

BROCK'S BANTER: Let's Do The Time Warp

Let's Do The Time Warp Again

By Brock Weir

Sit down and get comfortable. I have a confession to make.

Ensure your tray is in the upright position, swallow all liquids. We don't want a spit take to ruin your paper or computer screen. Here goes?.

I'm a history nerd.

Okay, that was somewhat anticlimactic for regular readers of this space, I agree, but bear with me.

This is something I have always known, but never really gave a second thought until this week. The realisation came out of a discussion between friends on an internet forum I maintain as a hobby which does, not that I think about it, have a historical connection.

Somewhere along the way this discussion of what would be one's ultimate fantasy (get your mind out of the gutter) turned into, ?If you had your choice of one superpower, what would it be?? Some had the usual suspects like flying or invisibility, but mine was time travel.

More often than I care to admit, I occasionally like to pause at a quiet moment wherever I happen to be, whether it is simply in my backyard or in a more exotic, far-flung locale and ponder who or what had trod the ground under my feet 50 to 100 years, or even millennia previously.

Who had these people been? Where were they going when they had this particular plot of earth underfoot? If they had their eyes firmly affixed on the horizon, what landscapes would they have seen on the landscape if they stopped to take a look around?

This fascination is not limited to location, but also historical events.

Programs such as ?Mad Men? regularly reframe historical assassinations and scandal through the lens of their main characters, but I wonder how momentous and historic events from our history would be covered today through the lens of the 24 hour news cycle and social media. What minutia, now lost to the ages, would have been analysed, over-analysed and otherwise beaten to death in this environment, which would not have ordinarily garnered a mention when they originally happened? Would certain aspects of an event resonate more with the people of today, whether on Facebook or Twitter, that were just shrugged off the first time around? For those of a similar mindset, it goes without saying that CPAC was History Nerd Nirvana this weekend when they joined forces with the BBC to air all 7.5 original broadcast hours of the Queen's Coronation on the 60th anniversary of the day the spectacle unfolded.

This was not a simple walk through the historical park, but someone had a stroke of genius to do a livestream of the event online as well, open to everyone, not blocked by geographic area as these things so often are, that was accompanied by a liveblog of events ?as they happened.? Sort of.

Blogger Andrew Thompson live blogged the event for CPAC in conjunction with some of the real-time material sent out by Buckingham Palace over Twitter, along with fascinating photos from Library and Archives Canada, their own collections, and museums around the world to make history come alive.

They also invited international viewers to leave their comments. People from across Canada, Australia, and, I believe, even one poster from Tanzania were able to leave their impressions as they progressed, whether they were cheering on the sea of Mounties on parade throughout London, or leaving their own memories of either them or their parents lining the streets to watch this unfold. Viewers shared photos, wagered who was in each carriage, mused about the 1953 television production values (or lack thereof from today's perspective), and gave an opportunity for Canadians who believe the nation would be better served by a republic to make their feelings known and stump to get a few people onto their side.

Nevertheless, as I watched the ceremony unfold on my TV and computer screen before setting out for the annual Aurora Street Festival*, it struck me what a brilliant way this is to engage people of all ages, but particularly students, in events of the past and make them come alive through the Internet and social media, which has become such an integral and inescapable part of life today. Consider for a moment, how much more exciting our history or mandatory Grade 10 Civics lessons would have been if we had chance to watch events such as Expo 67, aspects of Trudeaumania, or coverage of any of the wide variety of political assassinations of the 1960s or the FLQ crisis unfold in real-time, distilled in easily digestible bits, encouraging dialogue and conversation.

Or, in keeping with this year's Aurora 150 theme, for the Aurora Historical Society or the Aurora Cultural Centre, to take it upon themselves, root around town for people's home movies of local events, parades, and openings of the last 50 years or so, and have an

online stream and live blog afternoon for students?
I'd hop in my time machine back to Grade 10 and sign up for that.

*And my congratulations once again to the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and everyone associated with this year's festival. It's an event which seems to get better each year. In terms of providing a feast for the eyes and ears, organizers topped themselves.