

## COMMENT

## HEALTH CARE

## The value of a special place

We should all support community hospices

NANCY BROWN

I wrote this right after reading the editorial under The Spectator's View (Hospice investment adds up on all levels, June 17), as hospice care is a subject dear to my heart.

It was the day before Father's Day, a day especially sad for my son and daughter, as their father had died last September, from cancer — AML (leukemia). We mourn and miss him every day, but "special" days are even harder to get through.

It was just six months from his diagnosis to his death. The most part of those six months was spent in the cancer ward, C3, of the Juravinski Hospital, which is a marvelous, caring unit in itself, one that we should all be grateful we have access to.

When not in the hospital, he got to be home, albeit in a hospital bed, but at least at home, but with the knowledge that without white blood cell protection, he had no immunity to the "ever looming" infections that could take him back into the hospital at any time, day or night, and that there would be one that he wouldn't be able to escape from. He did not want to end his life in the hospital, possibly even in the frantic setting of the ER ward.

When that day came, we knew there was no more that could be done for him, and we knew he was too ill to come home again. In the early days, he knew this day was inevitable — he'd had no illusions that even the most aggressive chemo could save him, and so he had made the decision that the place he wanted to go to then, at that point, was the Bob Kemp Hospice, here in Hamilton, and we had made the arrangements.

On that day, we were so fortunate that he was able to go there at that time, that they had a room available for him. It is not a big place ... that is, not big in square footage, but immeasurable in every other way.

There are not enough superlatives to begin to describe what a wonderful place it is. It is not only the beautiful setting, with 10 large lovely rooms for "guests", but the overall design and atmosphere inside is like being in a cosy, welcoming lodge somewhere in Muskoka, while outside are beautiful gardens, a gazebo, endless bird feeders by the windows, a beautiful large water fountain alive with birds and plants, that can be seen and heard from some of the rooms, and believe me, all this serenity adds to the well-being of all who are there.

Of course, the staff, the caring, loving, compassionate, competent amazing human beings who work there, are the reason it is what it is! They become part of your family, and make the time you spend there with your loved one so much more bearable. My husband, Bruce, was "lucky" enough — and I know that sounds unreal for a man dying of cancer, but, yes, he was lucky enough for the first three weeks or to be able to "enjoy" — again, another unreal word — having friends and family come to see him there in this wonderful setting, to enjoy their company, to enjoy the wonderful people looking after him, and to be able, for a short while, to go back to "just being Bruce", and not Bruce "the cancer patient." And I could go back to just being his wife and not his "caregiver", and my kids and grandkids got to just "hang out" with him, in this loving safe place.

I know that I am basing all of this all on our family experience with the Bob Kemp Hospice, but I do not want you to lose sight of the fact that this is what a hospice experience is like, no matter what one you are in. They are truly the places to be at the "end of the journey" that you or your loved one is taking. Any and all of them must be supported. If the Wynne government is going to invest more money for hospices, then kudos to that government!

Each one of us, however, can also donate and give support. No matter how big or small the amount, it is all very much needed. Do anything you can think of to raise money to donate to a hospice. You will never know when it might be time for you or a family member to need to be there. Trust me, if you can end your days in one of these loving environments, you will be blessed indeed.

Nancy Brown lives in Hamilton

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## ISLAMOPHOBIA

## Ignorance is the enemy we should all be targeting

All Muslims are not to blame for violence perpetrated by those with hate in their hearts



RAZA KHAN

Ibn Rushd, a 12<sup>th</sup> century Muslim philosopher from Muslim Spain said: "Ignorance leads to fear. Fear leads to hate. Hate leads to violence."

So this suggests that ignorance ultimately leads to violence.

Last month I was surprised to learn of a London, Ont. Muslim woman who was allegedly spat on, punched and yelled at by a woman in a grocery store. She had her hijab and hair pulled and she received minor injuries. The perpetrator didn't seem to notice or care that the Muslim woman had her four-month old son with her. The victim managed to snap a cellphone photo of the perpetrating woman, showing a white woman in her late 30s wearing a "Canada" T-shirt. To see the alleged perpetrator's expression of seething hatred and shaking her hand at the Muslim woman is indeed shocking. London is a quiet, university town and one doesn't expect this kind of behaviour, let alone from a Canadian.

We also learned of a bloody severed head of a pig, gift wrapped in clear decorative cellophane, complete with tied and curled decorative ribbons and a greeting card "Bon appétit!" — left at the front door of a Quebec City mosque in the middle of the night.

Of course, the memory of 49 people callously murdered at the Pulse night club in Orlando remains fresh in our minds, again a senseless crime of hate.

Muslims despair that these tragic and

hateful incidents were occurring in the midst of Ramadan.

What is the anatomy of hate? What motivates someone to unleash and explode their hatred toward minority groups through physical violence — be they against women, native, the disabled, LGBT, blacks, Muslims or other? What triggered the woman in the grocery store to lash out at the Muslim woman? What motivated someone to take great time, effort and care to follow the steps: 1) acquire pig head — must be bloody, 2) buy cellophane wrapping and ribbons, 3) buy greeting card — must say "Bon Appétit!" on it, 4) drive to mosque at 2:30 a.m., 5) check if anyone is watching, and 6) dump "gift" at front door of mosque?

Is this the power and motivation of hate?

Unfortunately, these behaviours are not restricted to Canada. In Europe, five countries don't allow halal food (meat sacrificed according to Islamic tradition), three countries have bans on the hijab, one country has banned the Qur'an — the Muslim holy book — and another forbids the construction of minarets.

