

BROCK'S BANTER: Goddess of the Hunt

By Brock Weir

A pair of burgundy track pants paired vividly with a ratty, neon orange FUBU t-shirt, which my eleven-year-old self really had a nerve to put on.

A full order of take-out from 4 Seasons, the Main Street Newmarket Chinese food staple.

Cantonese chow mein, steamed rice, barbequed pork, sweet and sour chicken balls.

Ice cubes tinkling in a frosty glass of coke.

All of which made a wooden TV table groan under the weight.

I was sitting in a comfy, grey armchair ready for a late, late dinner.

A remote control was on the right arm of the chair and, as we ate our meal, I asked my grandmother if she minded if I flipped around the channels for a bit.

We were watching something of such little consequence it left nothing but vapour in my mind. The rest? Those are fine details seared clearly and permanently in my mind.

As I flipped channels downward, I zipped past ABC News, which was running a special news bulletin.

What was on the screen took a moment to register and I continued flipping until I saw a flap behind me from the corner of my eye.

Two generations of family females telling me to go quickly back to ABC and to the live coverage of what was, at that point, the bulletin Diana, Princess of Wales had been injured in a Paris car crash.

It was a long evening, but it was history unfolding before my young eyes.

Up until that point, I had heard my parents and grandparents recall with a degree of wonder, clouded with some lingering shades of horror, knowing exactly what they were doing, exactly what they were wearing, exactly what they were feeling at just such moments, whether it was the assassination of JFK or, under happier circumstances, the Moon Landing.

As soon as what I was seeing started to sink in, I knew this was the first time I would be experiencing just such a moment.

I have been a monarchist for as long as I can remember, so Diana, Princess of Wales was very much a part of my upbringing.

The Prince and Princess of Wales were, of course, regular fixtures in the media, but they were also fodder for plenty of conversation at family gatherings, for better or worse.

As strange as it seems today, the War of the Waleses was seen as perfectly appropriate table talk for someone who was just seven during the 1992 so-called ?annus horribilis?, as well as for a mature nine-year-old when the ?war? reached its zenith with the Princess of Wales' bombshell Panorama interview.

So, by the time they eventually divorced in 1996, I felt I had a vested interest in how it all turned out, not yet fully comprehending all the significant constitutional consequences the situation had here and throughout the commonwealth.

No one, of course, ever expected it to turn out how it did and it seems almost incomprehensible today; not just the tragic crash and the untimely deaths it caused, but the near worldwide mass hysteria it caused.

There is a fine line between myth and legend. Some people ? Wayne Gretzky for sports fans, Robert De Niro for movie buffs, and (insert politician of your choice, I'm no fool) for politicos, to name just a few ? become legends in their own lifetimes.

Despite being aged just 36, Diana was one such person.

In death, however, she became something more.

If I had the time, I would like to trace back just when, from my perspective, the late Princess of Wales became less of a legend minted during my own lifetime and when she acquired the patina of a near-myth.

Perhaps it was indeed the singular collective nervous breakdown that surrounded her death which bumped this up to a different level, but different it is.

Despite living through her heyday as a working member of the Royal Family and, later, as a tireless charity worker, her memory has acquired an otherworldly quality. It always happens when the light of a superstar is extinguished just as it burns its brightest.

It also tends to happen when the full picture of the person is lost as their most genuinely brilliant attributes are lionized while all human foibles and frailty are airbrushed away or swept off the larger canvas.

In this case, however, I think a great deal of this is the question of unfulfilled promise.

Once Charles and Diana had settled their differences and seemed to have settled into a more or less happy existence as co-parents, it seemed both of them were once again poised to reach their full potential.

Charles was able to get on with the business at hand, working tirelessly on the myriad benevolent initiatives he has carved out for

himself as Heir to the Throne. On Diana's part, she seemed more content and comfortable than she ever had been, energized to tackle timely and tough problems facing the world. One such example was the scourge of landmines which were, at that point, continuing to wreak havoc in so many war-torn parts of the globe.

She used her star power to highlight this problem and it affected real change ? even if this change was realised mere months after her death.

Of course, how much she could have achieved, if afforded the time and opportunity over the last 20 years remains untold, and that, in turn, has become a cornerstone of the myth.

Thankfully, we do have a mere hint of what might have been, with her sons and, most recently, her daughter-in-law doing their utmost to realise this potential not only with the way they are carrying out their royal duties but with the causes they champion. In the next few weeks, for instance, Toronto will welcome injured and wounded servicemen and service women from around the world for the Invictus Games, an initiative spearheaded by Prince Harry. Together with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, this trio have also kick-started a very important ? and fresh ? conversation on mental health through their Heads Together initiative, a movement that is ongoing and is, in turn, affecting real change for those who need it.

Over the course of time, the legacy and impact of Diana has come to mean different things to different people.

Despite her being a contemporary for so many of us, there is a new generation for whom she is simply a part of history seemingly far removed from the world of today.

While this week's milestone anniversary seems to have opened up old wounds in some quarters, it would be beneficial to focus on the positive and look to the future as her family furthers her legacy in ways that are unique to themselves.