

I'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

by Philip David Peterson

I'm sort of a loser, a born one at that. No one could be as much of a loser as I am without help from beyond. I've never really had things go my way, except maybe a two ton truck or perhaps a peculiarly ugly dog.

MY life is fairly full with terribly embarrassing occurrences which even now haunt me as I pursue my new life of total disregard for what would be my former embarrassers.

To give you some examples of what my life was like, let me begin by telling you of the utter fright I had upon first performing some business at a bank. Having led a particularly sheltered life, I had, in fact, never been in a bank even once in my childhood, unless you could still count my life as in that stage no, not one learning experience from which to gain some perfection of action.

Well, incidents dictated that I must enter such a structure to conduct some sort of complicated business to do with my college funds. That morning there was a noticeably dark and threatening sky with a howling wind and lightning prevailing. I stood outside suitably drenched, and entered the confines, the clean and well lit internal goings on of a multitude of happy and Well-adjusted people.

Having no idea which lineup I was to involve myself in, I joined the first one I came to, as my goloshes squeaked particularly loud and caused people to stare at me angrily and even worse caused the bank president, who was asleep nearby, to wake up.

Unfortunately, as it always happens your line goes three or four times as slow as all of the others and so you keep changing lines, whereupon that line ceases to budge as a result of some old lady, who has to have the directions to the washroom explained, though in the end she is led by the young bank worker there anyway.

So eventually I wind up in the original line, and am by now worrying about what I should do or say if indeed I ever get to the front before the bank closes. This worrying bothered me so much that I lost my balance and almost fell over, causing a stir from those about me, and making my face turn rather reddish.

After standing there for about thirty minutes, I eventually became the number two man, and realized that my confidence would soon be put to the test. As it turned out, it never was. My throat seemed to swell, and I had the unavoidable urge to swallow, causing large gulping sounds to echo about the room, or at least I imagined that they did. But when the cashier, as she was labeled started talking to the woman ahead, and using complicated banking terms like cheque or money order, the strain got to be too much, and I stepped out of line, stuck my hands in my hip pockets and swaggered off happily towards the door, whistling gaily to myself, and glancing nonchalantly all about the room as I went. This was all regarded by those present with great consternation, as to why this young man should wait so long and then leave, business unfulfilled, in such a fashion. In fact, it even drew many boos and shameful glances from those waiting in chairs nearby, no doubt provoked by the fact that my success at getting through the line was not shared by themselves.

Well, as you can see, I'm not the most stable individual alive. In fact, by the age of fifteen I had sufficiently confused myself about life that I was frequently seen wandering about in a dull staring stupor, and noticeably lacking in facial expression.

There is a certain area of my development (if, indeed one could call it that) which was singularly distressing for me. That area happened to be anything associated with elevators. Many brutal things happened to me in my relations with elevators. In many cases these re-

lations were extensive and closely akin to habitation.

The first occasion in which I suspected my dislike for those death traps was during my high school years. It seems that I was sent on an errand to one of the big buildings in the downtown area, which was modern and this had no stairways. Thus being forced to go up by means of elevator, I was fortunate enough to follow someone in who knew the workings of the things and equally as fortunately was heading for the same floor as I.

Everything to this time was just fine, but it was the events that precipitated that were quite displeasing.

So I wished to go back down eventually, and entered the open elevator, whereupon the doors slammed unmercifully shut behind me. I was thus faced with an important decision. Which of the new modern buttons was I to push to go down - for they were not labelled. So I decided to go about it very scientifically, and push each one in turn, thus observing the results. However, insofar as these results were either unnoticeable or nonexistent, I became rather anxious, and since I suffer rather inexorably from acute claustrophobia, became rather violent with the control board, pounding the buttons with full force and emitting rather obscene remarks about modern society. Eventually my anger gave way to dull submission, and I sank into a lethargy in the corner, and decided that my problem was that I simply did not know how to utilize the machine and that I was very stupid indeed. I was this way for maybe an hour, and was babbling rather hopeless utterances and was resigned to death by starvation, when magically the doors opened. There, outside stood two official looking men in blue uniforms who told me that the elevator had broken down a little while ago and that they hoped I had not been too inconvenienced. I thanked them, and said that I had just sat down in the corner for a nap while I waited for the proper repairs to be made.

