

BROCK'S BANTER: See you on the other side

By Brock Weir

There has been a certain nearly-indescribable feeling in Aurora over the past week.

It isn't any one particular thing that has contributed to it, but a host of singular events and individuals that have conspired to bring a warm and fuzzy feeling to this guy who can rarely be described as 'warm and fuzzy.'

The first seeds of this feeling were sown at St. Andrew's College on Wednesday night when I had the privilege of attending the 2016 Induction Ceremony for the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

Always an impressive evening, celebrating the great and good ' and the past and present ' of our sporting community, there was an excitement in the air, a sense that was certainly not dampened by the unexpected arrival of Bobby Orr as part of Team Stemmler.

The warm and fuzzy seeds started to sprout on Friday visiting Rick Hansen Public School to see generations of students and staff coming together to remember the fallen, and the veterans of yesterday and today.

These sprouts came into full bloom at several key weekend events: the official grand re-opening of the Hall of Fame on Saturday morning, followed by the Remembrance Dinner at the Royal Canadian Legion and Parade on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

It is always awe-inspiring to be in the presence of men and women who took it upon themselves in some of the darkest days we have ever experienced to put their lives on the line for the greater good and something bigger than themselves.

This was a point driven home by the guest speakers that evening and poignantly illustrated once again the following morning.

Typically, Remembrance observances at the Cenotaph can be dreary affairs, muddled by blustery winds and frigid rains, often augmented by a mixture of snow and hail.

Sunday could not be more perfect as the blazing sun warmed the impressive crowds and backlit the golden autumn leaves still determinedly clinging to their branches.

Always an impressive sight, I left the ceremony buoyed by what I had witnessed, a feeling that has been hard to come by over the past few weeks.

Last Monday, this news junkie made a personally monumental decision: Except in the event of a particularly monumental international or domestic cataclysm, I would ride out the remainder of the American Federal Election Season abstaining from any 24-hour news station hailing from south of our border.

Don't pooh-pooh that. For someone like me, that is a big deal. Speaking as an individual who once-upon-a-time built his weeks around the three presidential debates, keynote speeches at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, and key documentaries shedding light on who each of the main candidates are as individuals, it had to be a quick break, cold turkey, no tapering off or weaning off the whining.

At first, the withdrawal seemed harder than giving up Coke and other soft drinks nearly two years ago but, as soon as I did, despite a few shakes here and there, it was the best decision for my own personal wellbeing.

Something had to cut through the cacophony.

There comes a point where after months of talking heads, campaign surrogates and even the candidates themselves spouting off about any of the non-issues of the day, ignoring the issues that have the most direct impacts on voters, their voices blend to a harsh white noise that pounds at, but never penetrates, the brain.

Was there any particular breaking point? Perhaps it was that time I made the mistake shuttling between MSNBC and Fox News just before bedtime and subsequently lying in bed awake for the next four hours going through any number of doomsday scenarios. Or maybe it was the time the weekend before last I was on the treadmill, plugged into earbuds, only to find myself going on an internal rant at some of the nonsense being spouted by Rudy Giuliani on the TV above me. Only I wasn't ranting in my head; I was ranting out loud and only realised this after letting out an utterance that can't be printed in a family newspaper and finding the treadmillers on either side turning to look.

They were surprised, I was surprised, and I nearly lost my balance. Had I not recovered, I would have flown backwards off the belt and taken out a former counterpart at The Aurora Banner who was on an elliptical behind me. He would have been surprised as well. Tuning out, as it happened, turned out to be a good decision. Muting the white noise and turning to American newspapers, reputable blogs and other sources, one is able to cut through the bluster and gain perspectives on issues well beyond the myopia of 'emails!' and Choose Your Own Adventure: racist, sexist, predator, Putin puppet, fraud, ablest?

With that also came a sense of peace as logic rose to the top.

But all bets are soon to be off.

I'm writing this at 12 noon on Monday. We're in the last full day of the campaign before polls close on Tuesday night. We won't know who the ultimate victor will be before we go to press this week (more on that ? and how! ? next time) but I'm confident in saying the victor, no matter how the chips fall, won't be the American people.

At the end of the day, there will be a lot of healing required on both sides but the road to that point will be long and arduous. One candidate more than any other has fuelled their campaign by tapping into the long-simmering anger and hatred that has been festering under the surface for decades and has lanced the boil. Like toothpaste back into a tube, or a genie out of a bottle, that pus is not going to be sucked back in.

Whether they win or lose, the stench will permeate not only the corridors of power, but communities as well. We can only hope it doesn't waft over our borders as well.

So, let's wish our neighbours well, hope they make a decision they are comfortable with, and cast all that aside to commemorate, celebrate and remember all those people in our country, the Commonwealth, and our friends to the south, who were once the envy of the world, who stood for something, knew right from wrong, and were prepared to lay down their lives to defend it.