

Dear readers,

I'm not sure if I had too much on my mind this last week, or too little. There has been lots to write about – the B.C. election, astronaut Chris Hadfield returning to earth, scandal in the Canadian senate, scandal in the American IRS, Angelina Jolie's double mastectomy.... But somehow, nothing congealed in the maelstrom of my mind, and so I have no column for you this Sunday.

Since there's no column taking up bandwidth, I'm going to issue another warning about fake e-mails from me. About a dozen people have written saying that they got an e-mail from me which encouraged them to invest in a risky stock, join a matchmaking program, send cash to a Nigerian lawyer to facilitate the transfer of several million dollars, or bail me out of a jail in Spain.

I didn't send any of them. And as far as I can tell, my computer has not been hi-jacked by some cyber-terrorist.

Here's what I'm told happens. The people who make a living preying on unsuspecting victims have programs that troll the Internet constantly, looking for "live" e-mail addresses – the same way that Google constantly searches the Internet for data. They find my address, because it's on my webpage, which is updated at least twice a week, and in my bulk e-mails, about 2000 a week.

Once upon a time, when the world was simpler, the vampires simply added the address they found to their mailing lists. I got hundreds of spam e-mails every day, but you didn't.

Now they vampires are getting smarter. They not only troll for my address, but also for related information about the receivers of my mailings. When, or if, they manage to find your address, their data analysis programs put two and two together, and conclude that you consider me a trusted sender. Now you get the fake e-mails.

There are ways of circumventing these "phishing" programs, but they make it much more complicated for you to respond to me. So rather than going that route, I simply advise you to trash any missive purportedly from me, unless  
a) it's clearly labeled as a regular Sharp Edges or Soft Edges column, or  
b) you've recently written to me and you're expecting a response.

Don't take chances with anything you're not sure of. (Good advice in any area of life.)

Jim Taylor

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## **YOUR TURN**

No column this week, but letters about last week's column on the treatment of PTSD.

David Shearman felt I had misrepresented the PTSD app. He wrote, "I think you missed the mark on this one. The app is a gateway to support and help, not a treatment in itself. The congregation I serve, Central Westside United in Owen Sound, partners with Veterans Affairs Canada to help treat OSI. They provide a trained counsellor to meet with retired soldiers and their families as they struggle through the day-to-day chaos that is OSI. Our role is to provide a safe, peaceful, private space. It works. I am also consulted on matters which has a spiritual component, in co-operation with a Canadian Forces chaplain. I am well used. Canada will be dealing with OSI for decades. We need to find ways we can be part of the compassionate response, just as the "app" is part of the same response. A part of the of the response, not the whole response. That's what we do together."

Isabel Gibson refused to put the blame on the military alone: "I'm for not going to war anymore, but I hope we don't try to put that responsibility on the military. They don't go off on their own initiative: we send them into harm's way, and then don't look after them properly when they are harmed.

"As for PTSD in non-military life, I think we are in a process of recognizing just how fragile the brain is -- from damage caused by concussions in hockey, to damage caused by repeated hits in football that stop short of concussion, to damage caused by other physical and mental traumas. Fifty years from now we'll be doing this better, assuming we keep pushing for it now."

Several readers shared my cynicism about the Defence and Veterans' Affairs departments.

Bonita Garrett wrote from Winnipeg, "A lack of compassion and understanding from the federal government leads me to agree with you that an app, even one called 'PTSD Coach Canada,' will only lead to more isolation, less money for programs and services, and will attach a new type of stigma to this illness. In the name of 'savings,' this current government has shown the same disregard for surviving WW11 vets (my mother being one [RCAF]) in slowly eroding benefits that would assist them in remaining in their homes. They are, however, more than willing to hand over millions (billions really) in new 'toys.' Your opening comment 'I suppose I **should** be pleased ... but' says it all."

Similarly, Stephanie Keer wrote, "This smacks of being yet another public relations move, acknowledging a problem without really offering a serious solution."