Actually, this bad luck had plagued me since my very early childhood. Unfortunately, most of these nasty events occurred in the presence of my peers, if they may be put into such a low category, and caused me to be the loner that I am now. No one would admit to knowing me under any circumstances, and I'm sure that if one of them had been drowning, and I was standing on the shore with a life preserver, he would have ignored me. He wouldn't want to admit to having been saved by such a low mentality as I.

But to return to more specific events. One time one of the old hags we had for a grade three teacher, who was unaffectionately known as old chrome-dome because of the peculiar female trait of being bald, asked me in a rather pleased tone to pull up the venetian blind, pleased no doubt because she knew that even the simplest task given me would give her a chance to get even at one of us for her not having any hair.

Well, I rose from my chair and decided that at this exact moment I would at last become a success, although it didn't actually turn out that way. Now by nature, venetian blinds are not kindly creatures. If one pulls on one of the many cords, infathomable to me as to use, the curtain body is liable to jump first one way and then the next, open or close, become entangled hopelessly in your hair, or be pulled off the window casing completely. Somehow I managed a combination of all these, and when I could stand the embarrassment no longer, having stopped the main direction of the class for a full quarter hour, I turned toward the teacher who nodded her head in approval and even gave me a wink, which assured me and her that I was still an idiot, and not anything like a success

and cued me that I could return to my desk.

The trip back was not an easy nor a pleasant one. Being nonchalant and inconspicuous after having made a mockery of oneself like that is not easy, and whistling was not allowed anyway. The class was not as sympathetic as the teacher, and it gave me a loud round of boos as I sat down once more, and pretended not to notice, even though the book I was looking at was very obviously at such an angle as not to facilitate reading without great difficulties. I was going to ask to be excused, but at that point I thought that I would probably even make a mess of being sick.

The schoolroom example served only as a digression to escape the anxious feelings I have about elevators. My worst experience with them was yet to come. The event happened a few years later than the previously mentioned case. I had gained what I considered a certain amount of sophistication by this time, not enough to allow me to properly walk about with my nose in the air, but nevertheless with a noticeably level orientation.

Even so, I did not at that time go about seeking out elevators to ride on, though I could count at least four or five cases where I had successfully completed a mission on one.

On being in a strange city, and wishing to join some of my comrades on the very uppermost floor, I faced either making us of an elevator, or death by exhaustion. So I clambered confidently into the compartment by myself and started what I might add was my first solo mission. And so up and up I went, until the doors opened. Immediately upon this happening, I quickly noticed something peculiar. The first thing I saw was a pair of feet and as I lengthened my gaze upward saw ankles, knees, thighs and so right on up to a head. And there I was, head at floor level with a small group of people staring down at me, many with frowns on their faces and all pointing their fingers at me in a very threatening manner. I felt like a martyr to the gods, but came through with what I consider yet to be one of my most brilliant acts. I told them that the unit would be working properly soon and that they should not worry themselves, and I went tinkering about all over the room, and uttering knowing sounds at each hollow echo or noise of any kind.

And so my life went on, a life of ridicule and degradation, transforming me into a monster of society. I had given up all hopes of a normal life that would include marriage and children, for any woman who would be foolhardy enough to consider me seriously would have had to spend two years teaching me how to be a human being, and how could I even consider putting children through a life in my presence? But I need not have worried, for I was usually totally avoided by females, and considered a terrible bungler. Consider but one example. At one stage in life I considered myself rather dashing and knightly, and walked about with shoulders back proudly. One winter's morning while walking down the street a young lady slipped on the ice and fell rather cruelly to the ground. Being very chivalrous I approached her quickly and asked her if she needed my assistance, but before I could assist anything, I had fallen down and began to writhe in pain. After she had helped me to my feet, she said she was alright and went on her way, leaving me reduced to a nothingness that is hard to describe.

But those days are gone I'm tired of continually asking "Mirror mirror on the wall, who's the stupidest of them all?" and always having an affirmative answer. My schooling? is done elevators have run out of embarrassments for me, and my aspirations to become Prime Minister encompass my mind completely.