

BROCK'S BANTER: Deeds Indeed Speak

By Brock Weir

It was a strange request, but we had to roll with it.

Little over a year ago, I received a frantic phone call from a gentleman regarding an item that appeared in a Dufferin County newspaper I happened to be editing at the time, in addition to this one.

Both the person who initially picked up the phone and I could tell immediately he was quite upset about the blurb. The only problem was I didn't personally remember putting it in the paper.

He was getting married, he explained, and his in-laws-to-be were evidently doing their due diligence in learning everything they could about the gentleman their daughter or son was marrying. In the process, they apparently found something that didn't quite pass mustard and were kicking up quite a fuss about it.

After a bit of digging, we finally figured out what it was: our caller was charged with impaired driving two or three years previously and his shame was out there for all to see, particularly relatives or relatives-to-be who had the most basic understanding of how to Google a name.

The fact that his name and his 'shame' was part of the permanent record was something he had to live with but it was a fact he only had to live with once his prospective in-laws got wind of it.

He was charged with his offence while whizzing through a relatively small town on his way back to the big city where he lived, hardly paying a second thought to the ramifications of his actions in the community of just over 8,000 people.

He requested that his name and offence be removed from the online edition of the newspaper; his argument being that he had paid his penance, as it were, and, in the intervening years, his lessons had been learned.

He was a new man, he claimed!

Whether or not he was a new man was a matter between him, his spouse-to-be, and the police department of his place of residence. But if he was blowing the proverbial smoke on his change of behaviour at the time, it seemed from talking to the gentleman that he was sufficiently shaken enough by his misdeeds being online that he would think thrice about getting behind the wheel of any vehicle after having a drink.

'Naming and shaming' these impaired drivers was the standard operating procedure for this community's police department for as long as

I was with the paper, before migrating to another publication just to the east. In a community as small as it was, it was not universally supported. After all, chances were in a community of 8,000 people, one name of a local charged with impaired driving is likely to be known firsthand by any reader, or someone in their family at the very least. Impact was invariably swift: word spread and, before long, a transgression was the talk of the town.

For people in the orbit of the offender, this was, of course, seen as a negative, but those on the outside looking in thought it had an overall positive impact on the community.

So, I personally welcomed the news Monday that York Regional Police was going to follow the lead of other smaller police departments and begin naming and shaming individuals who still have not heeded the message that impaired driving might just be dangerous to themselves and those around them.

'It's clear that something has to change,' said York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe in his announcement. 'Effective immediately, York Regional Police will name all of the drivers charged with impaired-related criminal driving offences to further make impaired driving socially unacceptable and so that members of our community can assist with notifying police if these offenders choose to drive while under suspension. Innocent lives are put at risk every day by this irresponsible and criminal behaviour. We are not giving up.'

The final straw, it seems, came over the weekend when the YRP grappled with 16 individual drivers across the Region who racked up 27 individual impaired-related criminal driving charges related to alcohol and drugs.

Their new policy will see them list the names of offenders every Monday, beginning with this past Monday, and the first go-round resulted in the public shaming of drivers from Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Toronto, Vaughan, Milton, Ajax, Ancaster, Georgina, Markham, Richmond Hill, and Newmarket.

The fact that Chief Jolliffe had to imply in his statement that impaired driving is, in some quarters and crowds, deemed socially acceptable is disturbing in and of itself, and the surest sign that this policy is a step in the right direction. Time will tell if it ultimately proves effective in curbing the sheer volume of impaired driving charges, but it is an experiment that both long overdue

and well worth having.

I am curious what you think about this bold approach by York Regional Police. Please send your views to brock@auroran.com.

WELCOME ABOARD

As I write this on Tuesday, the Council of 2018 ? 2022 is just hours away from formally taking their oath of office. This is always an exciting time for Aurora ? at least for those who have a modicum of interest in civic life ? as new and returning leaders set out their goals and objectives for the next four years.

Aurora has a new Mayor in Tom Mrakas, a new Councillor in Rachel Gilliland, and a familiar returning face in John Gallo, with the balance returning incumbents.

It is, in my view, an interesting mix in that the majority of Council members, given their platforms on the campaign trail seem to be largely on the same page about many of the key issues facing this town in the not-too-distant future, whether they are big ticket items like the development of Library Square and the renovations of the Aurora Armoury.

That being said, however, it is clear that there will be some pockets of opposition, which is healthy in any democracy. Opposition will serve to provide varied ? and vital ? viewpoints around the table that should, if exercised correctly, lead to stronger, better-thought-out positions at the finish line.

One can only hope that this Council does not fall into the trap that other incoming Councils here and elsewhere have fallen into: losing the momentum given to them by residents to undue decisions made by the previous administration.

I wish all our new representatives the best in exercising the responsibility given to them by the people of Aurora.