

TWO HORNS
Wednesday, June 3 at 7:30 pm
Virtuoso works for French Horn solo and duet featuring father/daughter duo Allene and Martin Hackleman.
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Bad piping sparked \$4M condo blaze

Vent pipe ignited joists, joists started vinyl siding burning, then gas meter ruptured, investigator says

LAURA DRAKE
and ALEXANDRA ZABJEK
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EDMONTON

A massive May 6 fire that destroyed a south Edmonton condo building and left several people homeless was caused by an improperly installed pipe, fire officials said Friday.

Fire investigator Capt. Craig Kerry said the two-alarm blaze started because a pipe that vented hot gases from the building's boiler was installed too close to the wooden joists that supported the breezeway.

"There has to be a specific clearance based on the gas and plumbing code. In this case the clearance wasn't enough," Kerry said.

"So after a period of time, you're going get heating in the wood and it's going to ignite."

The temperature of the wooden joists reached its ignition point in South Terwillegar Village's Building No. 4 just before 9:30 p.m. that evening.

Kerry said one resident smelled smoke and went outside to find a

small fire blazing on a chimney chase.

"It was a small fire at that point; the flames were only two or three feet off the ground and it was basically directly on top of the area of origin," Kerry said.

The man tried to call the fire department but his portable phone went dead.

He went around the corner to another occupant of the building and together they dialed 911.

"When they came back around the corner to look at the fire, it had already lapped up the chimney chase, because it was covered in vinyl siding, and then it spread across the roof of the breezeway and then over to the west side of the building and got all that vinyl siding going," Kerry said.

The fire encroached on a gas meter, which ruptured.

"At that point you had approximately 80 pounds of natural gas pressure spewing into the air, which was ignited by the flames."

The building was soon engulfed in flames. The fire ultimately caused

\$4 million in damage at the new complex. Kerry said three units in the destroyed building, which was still undergoing some construction, were occupied.

Vanessa Troock and her boyfriend, Ryan Lays, were two of the people made homeless by the blaze. Their beagle puppy, D.O.G., was trapped inside their burning condo for almost an hour before being rescued by firefighters.

Now, the couple and their dog are living in an apartment their insurance company found, Troock said. She recently learned that they had lost more possessions than initially thought, since everything in the basement was ruined by water damage even though it wasn't burned in the fire.

With the fire investigators determination about the wrongly installed pipe, Troock said she and Lays are weighing their options.

"I'm not exactly sure what we're going to be doing yet. We've got a lawyer," she said. "You buy a home, you expect it to be built properly."

See FIRE / B2



A firefighter battles a blaze that destroyed a south Edmonton condominium building on May 6. Fire officials say the fire was caused by an improperly installed pipe.

LARRY WONG, THE JOURNAL FILE

Never say never to a Botox injection

Men didn't use to cry or get pedicures; things have changed

Todd Babiak



For more than one generation of men, retiring into Clint Eastwood's face was an honour. Eastwood had earned those lines, wrinkles, creases, scars and sunspots riding steeds, shooting scoundrels and bedding damsels in the lonesome West. It's a rugged and soulful look, an outer projection of his wisdom.

It's a romantic notion, that we should all age naturally. Women quietly rejected it some years ago.

In the waiting area of Cosmedics this week, a nurse called three women from Yellowknife into an examination room to see Dr. Ashwani Singh. One was a regular Botox customer, another had flown to Edmonton for an injection of Restylane gel.

"Are you three going to hold hands?" said the nurse.

"You bet!" said one of the women. All four of them laughed mildly, like teenagers climbing on a carnival ride for the 10th time. I was permitted into the examination room, as Singh drew circles under the woman's eyes with a white crayon. "The face is like a deflating balloon," he said. "We don't talk about wrinkles anymore. It's a whole lot easier to prevent a wrinkle than to treat a wrinkle. This is all about volume replacement, the mechanics of lift."

He injected the clear gel into one of the woman's cheeks and invited us



Journal columnist Todd Babiak receives a BLU-U blue light acne treatment at Cosmedics.

