

# The Daily Gleaner

Green Matters for the Daily Gleaner

April 4, 2011

By Valerie Hillier

## It Ain't Easy Being Green

I must admit that even an eco-holic like me can get discouraged sometimes and wonder why I do the things I do and make the efforts I make. While traveling on the interstates this past year and through many large cities, I have observed the true love of the automobile. Though mass transit in some cities is second nature, other areas are increasing the size and number of thoroughfares by extraordinary measures to accommodate the ever-growing number of single driver vehicles. And like many people across North America last year, I was extremely discouraged by the amount of time it took to stop the Gulf oil spill, and continue to be discouraged by the lack of responsibility British Petroleum is taking in recognizing the long-term effects of the spill. I often wonder how we can send people into space but lack the same level of technology, or perhaps commitment and motivation, when it comes to cleaning up our environment.

Fortunately my pessimism was curbed the other day when listening to an interview with well-known actor and environmentalist, Ed Bagley Jr. I have been following Mr. Bagley for many years now, and in fact, it is because of him that I began to reduce the amount of garbage I put out on the curb each week. About 20 years ago I remember hearing him say that he only filled one small grocery bag of garbage each week, and the challenge was on!

Knowing that he has been making environmental efforts for over 40 years, I found the interview inspiring, not only because it was incredible to hear him continue to speak with such passion and commitment, but also because he spoke so realistically about environmental action. His key points hit home with anyone, from individuals to small business owners and large corporations: smart environmental changes equal money savings; and making changes (especially large-scale changes) don't necessarily happen overnight ... and that's okay! It was 20 years before he installed solar panels on his own home.

Ed Bagley Jr. was compelled to begin living a greener lifestyle in part due to a couple of major 1970s era environmental disasters. But he soon came to realize that the efforts he was making were also saving him money. He has since gone on to convince colleagues in the film and television industries that they can do the same by doing something as simple as choosing to use recycled building materials instead of new.

While listening to the interview I couldn't help but wonder, if Mr. Bagley wasn't discouraged after 40 years, then why was I? I live in beautiful Fredericton, New Brunswick while he lives in over-populated California. Nevertheless, throughout the discussion he continued to point out

# The Daily Gleaner

the positive changes that have taken place in the state, most notably, that the level of pollution has been cut in half even while the number of cars has tripled over the past 40 years.

While traversing the eastern United States I saw both worlds: congested interstates and city sprawl, contrasted with beautiful state parks, remarkable wildlife and nature refuges, and stunning farmland. And though many things have changed over my lifetime, thankfully, due in large part to the efforts of people like Ed Bagley Jr., a lot of things have remained the same and many positive, inspiring changes have taken place. A wise Mahatma Gandhi once said: "you must be the change you wish to see in the world", thankfully I still believe this to be true.

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who lives with the environment in mind. If you would like to contact the Green Matters team email [greenmatters@fredericton.ca](mailto:greenmatters@fredericton.ca).