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**Bill's
Bulletin
Board**

By Bill Rea

I realize that this is going to seem sexist to some, but men wiser and far more experienced than I have lamented for centuries about their inability to figure out females. Having been married for some eight-and-a-half years, I can honestly say I'm officially neutral on this topic, if for no better reason than the simple fact that my wife routinely reads my weekly columns.

Men have never been able to figure out the two-legged females and, as was reconfirmed to me Saturday, they haven't done a whole lot better with the four-legged specimens either.

A bit of background is perhaps in order.

Some eight-and-a-half years ago, I married into a family of dairy farmers.

That new status opened up several opportunities for me, like giving me somewhat more access to an actual barn than would normally be available to a kid who pretended to grow up in the vicinity of the southern extremities of the Humber River. Indeed, in the days leading up to the

wedding, I was on the receiving end of a couple of tongue-in-cheek comments that I wouldn't officially be a part of the family until I had actually milked a cow. That requirement wasn't fulfilled until a little more than a year ago, and the assignment was carried out to the satisfaction of all concerned, although my brother-in-law did have to admonish me for putting the milking mechanism on backwards (on the cow, I mean). I was, after all, a rookie.

There have been a couple of occasions when I have been invited into Beth's brother's inner sanctum, also known as his barn, and Saturday was one of them. In fact, it has developed into an annual happening, just like Christmas, Easter and income tax time.

It all goes back eight years, when Beth casually told me one day that her brother Paul was had to vaccinate his herd annually against a malady known as bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), and she asked if I could free myself up for a couple of hours over the

upcoming Saturday afternoon to lend a hand. The thought of the experience intrigued me, so it was easy to assure my wife of a little more than half a year (at that time) that she could count me in.

I was talking to my brother later in the week, and casually mentioned the assignment that I had been given, and he expressed interest in lending a hand too. He also was a man who had spent his formative years within a mile of where the Humber meets the Lake, and since he had never even covered an agricultural beat for a community newspaper (I at least had that experience under my belt), the thought of seeing life inside a barn was evidently appealing to big brother Michael too. Paul, being the practical man that he is, was far too smart to turn down free and willing labour.

Thus my brother Michael and I got to traipse through copious amounts of manure, learning how to relate to young ladies of the Holstein persuasion. And there was born an annual tradition, which has involved my brother and I for as long as Beth and I have been wed. I since learned that it is usually scheduled to coincide roughly with Paul's birthday, which took place Sunday (by the way, Happy Big Four-Oh Paul).

So Saturday was the big day. I suited up in my grubbiest clothes, which I usual-

ly save for work, put on my steel-toed construction boots (cows have been known to try and stomp on my feet) and reported for duty.

This was the ninth year Michael and I have helped out in this endeavour (I counted on my fingers three times to make sure I had the number right), and things have pretty well gone according to the agenda each time, with the odd variation aimed at keeping life interesting.

But this year, things were a little different. The girls were somewhat less cooperative than they have been in the past. In the early going, I rushed between two of them to try and make sure one of them was securely in her stall, and found myself in the wrong position of a classic squeeze play. I was caught between a cow and a cow, neither of whom seemed to know either their strength or weight. It turned out this was the first time this particular cow had been so restrained, so Paul was expecting a few complications.

"Why don't you let me handle the fun stuff," he admonished.

Fair enough. Paul was the pro, Michael was the hired help, Beth was keeping track of the status of each of the young ladies as they got jabbed (dry heifer, pregnant heifer, etc.), Jacob (Paul's three-year-old son) was there to supervise and I was there to do as I was

bloody-well told. Only a married man knows his place that well.

The "fun stuff" also meant Paul got to administer the needles.

I've done this often enough to know that cows can and do kick. I've been on the receiving end of a couple well-aimed hooves. Thus, I understood what Paul was going through when one of them let him have it in the leg. He was able to walk it off with a lot of grimacing and muttering of a few words that can't be recorded here.

"It could have been worse," he commented when things had calmed down a bit.

"Yeah," I replied in my best loyal, subordinate tone. "She could have kicked me."

Another cow jumped a wall in the feeding alley and jiggled a few pipes in the watering system, requiring some makeshift plumbing improvisation on Paul's part.

But we got through it, and I'm happy to report that so did the ladies.

The easiest job of the day was done. The hard part came when Paul's wife Michelle took the birthday boy out for the evening, meaning Beth, her mother and I were pressed into baby-sitting service for their two kids.

If vaccinating a bunch of high-strung, stressed-out, uncooperative Holsteins sounds like a real chore, try baby sitting.

Editorial

Citizens assembly has potential to do good, if only more people knew about it

We share the frustration that Councillor Bill Cober has expressed over the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

At first glance, this assembly appears to be working diligently toward possible reform and improvements to the electoral system in the province. The only problem we have with it, as things stand now, is the same one that Cober has. This assembly has not done a particularly good job of promoting itself or its activities.

And considering this group is currently seeking public input, the reality is people cannot comment on something if they don't know such comments are being solicited.

That is a pity, because it seems this assembly is taking a somewhat more con-

structive approach than what some cynics might have come to expect from a government operation.

It's not unique or unusual for groups of citizens to be consulted by government. There have been, however, instances in which the objective of such consultation has not been clearly spelled out. In some cases, these procedures can be manipulated to result in a predetermined result, which government can translate into policies that it had in mind in the first place.

Such does not appear to be case in this situation. The indication is government is looking for a possible policy, and asking a group of randomly selected people to come up with it. There is also the promise of a referendum at the end of it all, meaning the voters, those

people who pay the bills and who are supposed to call the shots, will actually have the chance to do just that.

It's apparent that there is

no shortage of options on the table, including the status quo. That is good to hear. While the current system might not be perfect, it

might be the one that people prefer. If so, then so be it.

If only more people knew about this process, and were able to take part.

Letter to the Editor

Emergency personnel need to find your house

In the event of an emergency, you need to have fire, police and ambulance be able to locate your home quickly. If you dial 9-1-1 from a land line, the operator knows your address, and can send help immediately. We know that in the case of a heart attack, or a fire, and indeed in many other emergencies, that time is of the essence.

If you live in a subdivision, look at your home in the dark. Some of the numbers can only be seen if the

exterior light is on, but in an emergency, you may not be able to get to the light. Some of the numbers are hidden by bushes. Some of the numbers are on rocks that cannot be seen from certain directions.

A reflective sign by the road would help emergency personnel find your home quickly. Years ago, when 9-1-1 was first introduced, the Township mandated that the homes fronting on Regional roads, concession roads or sideroads must have reflec-

tive numbers by the road. It was thought that the homes in subdivisions were close enough to the road that their numbers could be seen.

But the numbers on subdivision homes are not easy to see.

The Township sells the green reflective numbers and metal posts at a nominal cost. It is easy to install the number. It could save your life or one of your family members.

Nancy Hopkinson,
Nobleton