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The Cadre
550 University Ave.
Charlottetown PE CIA 4P3
Tel: 566-0629 Fax: 566-0979
Ads: upeicadre@gmail.com

Contact the editor and send submissions to:

upeicadre@gmail.com

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But I digress...

Ray Keating
Managing Editor

Have you ever noticed that sometimes in life there are entirely too many choices? When I go to a restaurant and am presented with a 20 page menu, my first inclination is to hand it back and say... "I'll just have a steak". Having too many options is simply overwhelming.

When I was a young kid, we didn't have cable TV in my house. My recollection is that we had 3 or 4 channels, but I don't recall ever complaining that there was nothing on or that all the shows were re-runs. These days, people are greeted with 30, 40, 50 or more channels, but frequently complain that there is nothing on TV. Again... too many choices. This is really a twofold issue. First, I believe that since it has become commonplace for people to have so many channels of TV, the producers are left scraping the bottom of the ideas barrel. When one show proves to be a success, dozens of clones pop up, hoping to grab a piece of the ratings; reality TV is a perfect example of this fact. More importantly than this, I think that our expectations have changed. I was reading an article lately that talked about differences in TV over the last 20 - 30 years. This article said that over this time period, our attention spans have decreased, and we now are at the point that we require almost constant stimulation to keep us watching a show. If the show doesn't greet us with a frenetic pace, we quickly lose interest and change to another channel. For the producers, this is a simple dollars and cents equation. Fewer viewers, less revenue.

So, where am I going with this you ask? Well, this phenomenon is not limited to restaurants and television and restaurants. As I have mentioned in this

column before, I am slightly older than most of *The Cadre's* target demographic. I am also the youngest in my family, so my parents are quite a bit older than my peer's parents. This said, in their day, it was commonplace for sons to follow in their father's footsteps (before you jump on my gender exclusivity, let me remind you that few women worked outside the home in the late 40's and 50's); if your father was a farmer, you might well be, or if he worked for CN, you often did too. We all know that this is not so much the case now. When I was growing up, my parents went to great lengths to tell me that I could do anything I wanted to do with my life. I had an endless repertoire of choices. "Thanks... I'll just have the steak." Basically, that was my choice at first. Somewhere along the line I decided I didn't like steak. How about some chicken? Nope... not into chicken either. How about... well, you get the idea.

So, for me, it all came down to a series of trial and error ventures down one career path or another. Now, I am back at school, making my way through with a family and a lot of other stuff on the go. But I know what I am doing now right? I've got the bases covered and I've settled on what I want to do between now and when I am having a dirt nap. If you believe that, I've got a bridge to sell you (and I tried sales... didn't like it).

Really, when it comes down to it, there is a happy medium to be struck somewhere here. It's important to have choices. No one wants to come out of high school and say, "well my dad worked as a horse excrement evaluator, so I have no option but to do that too". There is some value

though, in having the vast array of choices narrowed down somewhat. The problem is in determining what process to follow to focus the menu. I've found that experience is the best method... but it takes a lot of time. If we relied on this alone, we'd all be in our 80's before we decided what to do with our lives. Research is good too, but obviously you can't figure out your passions from reading about someone else's. Ultimately, I think the key here is to take the matter seriously and really consider what makes us happy. It's not going to fall in our laps... we have to see what appeals to us on the surface and then try to get some hands on experience to see if we still feel the same way about it. Most of all, I think we all need to remember that life is about the journey not the destination. How many people are alive but not really "living"? Ultimately the end result is the same for all of us... we might as well enjoy the ride while it lasts.

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studentsforafreetibet.org
sftpei@gmail.com