

## Permission given

By Constance Scrafield

The Taj Mahal in India, was built by 20,000 men over the years from 1632 to 1653 and is symmetrically perfect, the greatest architectural achievement in the Indo-Islamic world. Still perfect.

Venice was established by, basically, refugees from Roman cities fleeing the invasions of the Huns and the Germans. It is widely thought that the first founding of the city was by the dedication of the church of San Giacomo in 462 AD. Since that time, through the many changes of rulers, the city has grown and the buildings today that dominate it were built primarily over the next several centuries up to the 1700's. St Mark's Basilica was originally built in 828 and, following a fire was rebuilt and consecrated in 1094. People still live, work and worship in these buildings.

The Pantheon, built in 124 CE, but not later the best preserved antiquity in the Roman empire, was originally a Roman temple and has, since the 7th Century, been used as a church. Two thousand years after its construction, the dome of the Pantheon is still the world's largest unreinforced concrete dome.

Last week, glass fell from a building of less than five years standing at Bay and Wellesley Street, Toronto.

In Shelburne, people want to sue the builder of the new development on the west side of the town because their roofs are leaking already and there are structural problems arising from, essentially, new houses (less than five years).

In Orangeville, there is a new development that looks too much like that one in Shelburne, and what official is overseeing the construction of these new homes?

A developer wants to build over two creeks and a valuable piece of land from Orangeville's ecological point of view and what official body is defending this parcel of land at the OMB or, now, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal?

We complain a lot nowadays about the abuse we inflict on the world around us and some of us object to the proliferation of thoughtless new construction: thoughtless as to what is being constructed and thoughtless as to where and what is being ploughed under to accommodate new, thoughtlessly considered buildings.

Easy to complain and carp about it all but what do we do about it? We give permission.

Let me paint a picture: your two teenage kids, kids of friends, nieces, nephews ? are already in high school, and the new laws about marijuana are about to burst all over everyone and, while they are not supposed to imbibe the new freedom, they are not meant to be smoking cigarettes or drinking vodka either under 19.

Meanwhile, ever since Patricia was in high school in the early years of this Millennium, kids have been smoking cigarettes in the parking lots and weed, as well.

Whether or not the age limit to start smoking marijuana is set higher at 20 or 25 ? whatever ? we can be pretty sure that the new permissiveness of the new law will encourage many of them to begin in their teens, where they might not have taken the chance before.

We allow this. Do we give our permission for our children to deal with this because we do not pay enough attention to what happens at high school?

?Silence is consent,? says the old adage, and this is certainly true.

We live our lives in an online fog.

We are deluded that we must always be in a hurry because the biggest scam on your computer says faster is better. So, you must update your equipment to comply with the falsehood that divides your life in tiny milli-seconds and never says why.

We agree to this abuse by condoning it.

There is a myth that only government, only that most elusive motivator, political will, can change things. The lie is that everything must come from the feds in order for things to move forward at all. We accept that if other countries don't progress, then our country does not have to either.

Yet and yet. If our neighbour left his yard in a total mess, junk everywhere, old cars, would we treat our yard the same or would we complain to the neighbour? When he told us to mind our own business, would we go to the town hall?

As a nation, we are not kept informed of the kind of progress other countries are making about how they care for their environment, on all levels, including China and India. We are not aware of the kinds of improvements there are ready to be used to do a better job than we are doing of caring for our own environment.

An individual has a great deal of power. We can pay attention to it all. We can be informed and make our own decisions based on good information about who we vote for; where we shop and who tells us how many seconds make our minutes.