

BROCK'S BANTER: One for the Books

By Brock Weir

It should come as a surprise to absolutely no one in this town that, like old habits, old fights, grudges, and bruised egos die hard. This can be seen anywhere you look, from the grand scale of skirmishes which continue to be fought over centuries-old religious slights, or the small annual classified at which runs in a number of Canada's larger newspapers every year reminding people of the true victors of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, just to rub a little sel in the plaie.

Then there are the old quarrels, seemingly dead and buried for decades, which can percolate to the surface quicker than Instant Sanka.

Consider for a moment when our newsroom at Carleton University received a new publication from ?Canada's New Government?, a term which had already well-passed its sell-by date, celebrating the many designs which came forward before our proud emblem was selected in 1965.

At the time, I was known for my predilection for some traditional aspects of Canadian life. People took it for granted that I would have been firmly in Diefenbaker's camp advocating that Canada keep the red ensign.

Not so, I told the room to their mock shock ? the Pearson Pennant all the way. What ensued, however, was a surprisingly heated debate on the merits of each submission in the printed material, from the wackier beaver-laden designs to the more traditional designed steeped in rich (and, in some cases, reaching) symbolism.

Eventually, we came to the conclusion that the Pearson and the final design were the only viable submissions, and with the top two, debate became fierce.

Standing outside our office on Yonge Street last week, however, I had flashbacks to these heady days as I watched a woman heading southbound on the east sidewalk dressed in the Red Ensign.

No doubt on which side of the debate she would be on, I thought.

?Happy Dominion Day!? she cheerfully exclaimed to those of us standing on the ?royal boxes? as our Town Crier calls the steps outside the old post office building.

Happy Dominion Day? That removes all doubt.

It was a nice way to set the tone for the rest of the day which mixed our very dynamic present with our complex, yet still dynamic past.

After our Diefenbaker surrogate continued on her way, festivities well and truly began with yet another colourful Canada Day outing. Led as always, by the Crier. The excitement level seemed unusually high ? and not without good cause.

There was much to celebrate by the end of the long weekend. Our 2013 Citizen of the Year was crowned in an emotional presentation by Mayor Dawe, and our U9 Stinger Girls Soccer Teem were recognized nation-wide as BMO's Team of the Week. With only 15 teams awarded this honour each year, it is a significant achievement, to be sure, and one to always be proud of. As they marched, there seemed a certain degree of pride that they were singled out by the Bank of Montreal for the stellar work they have done in the community just in time for Canada Day.

They weren't only BMO's Team of the Week, or Aurora's team, but Canada's team ? and I think they did us proud.

The present met the past soon afterward at the launch of the Canada Day festivities at Lambert Willson Park. With plenty of family activities running throughout the day, as per tradition, an additional attraction was going on tucked just behind the main action: the dedication of the Sesquicentennial Tree. The cycle continued as the Aurora Historical Society launched their ?Aurora Collects? exhibition, charting not just Aurora's part, but their own future as they re-establish a permanent museum space within the Aurora Cultural Centre after a much-felt absence.

If you would have told me that by heading back to the park I would hear the sounds of Leonard Cohen and Lil Wayne intermingled into a presentation which inexplicably worked, I would have called you crazy. But that is exactly what transpired by the time Samantha Ryan was named Aurora's 2013 Teen Idol. Look forward to seeing a lot of this very talented Grade 10 Student from St. Max in the months ahead.

As the busy day concluded at dusk, feet sore, mildly sunburnt, and just about reaching my saturation point in patriotic cheer, it was clear by the time fireworks lit up the night sky, and mosquitos hit the jackpot on my bare legs, that this certainly was a Canada Day to remember, and a fitting way to mark the Town's milestone birthday.

SNEEK PEEK OF NEXT WEEK

If you have been enjoying Jeff Doner's series with former Canadian tennis champ Brendan Macken, The Auroran kicks off a new series of interviews with Aurora's former Citizens of the Year. The series begins next week with an interview with the vivacious Annabelle Black, Aurora's second Citizen of the Year, and first female recipient. Ms. Black, who describes herself as a 'big talker?', put her mouth to good use, advocating causes which had significant impacts on many individuals, and using her creativity as part of the tight-knit group of people who put together Aurora's Centennial Party in 1963.