote-1)[1]. However, when actually confronted with the prospect, it was frightening. In spite of the stress involved, we have no complaints regarding the system . It makes sense. Allowing people in their mid-eighties to mail in 4 year license renewals doesn’t. MTO personnel deserve an accolade . They were professional, courteous and helpful. (But not exactly looking forward to our next get-together.)

Lucile, Bailey and Ken.

219 Atlantis Ave

Ottawa, ON K2A 1X9

1. [1] This in spite of the existence of C.I.D.E.R., an organization in the Champlain Islands which does a wonderful job driving people in need around. And we speak first hand regarding the quality of their mature volunteer drivers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)