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He Said She Said

Carnivals, teenagers and junk food

BY CAZ ZYVATKAUSKAS

Some fantasies are so elusive that we are prepared never to fulfil them. Most of us, in spite of our aspirations, remain content never to swim with the giant squid, wear St. Edward's crown or swing a golf club on the bright side of the moon. Yet these specific unattainable dreams can remain as beacons of wishful longing that keep us amused.

Even modest dreams may go unrealized. As both a vegetarian and a devotee of the carnival, I aspired to merge these two passions in the act of eating a veggie corn dog pulled fresh from the deep fryer. Watching the hardcore carnival carnivores enjoying these meals on a stick every year at the carnival only refreshed my longing.

So I was beyond jubilation when my dream came to pass this summer. Was it granted by the volition of some deity or remarkable luminary? No indeed, it was by the goodwill and fearlessness of a teenager.

He was a lad as unremarkable in appearance as one could imagine. If you had seen him on the subway or passed him on the street you might just have thought, Darned teenager. Yet in manning the Super Corn Dog booth at the Canadian National Exhibition all by himself he showed the composure of a gentleman and the easygoing spirit of a man comfortable with his lot in life.

As a bit of background I should add that this extraordinary teenager was discovered by my co-worker Diana, who knew about my passion. On a previous visit to the CNE, she engaged our young hero in a discussion about the variety of foods that could be battered and fried and learned of his willingness to fry just about anything in corn dog batter.

When she told me of her conversation, we hatched our plan. My dream began to look

remarkably like reality.

That fruitful day we both came prepared — Diana with a chocolate cream egg and I with a package of frozen veggie dogs. It was still early in the carnival day and so there were only a few other customers queuing up for the standard fare. When it came our turn, Diana asked if he would be willing to put our offerings to his fryer test.

You must imagine that at this point I was close to euphoric. As a vegetarian for some nine years and a carnival fancier for many more, I had longed to merge my herbivorous lifestyle with my cravings for real carny cuisine.

The young man no more shrugged at our suggestion to make an unauthorized fry test than a test pilot would balk at the chance to fly the latest jet fighter. He firmly took the health-food sausages and within minutes transformed them into proper carnival fare — veggie corn dogs. The cost for this dream-

fulfilling feat? Not a cent — although he was certainly paid in gratitude.

I came away from this exhilarating experience fully sated and with a new respect for our teenage accomplice. It occurred to me that this fresh and somewhat anarchic teenage attitude could do much to improve our lives in general. Imagine if such teenagers were employed not only in corn dog booths but also in banks, government offices and other dreary places where bored or jaded adults can squelch a creative new idea.

With this in mind, don't be too unkind or censorious when you meet these teenagers on the street, on public transit or even in the classroom. Their flexibility and creativity could change your world.

Caz Zyvatkaukas is a U of T history student who doubles as designer of the Bulletin. She shares this space with Paul Fraumeni.



The author; the corn dog

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