

BROCK'S BANTER: Lasting Legacy

Creating a Lasting Legacy

By Brock Weir

One week on, it now feels appropriate to ask whether everyone has fully recovered from the weekend of May 3.

After all, when so many organizations in Town decided that would be the weekend to remember, they weren't messing around. I heaved a sigh of relief at the bright, sunny, nearly cloudless weather on Saturday morning. It was just a few short hours after the Society of York Region Artists launched their 51st annual Juried Art Show and Sale, but the real action was to begin that day with the opening of the newest season of the Aurora Farmers' Market and the myriad of festivities surrounding the 125th anniversary reunion of Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School.

Amid the chirpiness of everyone basking in what felt like the first true day of spring, I looked ahead to the next day when the Queen's York Rangers were due to host their appreciation lunch, raising money for their Regimental Assistance Fund, followed by the promising Aurora 150 Tattoo, organized and hosted by the Town's Sesquicentennial Ad Hoc Committee.

The weather would be a good sign, I thought, for the lunch held outdoors at Machell Park, but questioned whether it would have an impact on the Tattoo. Would you turn up the chance to catch some much needed rays in favour of the stuffy atmosphere of the Aurora Community Centre no matter how spectacular the event promised to be?

Evidently civic pride won the day and as someone who had been looking forward to the event, I was relieved to see the lineup of people waiting to get in stretch around a good portion of the building.

The event did not disappoint, with performers coming together from across Ontario for a colourful event that will surely live on in the memories of the people that packed the arena.

After speaking to David Veitch, the event's musical director the previous week, the precision and intricacy of the event was all the more remarkable considering they had only been able to have their first rehearsal together as a nearly 300-strong group just that morning.

Congratulations are in order to everyone involved in putting this together, and I look forward to seeing what's in store for the rest of the year.

As the sights and sounds of last weekend fade ever so slightly into memory, I do wonder what will be the lasting legacy of these commemorations. They will provide lasting memories for the people that were there, but what about the years ahead?

Reminders of celebrations of yore, milestone anniversaries, national and international celebrations, and remarkable people who have left their imprints can be found across Aurora if you look hard enough. Aurora's Centennial Celebrations in 1963 can be found in the old Aurora Public Library Building. Just four years later, the Aurora Community Centre was built with grant money to mark Canada's own Centennial, a landmark event which was also commemorated with Confederation Park.

Just two short weeks ago, a permanent reminder of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was inked for Civic Square Park, but, so far, Aurora's own 150th anniversary hasn't fared as well.

Thankfully, the Aurora Community Arboretum has stepped up to the plate and will be naming an official Sesquicentennial tree, one which already had its roots firmly planted well before 1863, coinciding with this year's Canada Day Festivities.

The Town and the Sesquicentennial Committee are planning a time capsule and a virtual memory book to collect stories, anecdotes and mementos, but those are hardly initiatives the kids who attended last weekend's tattoo and 'tough mudder?' will be able to point to for their own kids and grandkids.

Will the \$10 million proposed Hillary-McIntyre Heritage Park, at the end of the day, turn out to be that special something? Given the divisive reaction to the project, however well-intentioned it is, doesn't make it a likely candidate.

So, now what? What would you like to see as a permanent reminder of this year's milestone? Is it worth a permanent reminder, or are these festivities sufficient?

A few months ago during a Council meeting, Councillor Wendy Gaertner said something that made me chuckle. In a discussion about drawing people into certain neighbourhoods and creating 'destinations?', she mentioned a family tradition she has where every time they visit the Art Gallery of Ontario they like to take their photos at one particular nearby statue.

I laughed, not because that is a silly tradition (and it certainly isn't; I think that could be kind of fun!) but images came to mind of what Aurora could do to follow suit.

Glenn Gould wasn't from around these parts, so we can't install a sculpture of him sitting on a bench outside the Cultural Centre. But would it be any kind of a draw to put a statue of Lester B. Pearson on a bench in front of his old school so people could stop and pretend to shoot the breeze? Probably not.

Would people get a kick out of posing alongside a larger-than-life Fleury Plough? A few snappy ' and rude ' slogans come to mind with that initiative, but that's probably not the ticket either.

What about a cast-iron replica of the Old Woman Who Lived in a Sisman Shoe?

Surely we can think of something better!