

Stretching the truth

By Brian Lockhart

'The secret of life is honesty and fair dealing. If you can fake that, you've got it made!'

Yup, Groucho Marx really had a handle on the way things work.

One thing is for sure - when you hear a guy disparage the Corvette Stingray by saying 'yeah,, but they ride like a truck,' you know for sure he is the guy who will never drive a Corvette, ever, and most likely he drives a tiny little car with a stick-shift and thinks he's driving faster than anyone else because 'stick shifts are faster' - even though his car has a 40 horsepower engine - and his car gets 'better mileage' than any other car on the planet.

For some reason, no one will ever admit how long it really takes them to drive somewhere. I've had many discussions at hockey games where people tell me they can make it to a road game in no time at all, saying 'it's only an hour,' And yet, when I drive the exact same route at the speed limit or slightly faster, the same trip takes me at least 30 minutes longer.

I once was sent from Toronto to London on a business thing. When I suggested what time I should leave to make the meeting on time I was told I was leaving too early.

'We were there last week and it only took us an hour,' I was told by senior management.

Luckily for me there was a map of Ontario on the conference room wall. I made a quick measurement using the kilometre scale and pointed out that it is approximately 177 kilometres from our location to London, as the crow flies, and unless they had flown out of the parking lot on a Lear Jet they didn't make it to London in an hour.

I left at the proper time to make the meeting.

Clothing size is something else people don't like to admit. It's not like I've ever asked anyone in casual conversation, 'Sooo... what dress size do you wear??' But if you ever did you probably wouldn't get a truthful answer.

One time we had a company anniversary and we all got bright white T-shirts with the company logo. Unfortunately I was tasked with asking everyone which size they needed.

T-shirts aren't exactly a tailored item, so you had a choice of small, medium, large, and X-tra large. Not one guy in my department of about 100 would admit to needing a small or medium size shirt. We had one fellow who was about 5'2" tall, and weighed about 90 lbs. I asked him what size he wanted and without missing a beat he said 'Large.'

He got a large and ended up looking like he was wearing a dress.

One peculiar exaggeration, especially in central Ontario, is a reference to 'THE cottage.'

It's never 'a' cottage, it's always 'the' cottage.

For some reason, no one ever admits to not actually owning 'The Cottage,' or the fact that they just happen to be visitors.

It's common to hear people say, 'We're going to THE cottage for the weekend,' with an implied 'You don't have one??' in a cartoon balloon floating over their head.

I had a co-worker who used to say 'We're at the cottage this weekend,' as if she and her family were spending the weekend at the Kennedy Compound in Kennebunkport. Oddly enough, I knew that 'THE cottage' was actually co-owned by her in-laws and several other families who allowed them to visit on the occasional weekend.

I'm waiting for the phrase to morph into 'summer house' just to add a more snobby appeal.

Everyone is a manager. As someone who used to receive resumés for job applications, I was amazed by how many people were managers at their former job.

It didn't matter if it was a retail store, a landscaping company, or hotdog stand, everyone was either a manager or assistant manager. No one ever admitted to being an employee.

That also goes for spouses. In the group I used to have lunch with every day, every person's spouse was a manager.

'My husband is manager of produce at the grocery store,' although when I ran into him there, he was the guy putting the oranges on the shelf.

No one ever admits to making a fashion statement by buying their clothes at Walmart although the Walmart parking lot always seems to be full and they make a lot of money.

And of course, despite being the world's most successful restaurant chain, no one ever admits that McDonalds is their favourite restaurant and the Big Mac or Quarter Pounder is their favourite hamburger.

Go figure.!