

BROCK'S BANTER: A good, strong palate cleanser

By Brock Weir

One upon a time, in a land far, far away ? Agincourt ? I received a firm rebuke after making a passing comment about wanting to ?kill some time.?

Said within earshot of a relative in his twilight years, I was lectured there would come a time when I would regret saying anything so foolish. I thought it was merely a figure of speech, not having considered what it meant from a philosophical standpoint and all the implications attached to it.

However, I quickly wised up and saw his point of view.

Since then, I never actively looked for ways to ?kill time,? but the times they are a-changin'.

I'm sure many of you were overtaken by morbid curiosity last week to watch the Republican National Convention. I fully admit I was too. After all, it is always good to keep an eye on what our neighbours are doing every once in a while. Just in case of an emergency.

The convention started off innocently enough with the typical run-of-the-mill speeches one would expect in such a venue, quickly descended into comedic territory with the aspiring First Lady's loving homage to the incumbent, the time the Stars-and-Stripes-washed Ted Cruz exposed his receding Canadian backbone telling fellow Republicans to vote their conscience, and various other talking heads coming forward to offer their takes on the proceedings which, to my mind, offered an insight into some alternate universe I have yet to crack.

Then came the big night, the grand finale, when the newly ? and finally officially ? minted Republican presidential nominee came forward to deliver his speech to rally his supporters and bring skeptics into step.

The general tone of this affair was everything one would expect as well: those blindly following him finding themselves in states of ecstasy, stopping just a couple of steps short of speaking in tongues so they couldn't drown out words from their leader. (After all, they have talking points they had to spout at the water cooler the next day, to the dismay of their reasoned co-workers.)

Those with a wider outlook on the world, however, received exactly what they expected to be delivered: the same blowhardery that has been offered by the candidate since he jumped into this race and the other Republican run-offs he dipped his petite foot into before pulling it out and shaking it all about, telling Republicans they weren't yet ready for his greatness.

Ready or not, here he comes.

Personally, I zoned out for a chunk of the speech but I sat up and took notice when the Republican nominee said he was going to outline his plan to ?make America great again.?. Steeling myself, hoping to learn something, I warmed up some leftover tea and eagerly waited for a plank or two.

They've packed up Cleveland and gone home, but I'm still waiting as the Democrats move into Philadelphia, swanning into the place with their own scandal and merry band of Bernie-or-Busts who seem to have the same disconnect to reality as their Republican brethren.

Thankfully, in our 500 channel universe, there were no shortage of options to flip to as a palate cleanser once the sideshow shut down for the night, and I enthusiastically exercised that option, eager to stop my mind from reeling at what I just witnessed.

Indeed, the other options stopped the spinning but I was still dismayed.

I needed to find stronger stuff elsewhere.

A nice antidote came on Saturday morning on a trip to the Aurora Farmers' Market.

Under the beautifully sunny sky, I was there to catch up with Ontario's Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown as he toured some of Aurora's cultural highlights with Mayor Geoff Dawe and Councillor John Abel. After stops at the Cultural Centre and Public Library, they were ahead of schedule, so we sat down on the bleachers to talk about some of Aurora's burning issues.

The result was the most effective palate cleanser I've had yet from the nonsense dominating the American political landscape.

?We had become almost Republican in our positions, always voting against everything the Liberals did,? said Mr. Brown. ?I say there is no monopoly on a good idea. We will vote for anything if it makes sense for Ontario. I am not going to be blindly ideological or blindly partisan.

?I don't care who you love, where you're born, the colour of your skin, how much money you have, if you belong to a union or not, you have a home in our party. People want to be fiscally responsible. They want an honest, transparent government. They don't want something rabid and ideological.?

Regardless of whether one supports Mr. Brown, Ms. Wynne, or Ms. Horwath, or whether one writes off what he said as mere platitudes, after the divisive fear mongering and sheer hate stemming from Cleveland last week, and whatever comes out of Philadelphia this week, it is a refreshing change of pace, and one our neighbours would be wise to follow.

But, that ship has sailed.

And, with apologies to my late grandfather, I have no hesitation in daydreaming how nice it would be to go to sleep in a comfortable bed and wake up at the end of next January when whoever wins the fight for the White House is safely installed and we can move on with our lives.