

## COMMENTARY

YOUR VOICE

## Some people care; others can't be bothered

By HOWARD V. SANN

like a bad one," I said.

Dinner was bittersweet. My 20-year-old daughter was going back to college in the throes of another break-up with her boyfriend, who was now moving into her dorm.

"You don't have to talk to him anymore," I said.

"How can I not? It's not nice."

"Boundaries are healthy."

"It's uncomfortable," she said. "Awkward."

"After a while," I said, "awkward becomes comfortable." She didn't believe me.

It was after 9. As we walked her to her car around the south side of Sherwood Diner, we heard sirens then saw two police cars race by on Post Road.

Hugging my daughter, I said, "You deserve better."

"Love you," she said. She got into her mother's car, opened her cell and took a call.

We stood by our car, waiting, watching until she started slowly backing out. Suddenly, we heard a bottle clanking on the pavement. She stopped, rolled down the window to look. On the driver's side was a small, green soda bottle. Unbroken. "Did this fall out?" I asked, picking it up.

"No," my daughter said.

"That's weird," said my wife.

## ABOUT THE WRITER

Howard V. Sann is the owner of Victory Ink, a Bridgeport-based communications company.

It had come from nowhere. I put the small green bottle on the other side of the metal guardrail that separated the diner from the parking lot and waved as my daughter left.

As I latched my seat belt, through the rearview mirror I saw four or five tall guys walking past my daughter's space to a dark blue Honda SUV. They could've been high school seniors or in college. Backing out, I turned and looked again and saw one of them, with short, dark hair, saying something to the others as he looked over the guardrail where I'd put the bottle.

"He's reaching for it," I said, incredulous. "He picked the bottle up," I continued, dumbfounded. My wife and I looked at each other, perplexed. When I turned to look again, they'd all disappeared inside the SUV except the one dark-haired kid, who was looking around, holding the bottle discreetly at his side. As I pulled forward, our eyes met for a split-second. Then, in my side view mirror, I saw him approach the

front tire of the red car next to where my daughter's had been.

Instead of driving out, I made an abrupt right into another parking space between two cars, knocked off the lights, shut the engine off and watched.

The dark-haired kid had wedged the bottle under the front tire and was adjusting it. Now I knew where the bottle had come from. He got up, climbed into the dark blue SUV and the SUV pulled out, right past us, a picture of normality.

When the SUV stopped at the stop sign at the exit, I said, "Read me the plate." As my wife did, I repeated after her as I wrote it down. When the dark blue SUV turned right onto Post Road toward Westport, I got out, went over to the red car, removed the bottle from under the front tire, put it back behind the guardrail, this time snuggled inside the curved steel post, ran back, got in the car and jerked it into reverse as if I were in pursuit.

"Should I follow them?" I asked, braking at the red stop sign.

"For what?" my wife said.

"To see where they live."

"And then what?"

"I don't know." I went left on Post Road toward Southport.

"We should call the police," she said.

"They take daddy's SUV, booby trap a car — it's random — eat, see the prank failed, try again, then bring the car home. Maybe a girl gets a flat and crashes. They never know anything. They never did anything. Nothing ever happened."

"We should call the police," my wife said again.

"OK," I said, irritated.

"Don't be upset with me," she snapped.

"I'm not upset with you, just unnerved," I said. "OK. Call the police."

As she opened her cell, we came upon the accident we'd seen from the highway almost two hours ago — policemen and firemen surrounding a pickup truck and a badly crushed SUV, its doors removed.

"Oh, God," my wife said.

"I'll call from home," I said.

Back in Black Rock, I got the Westport police on the phone, told the desk officer where I'd been, what I saw and gave him the plate number. "The bottle's still at the diner," I said, with CSI precision.

"We don't do Bridgeport," the officer said. "You'll have to come in and file a complaint."

"But it happened in Westport," I

pleaded. "You mean you can't do anything?"

"You'll have to come in and file a complaint," he repeated, as if I were hard of hearing.

"OK, thanks," I said, hanging up, shaking my head. "We have to file a complaint. On the highway, you see a maniac driving, you call 9-1-1 and they dispatch a car to go after him."

My wife and I just stared at each other. I broke the silence with: "We did nothing."

"You removed the bottle," she said. "Maybe saved someone some trouble."

"It doesn't feel like enough." At that moment my wife pulled a 3x5 postcard from her inside coat pocket. It was from Ken Johnson's memorial — a substitute prayer card made by the family with a picture of Ken as a boy, looking mischievous. "What a face," I said, sighing, flashing back. "I loved what his girlfriend said, what was it? I can see Ken now, up there in Heaven, with a tool in his hand — fixing wings."

"Angel wings," my wife corrected.