

## COMMENT

This understanding of her legal obligations is contrary to common sense. Further, McCallion was wilfully blind to the status of the ... development.

SUPERIOR COURT JUSTICE JOHN SPROAT, IN DISMISSING AN APPLICATION TO FIND MISSISSAUGA MAYOR HAZEL MCCALLION VIOLATED CONFLICT OF INTEREST BUT CRITICIZING HER ACTIONS NONETHELESS.

## Are you a fox or — better — a hedgehog?

McMaster president **Patrick Deane** addressed graduands at this week's convocations

This is a time to contemplate where you fit into our society and our world.

Where will your university education eventually find its value? How will your life as the proud holder of a McMaster degree address the questions facing our species and our planet?

Philosopher Ronald Dworkin identified the issue this way: "Living must be more than finding oneself pulled by unexamined habit through worn grooves of expectation and reward."

"No respectable or even intelligible theory of value," he wrote, "supposes that making and spending money has any value or importance in itself and almost everything people buy with that money lacks any importance as well."

Dworkin prompts us to consider the value of all we do, and to understand value in qualitative rather than quantitative terms.

Value resides in relationships — between people, between people and things, between people and ideas.

Beautifully, if bleakly, Dworkin expresses the notion this way: "The only value we can find in living in the foothills of death, as we do, is adverbial value." How we live is a question of value; that we live and die is merely a matter of fact.

Ronald Dworkin died in February. He was 81. In 2011, he offered an overview of his thinking in what would be his last major work, *Justice for Hedgehogs*.

The title comes from the ancient Greek poet Archilochus, who wrote: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." As Dworkin interprets it, this line contrasts two world views. The first regards phenomena as serial, separate and individual. The second sees them as connected and integrated, not a series but a singularity.

For Dworkin, "Value is one big thing."

I won't try to unpack this assertion in all its complexity, except to reiterate that value resides only in relationships.

The realm of ethics and morals is community, the network of our relationships. Moral and ethical values are of necessity interconnected and interdependent.

A life does not realize value through compartmentalization. To be ruthless in the office, yet loving in the family: What kind of a life is this? What can we say about its value? Only the hedgehog knows.

The point about the hedgehog's view is that the value of a life is the sum of its qualitative interactions with the world: immediate and remote, direct and indirect, private and public, professional and recreational.

Personal integrity resides in the consistency with which we apply ourselves in all of these realms.

Before today's ceremony, I'm certain many of you invested in some new clothes. I'm no shopping expert, but I know your deliberations at the rack will have included some thoughts about the value of the garments you were thinking of buying.

Most people would think about the price, which, as you weigh affordability and use, turns into an assessment of the garment's value.

Typically, the context within which we attribute value to a shirt or a dress is very narrow: it may be fashionable, it may "say" something about you, or it may simply delight your eye.

Value is neither essential nor universal, however. Things have different value for different people in different circumstances. In the kind of commercial moment I have just been describing, the hapless garment becomes simply a nexus for intersecting value propositions: yours, the store's, the manufacturer's, the advertiser's.

After the April 24 collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in Bangladesh, killing more than 1,100 workers, can shopping for clothes ever again be the kind of fox-like, somewhat self-involved activity I have been describing?

I thought of this recently in the men's section of a department store where for the first time I noticed that the majority of shirts available were made in Bangladesh, where a garment worker's life is sometimes cheap to her employer, and where the minimum monthly salary is 3,000 takas (\$38), or about half of what my Canadian retailer is asking me to pay for one shirt.

The Bangladesh tragedy is an illustration of why it is impossible to live a good life without taking the hedgehog's view, without understanding that value is "one big thing."

We must at all times behave as if it is "one big thing." I must consider the inhumane treatment of workers in Bangladesh as I stand in a store in Canada assessing the value of a garment I am being invited to purchase: if I do not do that, my value as a human being is diminished.

This convocation ceremony provides an opportunity to ask you to take your McMaster degrees and go out into the world — if not confident in your ability to transform the world, at least determined to live in it with integrity and dignity.

Farewell, hedgehogs.