I was inspired by a Reuters photo a few weeks back showing an aerial shot of the larger than life Cadillac hearse carrying the larger than life body of the late Muhammad Ali in Louisville, Kentucky. The photo showed a white man holding one end of a large banner reaching over to touch the hearse. The banner he was carrying read "We love you Muhammad". "Wow. Do non-Muslims love Muhammad", I thought? No. They love Muhammad Ali — the boxer.

The world remembers Muhammad Ali not as a black Muslim American who was proud of his name, and his faith. They remember him as the greatest boxer of all time. They remember his rhymes, his boxing moves and his colourful and witty personality and for "making America great." They

remember him for standing up for peace and justice. However, the world seems to overlook that his love for Islam was his inspiration in his fight against war, violence, hate, racism and discrimination.

Muhammad Ali when given the honour of having his name immortalized in the famous Hollywood Walk of Fame, declined the honour to the amazement and shock of the facilitators. Why would Ali decline an honour that everyone in this world can only dream of? He said he shares the name of the beloved Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him — and did not want the Prophet's name to be desecrated under the feet of others. In a remarkable compromise, Muhammad Ali's name was still immortalized in a star and is the only star in the Walk of Fame that is mounted on the wall.

Muslims are among North America's list of minority groups which are increasingly being subjected to hate crimes and attacks. We now jockey for first place, in competition with the LGBT community, native communities, blacks, Sikhs, the disabled and women.

Muslims, however, are the only group that are being held to account for the violent crimes of a small band of really angry Muslims in faraway lands, while at the same time we endure the trauma of war, terror and hate ourselves. At least 1.3 million Muslims have been killed and nine countries devastated by the ongoing "War on Terror," creating the largest number of refugees in the world since the Second World War. Each mosque across North America prays for this human loss and suffering.

If indeed, ignorance leads to fear, hate, and violence, it would make sense that we as human beings collectively tackle ignorance.

Dr. Raza Khan is a family physician, born and raised in Hamilton

## SECRET DOUBTS

## Lessons we can learn from Eddie the Eagle

His name is Michael Edwards. All he wanted was to be an Olympian



THOMAS FROESE

*"They that wait upon the Lord will mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not be weary; they will walk and not faint. The Hebrew prophet, Isaiah"*

The sad news of the day, or any day, is that the world is full of people who lack hope and basic belief in themselves because they've long been told in one way or another that they'll never amount to anything, that they have nothing to offer, and the sooner they realize this the better it will be for all concerned.

Gather your friends and neighbours or anyone, really, from the guy who borrowed your rake to the rock-star in the Learjet, and ask them to write anonymously what they really think when looking at the ceiling at night, and get something like this:

"No matter what I accomplish, I still feel like a failure." Or, "I can't shake the thought that I'm worthless." Or, "I don't think anybody could ever love me, not if they knew the real me."

There was a movie theatre on the edge of the Cotswolds in the United Kingdom who had the same thoughts. (At least this is what it would say if movie theatres had thoughts and occasionally expressed them.)

Yes, there was this theatre in Gloucestershire, even as there was a kid from Gloucestershire. The kid was told these things by people, starting with his father, who, according to the movies, once said, "There's a world who doesn't want to know you."

But the kid said the world can go to hades because it's blind and deaf to what really matters, and he went off to fly (sort of), anyway. His name is Michael Edwards. All he wanted was to be an Olympian.

The rest, you likely know, this true story of Eddie the Eagle, the naïve (and only) British ski-jumper in Calgary's 1988 Olympics, wearer of those fogged-up Coke-bottle glasses, the guy who charmed the world



PHOTO BY THOMAS FROESE

Cinema patron Dan Button, a resident of Gloucester, England, walks past the tiny Sherborne Theatre in that city while it showed the movie, Eddie the Eagle. The Hollywood production is about nearby resident Michael Edwards, who 28 years after charming the '88 Winter Games in Calgary during his unusual foray into ski-jumping events, still lives in the area where he grew up, in Gloucestershire County.

when he jumped in 70 m and 90 m events because, well, he could. (Sort of.)

Eddie didn't care much what people thought. Likewise, in its best moments, I doubt that little theatre, a remodelled church, gives a flying flip about who thinks what. On my last trip to the UK I watched Eddie's story in its tiny space. (Think Hamilton's Westdale theatre shrunk fivefold.) It was perfect symmetry of content and medium.

Now, I'm one of those people who'd rather watch a well-crafted movie than do just about anything, a summer movie today, or another movie any day, really. I'd easily watch, say, all three Godfather movies while flying from Africa. So all this sensitivity to theatres, and stories written in blood, so to speak, might have something to do with this.

In fact, there are plain theatres in plain places like Uganda, even if only one viewer (hi there) watches. Indeed, a clerk once ran across the street to a competing theatre to get a certain movie for that lone viewer. (Hi there, again.)

In that humble country, for a few thousand shillings — 1,000 Ugandan shillings is about 40 Canadian cents — you and your kids can not only catch Angry Birds (at a

theatre calling it The Angry Bird), but you can negotiate with management for a poster. This is why movie posters fill certain walls in that viewer's African home.

But getting back to Gloucestershire and Eddie and you, this theatre, sure, people will walk past and laugh at your minuscule frontage, your inconsequential chairs and your mom and pop screen, even as pop's in your tiny lobby serving popcorn. But this is your charm.

So have your secret doubts and hard nights. But you never know. One day some stranger might visit, enjoy who you are, then tell everyone possible all about you, like he's crazy for you, really, like how those ancient prophets carried on about the Creator's wild love for humanity.

Some people will still call you a joke. And maybe you are. The world premiere of Eddie the Eagle, after all, fell on April Fools' Day. On the other hand, the foolish things of this world often do upend the wise, sometimes in remarkable fashion. If it wasn't so, life would be a horrible bore.

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