

Treat others with respect and dignity - it will catch on

BY LEO VALDES, NORTH SHORE NEWS APRIL 17, 2013

Dear Editor:

Seventeen years ago, we bought a house in the Upper Delbrook neighbourhood of North Vancouver. Two weeks after we moved in, my wife gave birth to our third child, our beautiful daughter. Our car, a van, became the right size for our family.

My wife drove the kids to school with the van every day, leaving the baby with grandma at home. I took a bus to work in downtown Vancouver from a bus stop just at the corner.

After a long day's work, I'd take a crowded bus home. By the time it got to my neighbourhood, I could get a seat and look out the window. Just before my stop, I would see my two sons sitting on the branches of their "own" trees, reading comic books, and my wife at the doorsteps with our daughter in her arms. What a wonderful sight to come home to! So, at the bus stop, as I am leaving the back doors, I shout, "Thank you!" to the driver. After all, he brought me safely home to my family.

Every day, I'd say thanks to the bus driver for bringing me home. Sometimes, people would give me strange looks. But since I got started saying thanks, I decided to keep doing so. This went on for months. After a while, the bus driver would wave back at me. As far as I remembered, no one else thanked the bus driver.

The following year, family schedules got more complicated, so we bought a second car. I drove the kids to school before heading downtown to work. I stopped taking the bus.

Many years passed, and the kids are grown up. My tree climbers have learned to drive cars. Once again, I had to take the bus downtown.

On that very first day coming home in the bus, as the standing room thinned and I finally got a seat, something unusual happened.

On every requested stop, people leaving the back doors were shouting "Thank you!" to the driver! Seniors, teenagers, nannies, business people, foreign students and kids. At every stop, they said "Thank you" as the doors opened. And the bus driver responded by saying, "Have a great day!"

How did courtesy become the de facto standard in this bus, when it was an anomaly years ago? Did I have anything to do with this?

I believe courtesy is a slow-acting virus. If you start being nice - if you start treating people with respect and dignity - others will eventually follow. It does take time.

To this day, when you take the 246 bus, at about 5 p.m. onwards, you will hear people thank the driver in the Delbrook and Montroyal areas.

Leo Valdes, North Vancouver

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