

Do you remember?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I was driving down First Street in Orangeville last week during one of the icy days we've had recently and saw an unusual sight.

A woman was backing out of a driveway and managed to get stuck. The way her car teetered over the ice buildup at the end of the driveway left her tires spinning with no traction at all.

At the time I thought, "wow, I haven't seen that happen in a long time!?" Which then got me to thinking about a lot of things we may have forgotten that either used to happen or existed as part of main stream life in North America.

It used to be very common occurrence to see someone stuck in the snow on a city street or in a parking lot.

Other people would hop out of their cars to push, and the motorist would be on their way.

You don't really see that any more. Back then, cars had rear wheel drive, horrible bias ply tires, and no weight over the rear axle. Many people used to toss 50-pound sandbags in their car before winter just to add some weight.

When the trend shifted to front wheel drive, you had the added weight of the engine to keep you pinned to the ground to add traction. Figure in all-wheel drive, and tires that can drive through snow, and a lot of backs have been saved from trying to push a 2000-pound car out of an icy rut.

Stray dogs are a rare sight on any city street these days. At one time it was pretty common to see a dog all by its lonesome wandering around a neighborhood sniffing at anything that caught its interest.

Add to that the calling card they left behind which was quite often found when a guy mowing his lawn ran over the offending pile and found out the hard way that a dog had been on the lawn.

Thanks to leash laws, fines for letting your dog run wild, and poop and scoop laws, canines are no longer seen roaming the streets at will.

Vending machines are still with us, but at one time you could buy a pack of smokes by depositing your 50 cents and hitting a button.

A group of 10-year-olds could pool their coins and spend the afternoon puffing away on a pack of Sportsman filter cigarettes at their favourite hiding spot, just like the outdoorsmen that were pictured on the package.

When was the last time you saw a TV antenna on someone's roof? Those crazy things that looked similar to one of radar antennas that tracked Mercury astronauts used to define the landscape of many neighborhoods. For a while, the bigger the tower you had, the more prestige you had in your little corner of the world.

Thankfully, cable TV and satellites have erased these eyesores.

TV commercials these days are fast and furious because advertisers know the attention span of the average person is now around six seconds.

Back in the black-and-white days of the idiot box, commercials ran a full minute. Yes, one full minute of Mrs. Olsen inviting the entire neighbourhood over for coffee.

Today, watching a 60-second commercial feels like you are watching a short movie.

Have you been in a McDonald's restaurant lately? Yes, great burgers, and the average age of staff behind the counter seems to be around 12.

Many high school kids learned about the working world with their first job at McDonald's.

However, go back a few, well maybe more than a few years, to the early 70's, and watch a McDonald's TV commercial on Youtube.

The people behind the counter were grown men. Yes, men wearing jaunty caps who supported their families by working at this new and growing hamburger franchise that was taking the world by storm.

And speaking of burger joints, when McDonald's first appeared, several other burger franchises jumped on the band wagon selling quickly made food in a pick-it-up-fast environment.

Burger Chef was great, but didn't last long.

One big favourite was the Red Barn. They sprung up all over the place then disappeared almost over night.

There are still plenty of places in Ontario where the buildings, shaped like a barn, are still standing and have been converted to all sorts of different business.

Anyone who remembers the franchise knows exactly what that barn shaped building used to be.

Some day in the future people will look back at this era and say, "Do you remember when....?"