RYAN JACKSON, THE JOURNAL

to compare the two sides of her face. The difference was extraordinary, yet she didn't look "treated." The entire procedure took less than 15 minutes.

"This is so good for my image," said the woman, as Singh held a mirror over her. Yellowknife just got a little prettier.

The atmosphere of easy joy in the medical spa — looking better is fun! — doesn't always extend to a small but growing percentage of Singh's clients: men. Shortly after the women left, a well-built gentleman arrived for a Botox injection into his forehead.

"He told me he could never tell his buddies about it," said Singh. "But he also said his friends would be the first ones to come in here to get it done, quietly. It's the difference between men and women. We just don't have that ability to talk to each other, honestly. This is where women are far, far more advanced than we are."

For some years in North America, the "metrosexual years," appearance and sexuality were linked. A man going into a medical spa for sweat reduction treatments or Botox injections



Cosmetic physician Ashwani Singh injects Botox in 42-year-old Michael Clark's face.

RYAN JACKSON, THE JOURNAL

into his forehead, laser skin resurfacing or microdermabrasion, chemical peels or photofacials, was at risk of seeming either girly or gay. Those who had the confidence to ignore such labels were considered

narcissistic, excessively vain.

Singh said the recession seems to be changing that. More and more men are coming into Cosmedics and its two Urban Body spas for assessment and treatment. "A lot of middle-aged men are suddenly forced to compete with younger men for jobs, maybe one reason," Singh said. "But there's still that stigma, for some men."

Men spend thousands of dollars babying their cars and their front lawns. We spend hours at the gym. I was completely convinced by Singh (who I happened to meet at the gym). We're completely messed up! Delusional! Why shouldn't we look as young as women?

"So when do you want to come in for a treatment?"

I was, despite my philosophical transformation in the gym, frightened. Not because I'm desperate to preserve my masculinity (a losing battle ever since I cried at a *Little House on the Prairie* rerun, in front of several male friends, when I was 17). But because I didn't really want to think about my failing appearance — those lines, wrinkles, creases, scars and sunspots. I like to bury

flaws, like dead pets.

Singh is very persuasive. A five-minute swab of the skin around my nose, for a fascinating new DNA test that would measure my inherited and environmental susceptibility to skin cancer, turned into an hour and a half of treatments over two visits. Under the care of Urban Body Clinic director Judy Normandeau, I received demos of a bit of everything — the photofacial, the microdermabrasion. Armed with the DNA analysis, Singh and Normandeau gave me frank analyses of my skin: the sun damage, the acne and chicken pox scars of my youth, inexplicable blotches, a hole from that time a gentleman punched me in the face in a Whyte Avenue parking lot.

"Do you know how hard it is for some men to come in here?" she said, with a slight Spanish accent. "To deal with those self-esteem issues that are so important in our lives? People see our faces every day. It is our window to the world."

On Thursday morning, she gently attacked my window to the world with a laser. "You're a little bit pink," she said immediately afterward. "But it's not bad."

Michael Clark, 42, a Cosmedics patient, had also received a pixel skin resurfacing treatment Thursday morning. He was somewhat less pink.

Clark has received two Botox injections, but doesn't suffer from peer-related anxieties. This may be because he is very tall and built like Conan the Barbarian; it is difficult to imagine a sane redneck questioning his masculinity.

"I spend a lot of time in the gym, eating well, taking supplements," he said. "The most I ever did was slap some sunscreen on. But I see a real difference already. If I can prevent wrinkles later, with Botox now, it makes perfect sense. It's that stigma handed down from generations of our fathers, that you don't cry, you don't get pedicures. Things have changed."

Clark raised his eyebrows. There were no wrinkles.

I had always thought of myself as one of those men who would go through life without having Botox injected into his forehead. On Thursday I became one of those men who has Botox injected into his forehead.

As I was leaving the clinic, Normandeau placed her hands together sympathetically. "I'm sorry you have to go back to work. You are a little red."

See BABIAK / B7

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