

# Driving rules in need of change

Last Tuesday 15-year-old Paul Andrew Levy was struck and killed while in a crosswalk.

He was dragged along the street for 25 metres. Paramedics were unable to revive the teenager.

The 83-year-old man who hit him required the assistance of a steel walker and Halifax Regional Police to exit his vehicle and cross the street.

Levy's funeral was on Friday.

The elderly driver received a ticket under the Motor Vehicle Act for failing to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. This carries a fine of \$337.50.

How could this accident have happened? Investigators are saying that the crosswalk is in a dangerous place.

Monday was just one of many accidents to have occurred there. The week before, a 46-year-old cyclist was struck at the intersection and received cuts and bruises as well as a broken kneecap. In August of 1988, another boy, 9-year-old Liam Patrick McDermott, was also struck and killed.

At a local council meeting, there were calls of crosswalk safety — possibly of building a pedway over the street. Police were urging motorists, as well as pedestrians, to use extreme caution when crossing the street.

These are all good ideas, but when is someone going to address the problem of elderly drivers? To hold a driver's license is not a right, it is a privilege.

The licensee is required to pass written, manual and physical tests before acquiring the license to drive. This license is renewable in 5-year terms, without taking any type of written or manual refresher tests.

In Canada, one cannot hold a valid driver's license until the age of 16. We feel, as a society, that

people under this age are not sufficiently able to cope with the responsibility of operating a motor vehicle. They have not developed the social, mental or physical skills needed to undertake a task of this magnitude. So why, if there are limitations to the age by which one can apply for the license, are there not provisions in place in order to remove this privilege once the licensee has reached a certain age? Or at the very least, a requirement of mandatory testing of all motor, oral and written skills in order to renew the license?

refresher test similar to the one required to get a license. Also, an examination of eye sight and hearing seems necessary.

If the licensee has undergone a stroke or any other physical disability, again re-testing should be required.

This will cost tax-payers money. But think of the accidents caused by these elderly drivers, the lives lost. Insurance premiums, lawyers fees. Tell Paul Andrew Levy's parents that their son was only worth the \$337.50 it cost that driver in fines. Tell that also to the next parent whose child is killed in a car accident.

I was talking to my elderly neighbour about this topic yesterday. She is 69, wears glasses and at times a hearing aid. She holds a learner's permit.

Currently, she is enrolled in Young Drivers of Canada. Previously, her only experience behind the wheel was in WW2, when she drove tanks. Her husband holds a valid driver's license even though less than 2 years ago he suffered from a stroke that has left the right side of his face paralyzed.

If my neighbour wishes to "go for a drive" all that is legally required is a licensed driver to accompany her on voyages. Guess who that is?

What type of a system is this? When a 69-year-old woman with vision and hearing difficulties, who has had no previous driving experience, can operate a motor vehicle in this province with only her disabled husband as a supervisor? Or where an 83-year-old man with a possible broken leg and a steel walker can drive his vehicle, cause a fatal accident and other than a \$337.50 fine, have no other detrimental effects on his record?

It's a system that needs a change.

VANESSA OWEN

## EDITORIAL

Having a driver's license is of great importance. It is freedom. The ability to go from one place to another without waiting for the bus or calling a cab. But with that freedom comes a responsibility. Not only to the driver, but also to family members that allow an elder to drive knowing his capacity to do so is deteriorating. How many times have you heard someone mutter, "One day he is going to kill himself?" Guess what, he just killed a 15-year-old kid, not himself.

It has been scientifically proven that as we age, our visual, hearing and motor skills deteriorate.

At the age of 65, 75 or even 83, our skills are not what they were when we passed the tests at the age of 16. So why are we able to still hold a driver's license? Why are we still allowing drivers such as the man who caused the accident that resulted in the death of Paul Levy renew their licenses without further tests of their mental or motor capacity?

I say we instill a mandatory age, like 65, whereby every citizen must renew their licenses on a 2-year basis and submit to a written

## OPINIONS

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### 3.4 is the loneliest number

I am a science student and my GPA is 3.4. I would tell you more about myself, but I am realizing more and more that my GPA is the fundamental definition of who I am in the academic community.

Once upon a time I had dreams of being a scientist. Scientists were truth seekers and innovative individuals who used their creative skills in order to assemble facts and understand a greater picture of things. However, somewhere down the line, the definition of science has changed. University is attempting to mould science students to fit into a very restricted definition of what a scientist is. It appears that analytical skill and creative thought are no longer welcome. All of the emphasis of learning is placed on the memorization of the Periodic Table of the Elements, or 150 different genes and the mechanisms by which they are controlled. This method of education is poor preparation for the "real world" — in the real world you would just flip open a textbook and look it up if you didn't remember.

Thus, the GPA becomes a cumulative index of how many useless facts you happened to be able to regurgitate first thing Monday morning while half asleep, clutching onto your cup of coffee. And although the laboratory makes up a significant component of a class, it still is not worth enough in comparison to the time that you spend on it.

When applying for summer research assistant jobs, it seems that all the employers at post-secondary institutions are interested in is your GPA. Experience counts for something, but certainly not everything. Graduate school is a similar story, with most of the admissions based on GPA. The GPA obsession of the academic community can certainly lay a beating on the confidence of students. Students feel discouraged and nervous about their future, because they have been bombarded with horror stories about how you will never succeed in science

without an A-average. Instead of encouraging us, the departments essentially line us up in front of a firing squad and knock us down one by one, saying "you're not good enough, you're not good enough." And the result is small fourth-year classes full of nervous students, panicked, and struggling so hard not to be *that student* with the lowest mark in the class.

Since when does my GPA determine my self worth? How is it a description of all my summers of experience and hard work? What does my GPA say about my strengths and skills as a person?

I guess that these details are minor compared to that special number.

The most frustrating aspect of the GPA dilemma is that the discriminating ones are the scientists themselves. They should know better than anyone that an A student doesn't necessarily know how to pipette properly. Those in power argue that a GPA is the only objective way to compare students. This hardly seems so, seeing as a biochemistry student with a minor in basket weaving is obviously going to have a higher GPA than a combined honours student who has virtually no options in their entire university career. And even those professors who disagree with using GPA to judge students just shrug their shoulders and complain a little bit, but do virtually nothing to combat the problem.

Don't misunderstand me: I don't think that science should be a cake walk. It should be challenging and demanding and we science students should have to work hard for our degrees. But I am tired of feeling worthless and being discouraged from scholarship applications, jobs and graduate studies just because I am not at the top of my class. After four years of trying, I am finally admitting defeat. Politics has demolished my interest in science. I will be taking my creativity and innovative thought elsewhere, where it might be appreciated and rewarded.

JANET FRENCH

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