

BROCK'S BANTER: How much can change in a week?

By Brock Weir

Who could have imagined that when we woke up last Wednesday morning that in just a few short hours we would have something collectively pressed into our psyche? Yet another one of those moments where one's children or grandchildren will inevitably ask, 'Where were you when???

Of course, with last Wednesday's events so fresh in our minds, there is no real need to fill in that blank.

For those of us who saw it unfold live on television, the internet, over the radio, and even by word of mouth, perhaps it might be wise to consider what images from the day, and the days that followed, will remain fresh in our minds.

It might be a small, inconsequential act of defiance, or it might be a natural reaction to such cowardice, but I would wager the most lasting images in our minds will not be those of a 'radicalized' Canadian. Rather, the poignant images of Corporal Nathan Cirillo, father of one, proudly standing guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, will probably stand the test of time. These images spread quickly throughout social media, but only following on the heels of the photos taken almost immediately after; those devastating images of the same man, lying at the foot of the tomb, as tourists and passers-by rushed to his aid, including Barbara Winters, doing everything in their power to assist the man whose life was slipping away.

For others, it will be any one of the amazing images of Sergeant-At-Arms Kevin Vickers, springing into action, to take down the gunman at the end of the Centre Block's Hall of Honour - an unthinkable scenario just a few short days ago.

Closer to home, some may have been particularly moved as flag after flag across Aurora was lowered, whether at Town Hall, the Aurora Public Library and, in particular, at the Aurora Cenotaph, the latter of which particularly drives home the point that these far away conflicts, the kinds of conflicts that ultimately led generations of men overseas, is inching ever closer to home.

Some, however, might have been impressed by the more-than-slightly alarming sight of increased presence by the York Regional Police on site throughout the day at the Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe Armoury; a completely understandable, yet undoubtedly jarring image.

While those images ruled the day in the immediate aftermath of the incident, Thursday gave way to something else entirely: a city, and a nation, defiant. Those images had their own degree of poignancy as well. From the leaders of Canada's parties, Stephen Harper, Thomas Mulcair and Justin Trudeau, gathering at the National War Memorial early Thursday morning to pay tribute to the newly fallen, to the spontaneous round of O Canada that broke out in the crowd, they were images not soon to be forgotten.

However memorable these were, they were soon eclipsed by Mr. Vickers, carrying on with the business at hand, leading the ceremonial procession into the House of Commons like it was any other work day. Of course, it was anything but, as Members of Parliament of all stripes rose to give him a thunderous round of applause lasting several minutes, rendering not only Mr. Vickers, but anyone who happened to be watching, speechless.

Rounding out the sights that will stick with us for a very long time are images of Cpl. Cirillo's two German Shepherds peering out mournfully from their front gate beside makeshift floral tributes to their master, awaiting a homecoming that will never be.

By Friday, of course, those images were followed by his body making the final return to Hamilton, as thousands lined the Highway of Heroes, a route which has, in recent years, mercifully become a testament to a sad chapter in our collective history, rather than a vein which ran straight through our collective hearts. Now, that is a path that is raw once more.

Depending on our respective points of view, it will be hard to say which of these images will be the first that pop into mind years down the road when we hear mention of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, Corporal Nathan Cirillo, or anything else that evokes the events of October 22, 2014.

This week, let's linger on the scenes that unfolded in the House of Commons on October 23 when the leaders of Canada's three main parties cast aside their political differences, years of vitriol, and season after season of attack ads, to embrace, put on a united front for all Canadians, and a united front which underscored how petty party politics can be at the end of the day.

On Monday, Aurorans headed to the polls and elected their Mayor and Council for the 2014 - 2018 Term. For some, it was the end of a long, hard-fought road. Some were returned to their posts, some will now begin a crash course on Aurora's affairs and in learning how to be an effective Councillor. There were bumps along the road for everyone, with the campaign taking a particularly nasty and ill-conceived turn in the final days with an anonymous leaflet or two advising people who to, and not to, vote for.

Some, over the course of the last few months, might feel they have been personally maligned in the process, some might be freshly calloused not realising how thick one's skin needs to be when throwing themselves into the political arena, while others might feel somewhat relieved sizing up the eight who will be joining them at the Council table - or not joining them, as the case might be.

The last Council was inaugurated at the beginning of December, 2010. As per tradition, our newly elected Council will take the helm this December as well. Four years ago, the inauguration got off with what some felt to be an inauspicious start when one councillor concluded his first speech with the phrase, "Let the games begin."

But there is still just over a month away before the 2010 - 2014 Council fades out and the light shines upon the 2014 - 2018 term. Last month, it seemed inconceivable that I would ever recommend politicians take a leaf out of Stephen Harper's book - or even that of Thomas Mulcair or Justin Trudeau - but we now live in a strange, uncertain world.

To those politicians who will be our local leaders for the next four years, look to the actions of Harper, Mulcair and Trudeau this week. Cast aside your political differences, at least temporarily, put your respective heads together, forget the idea of being beholden to any particular constituency other than Aurora as a whole, and evaluate what you can do as a nine member collective to make a positive impact on the Town.