## Weeding out the non-essentials

Life is like a garden — start by helping our community grow



DEIRDRE PIKE

Summertime and the livin' is easy, so they sing.

This year, more than others as I recall, I am longing for summer holidays. Amid a day trip or two to southern Ontario theatres and beaches, I am most excited about the unscheduled simple pleasures I'll enjoy around the house and 'hood, like weeding the front garden.

I enjoy weeding because it's a mindless activity that brings me in touch with the earth while getting to speak to the passersby who stop to admire something growing bright and beautifully. The fact that anything grows at all is a joy to me, given how the garden came about.

It was six years ago that my partner Renée and I were told she had a large tumour on her ovary and it was likely cancerous. We had been together less than a year at that time and it sure was a good test of our relationship.

Between the wait time for surgery and the good news we eventually heard (ovarian tumour borderline and uterine tumour cancerous but all gone with surgery — no chemo necessary), I ripped up all the grass in the front lawn and started planting flowers and vegetables.

Although I have my dad's gardening books, I hadn't actually read them at that point so I had no idea what should go where. I planted tomatoes beside hydrangeas, rhubarb beside hostas and onions beside black-eyed susans. It wasn't even planting season but I went full-steam ahead anyway, telling Renée with great hope and faith that she would be around next year to see this beautiful garden. She was and is and everything that grows is a tribute to her strength and beauty.

So I am busily wrapping up some projects at

For nearly 90,000 people in Hamilton who are living below the poverty line, there isn't money left over after rent and food to invest in a garden.

work to take a break in July. As I do so, I am once again reminded that summer's simple pleasures are not tangible for many people in our community. Take gardening, for instance.

For nearly 90,000 people in Hamilton who are living below the poverty line, many of them deeply below, there isn't money left over after rent and food to invest in a garden.

In my research this year on precarious employment, people in Riverdale were given cameras and asked to take photos to illustrate the impact this kind of unsteady, low wage, unsafe work has on their neighbourhoods. Many of the photos showed front yards with nary a flower.

The accompanying stories told of what life is like when one is working for Ontario's minimum wage, frozen for years now at \$10.25, and not earning a living wage currently calculated in Hamilton at \$14.95. By definition, a living wage allows people to participate more fully in community life and without it, summer pleasures will not be forthcoming. Thirty thousand people in this city are working and yet still poor, many needing food banks to help them out.

And food banks will be needed even more as summer brings about the shutting down of provincially supported student nutrition programs in schools and community centres until September. While the purpose of the programs is to provide nutritional food for all students, what about those kids who require them because they're both nutritionally and economically poor? They are facing a summer without that breakfast program to start their day or a snack to carry them through.

The living wage calculation for Hamilton includes money set aside for swimming lessons for families with kids because, like Prince William just declared, every child should learn how to swim for the aspects of both pleasure and safety. But with tens of thousands of our local families on social assistance or working for minimum wage, we know there are too many children who aren't able to access swimming lessons or local pools.

So as we get ready to enjoy all that Summer 2013 has to offer, let us find ways to continue supporting our neighbours who are not able to participate as fully in community life. Start with a visit to a food bank and a call to your MPP about thawing the freeze on minimum wage.

Deirdre Pike will be enjoying summer in "Renée's Garden" in the Strathcona neighbourhood. She can be reached at [dpikethespec@gmail.com](mailto:dpikethespec@gmail.com) or at 162 King William St., Suite 103, Hamilton, L8R 3N9.

## Faraway home is where the heart is

On this Father's Day, I know I have a 'daughter of the world'

THOMAS FROESE

It's 10 years later, dear Elizabeth, and it's true: Home is where your heart is. You've said it now in plain words. Your heart, with your imagination, is in our African home.

This is what I know you mean when you say here, with sorry sadness, "Daddy, the roads are too smooth here. Everything's too perfect. I'd rather be in a place where the roads are bumpy but more interesting."



Elizabeth Froese shortly after birth



Elizabeth Froese at (almost) 10

I hope that you don't mind me sharing this, by the way. Because while it's for you, it's also for anyone who's ever held a newborn and marvelled at the wonder of it, flesh of one's flesh and bone of one's bone, holding such joy, and pain too, that's part of parenthood.