"Preach on!" wrote Charles Hill. "As a counselor, I have worked with a couple of military PTSD cases. In one case, any loud noise outside the home sent the soldier under the bed, sometimes injuring his wife. The other, more recently, happened to a veteran in our Sunday School class. He remembers hearing the explosion in West, Texas, the fertilizer plant that blew up causing a 2.5 magnitude earthquake. The next thing he remembers is being on base at Ft. Hood, about 50 miles away, putting on battle gear. There is no instant cure, certainly not an app. That is insane!"

"Once again your column opened a gap in my thinking," Jim Henderschedt wrote. "My definition of PTSD was not inclusive enough. It was restricted to the huge & dramatic descriptions of war damage, etc.

"I now realize that my wife and my cousin were both afflicted by car crashes which they did not cause and that caught them unaware. Result? A car rider who was NOT relaxed, who reacted at unusual sounds (even in a garage after the car stopped).

"The really sad part is most not so afflicted think it's not worth getting worked up about. Except for those 'minor flashbacks' (minor?), which (usually) don't affect others. I'm sure there are a large number of similar kinds of events which create a memory that's not pleasant, reflexes that are different and hard to control. But as you suggested, the tendency is for others to say (or think) 'Get over it!'"

Noel McLaren (who lives in Australia but was currently travelling in North America) wrote, "Your column on PTSD was on the mark. As a retired fire chaplain whose training was in pastoral care and counseling I was considered a natural choice for PTSD counseling. I worked with first responders -- fire and ambulance people and law enforcement officers as there was no one available to them in our area. The main therapeutic resource I had was talk. We talked about the situation and what bothered them until the firefighter or life squad member was through the trauma. It often took weeks and many sessions until the workers were able to return active duty.

"I am not sure tapping an image on a phone or listening to a recorded message will do it. It does require intensive listening and compassionate responses."

Marilyn Stone hoped that "organizations and governments in North America have consulted the folks in Israel. That country has apparently become the 'capital' of PTSD Recovery! Out of the necessity of helping its inhabitants (from WWII refugees on), they have somehow developed recovery methods. I do not know as much about it as I wish I did. I only know that a young relative of mine, who suffered from PTSD after an incident in 1995, was sent there to work for two years, and has improved so much that her siblings tell me she is a more healthy person than she was 3 years ago!"

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## TECHNICAL STUFF

This column comes to you using the electronic facilities of Woodlakebooks.com.

If you want to comment on something, send a message directly to me, at [jimt@quixotic.ca](mailto:jimt@quixotic.ca).

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You can access several years of archived columns at <http://edges.Canadahomepage.net>.

I write a second column each Wednesday, called Soft Edges, which deals somewhat more gently with issues of life and faith. To sign up for Soft Edges, write to me directly, at the address above, or send a note to [softedges-subscribe@quixotic.ca](mailto:softedges-subscribe@quixotic.ca)

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## PROMOTION STUFF...

If you know someone else who might like to receive this column regularly via e-mail, send a request to [jimt@quixotic.ca](mailto:jimt@quixotic.ca). Or, if you wish, forward them a copy of this column. But please put your name on it, so they don't think I'm sending out spam.

For other sources worth pursuing, try

- Ralph Milton's HymnSight webpage, <http://www.hymnsight.ca>, with a vast gallery of photos you can use to enhance the appearance of the visual images you project for liturgical use (prayers, responses, hymn verses, etc.)
- David Keating's "SeemslkeGod" page, [www.seemslkegod.org](http://www.seemslkegod.org);
- Alan Reynold's weekly musings, punningly titled "Reynolds Rap" -- [reynoldsraps@shaw.ca](mailto:reynoldsraps@shaw.ca)
- Isobel Gibson's thoughtful and well-written blog, [www.traditionaliconoclast.com](http://www.traditionaliconoclast.com)
- Wayne Irwin's "Churchweb Canada," an inexpensive service for any congregation wanting to develop a web presence, with free consultation. <http://www.churchwebcanada.ca>
- Alva Wood's satiric stories about incompetent bureaucrats and prejudiced attitudes in a small town are not particularly religious, but they are fun; write [alvawood@gmail.com](mailto:alvawood@gmail.com) to get onto her mailing list.

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