Yes, 10 years ago you were born, so close to Father's Day. Ten years ago when, in a column in this newspaper, there was that photo of tiny you beside me, then the headline, "A Daughter of the World." From the beginning you crossed borders and lives.

Now it's your 10<sup>th</sup> and we're at your favourite restaurant on Upper James. The meal and the song and candle-blowing are finished. Our fortune cookies all come out and you open and read yours with the truth of it: "Home is where the heart is."

It's a perfect message, you say, just for you, a reminder of our African home, your home. It's that home with green space and blue sky and black friends and bumpy roads, that faraway home of more danger and less fear.

You remind me of Cissy, that beautiful girl from the Dickens story, *Hard Times*, the daughter of a horse breaker for a travelling circus. She lives among tightrope walkers and magicians, among fire-eaters and lady acrobats, even elephants and midgets.

Then later, as "Girl Number 20," she's in a classroom of empty knowledge with that teacher, Gradgrind, who asks her to share lifeless facts from some dry text about horses. Cissy, unknown to everyone, actually knows horses rather well because she's ridden horses. She's combed them. She's watched horses give birth and she's watched her father salve horses and rub them with liniment.

This, I think, is what you mean. Canada has a certain standard. It also has a stark beauty. But Canada can also be a Gradgrinder sort of place, hollow with walls within walls, a politically correct and anal place that's full of "me" and fads and handhelds and sex, but not very full of heroes or transcendence or magic, really, of any kind. It can be a place where we wear our seatbelts and sanitize our hands, but not where we easily see or touch or feel or heal anyone.

You have your fortune now, Liz. Home truly is where your heart is. Home, say the poets, is also the place we long to leave when we're young, then long to return to when we're old. One day when you're older you might think about this too, maybe while at some crossroads where, I pray, you'll, like those poets tell, choose the road less taken, bumpy or smooth, the road that will make all the difference in your life.

Yes, dear Liz, you are a daughter of the world. But you're not alone. You're never alone. And this is the message in all this.

You have company. There are others like you, your brother and sister and many others, really, so-called Third Culture Kids with a foot in two worlds, children both blessed and torn.

And not only Third Culture Kids, but immigrant children here so close to you, in Hamilton, even in your neighbourhood, your very school, like so many Canadians, kids with tastes and memories or maybe even nightmares from homes so far away.

This very much is also Canada's story. It has to be. So many of us, more than you realize, are in this together, away from home, travellers of one sort or another who are asking, "Where, really, is my home? And if my home is where my heart is, then why does my heart have to be so far away?"

Author and journalist Thomas Froese lives in Uganda most of the year. He and his family are on their annual stay in Hamilton. Follow his blogs on fatherhood at [www.dailydad.net](http://www.dailydad.net) and his columns on the developing world at [www.thomasfroese.com](http://www.thomasfroese.com)



## BRIEFLY

Short and excerpted comments sent to [letters@thespec.com](mailto:letters@thespec.com)

### To the critics of 1812 coverage

On one hand you quote the prime minister as inviting Canadians to learn more about this key chapter in our history. On the other hand you criticize the plethora of newspaper coverage.

How can one learn more if there is not more to learn from? If there was too much for you, you simply could have turned those pages and carried on with the rest of the paper.

With Canada's 150th birthday just a few years away, bear in mind there will be a plethora of articles. I can't help but wonder what you will have to say then.

CARL PLELI, STONEY CREEK

### Are British police better trained?

RE: Police don't shoot to wound (June 13).

Maybe Canadian police "aren't trained to do it." But confronted by two blood-covered, machete-wielding assassins British police did succeed in bringing them down by shooting them in the legs. Are they better trained?

ALAN M. MCPHERSON, ANCASTER

### James St. and the two-way hex

RE: Barton Street series

After contemplating for days about why Barton Street has floundered and James Street has prospered I can only think of one major difference between the two streets and that is James Street was an efficient one way street for a good part of the 20th and 21st century while Barton Street was always two way.

I just hope the two-way hex does not ruin James Street's vibrant future.

PAUL JOHN PHILLIPS, DUNDAS