

BROCK'S BANTER: Slow and Steady

By Brock Weir

For some reason this year, I was gripped by Aurora Street Festival Fever. That is not to say it is not an enjoyable event year after year, but I was particularly looking forward to this past weekend's festivities. I chalk this newfound appreciation to two factors: the first, doing the whole length of the Street Festival, and back, for the first time last year. And, two, finding one booth in 2014 that, as luck would have it, held the missing piece to completing my collection of Golden Key 'The Lucy Show' comic books, which were published between 1962 and 1963. Taking things in, in its entirety, is really an eye opener to what the Festival actually holds, and the number of businesses Aurora and the surrounding area have to offer. And who knows what you're going to come home with! My excitement for this year's event was tempered somewhat on Friday night when, after a nice meal of Cantonese Chow Mein, I cracked open my fortune cookie and found the following message: 'You have a slow and unhurried natural rhythm.'

Insulted by this rude piece of communicate, I began to wonder whether the message in the cookie was a precursor to Sunday's Street Festival. Was I about to be Tonya Harding'ed by a rival, impeding my efforts to make it all the way from Wellington to Murray? Was it a sign the skies were going to open up in a downpour, making the jaunty stroll a slog?

Ultimately, and thankfully, the message was not worth the paper it was printed on, and it turned out to be a lovely day, and the turnout was fantastic.

It seems the first Sunday in June is the one day where all of Aurora comes together and flows downhill to form an incredible sea of humanity in the dimple that lies between the Aurora Public Library and Park Place Manor. And, even if you don't buy anything in particular, this sea of humanity is always fertile ground for lessons and observations about life in Aurora.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

As a fleet of vintage-style biplanes circled the Street Festival a number of times between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m., I could only hope those on board were engaged in some sort of scientific count of the number of people filling Yonge Street at that particular moment in time. This year's event, going on my highly scientific method of measuring elbow room, there seemed to be more people in attendance than every before. Yonge Street was a veritable solid convoy of people moving in either direction very shortly after opening at 11 a.m. Curiously, however, there didn't seem to be any particular parking crunch and less than normal fender benders on the hunt for a coveted spot. Perhaps someone has finally uncovered the 'adequate' number of parking spaces in Downtown Aurora we have heard so much about.

THE POLITICAL DIVIDE

Once again, the Aurora Street Festival bucks the national trend. When it comes to politics, there is no such thing as a right wing or a left wing, but the Liberal Party once again maintained its Provincial and Federal stronghold at the north end of the Street Festival. Although the Federal Conservatives 'MP and MP hopeful alike were playing Switzerland, holding court somewhere in between, the Provincial Progressive Conservatives held their own, as is tradition, near the south end of the affair at Dunning Avenue. This was a particularly valuable piece of real estate once upon a time as it was right outside the constituency office of Frank Klees. Perhaps the PCs are keeping the spot warm looking for another chance at glory.

CRACK AT GLORY

Speaking of the Progressive Conservatives hoping for another chance at Provincial glory, newly-minted party leader Patrick Brown was on hand for part of the day helping to keep the home fires burning. Working his way into the crowd, he joined local members of the party faithful at their booth, meeting the crowds there and elsewhere along the Festival route. A nice touch, and a feather in the local PCs cap, to be sure, but with a Federal election just a few short months away, it's a shame Lois Brown, Costas Menegakis, Kyle Peterson and Leona Alleslev, Conservative and Liberal candidates, respectively, for either side of our Federal boundaries, couldn't bring in Stephen and Justin to provide a boost.

ODDITIES

'Have you ever wondered why we're called odd?' asked one gentleman with an eye-catching beard. Before I chose a winner from the multitude of clever responses that came to mind, it seems he just assumed I had and proceeded with the explanation. It turns out he was a member of the venerable Oddfellows, who have called the block in front of the Old Post Office home for the better part of

the century. Having passed this building every day, I had assumed (wrongly) the plaque outside the building was a reminder of the service club that called the building home when it was first built, but you know what they say about the people who assume. With this mystery cleared up, I'm intrigued to find out more.

A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME

Proceeding up and down Yonge Street at a speed dictated by the thickness of the crowd ? and not by a fortune cookie ? makes you sit up (as it were) and take notice of your surroundings. Although I must have passed it thousands of times, this year's Festival was the first time I truly paid attention to the old home on the north side of Cobblestone Lodge. With little activity seeming to happen on the property, I wondered just what lay behind those walls. Perhaps, in the future, a Doors Open Yonge Street would be a spectacular addition to this already popular festival.

THE GRIP

The Aurora Street Festival is always fertile ground for new gadgets, whether they are electronic or even something to help you in the kitchen. Of all the tools that were on show this time around, the one that intrigued me most was a freebie ? this time handed out by CHATS. ?Do you want a jar gripper?? asked the volunteer. I initially turned it down, but after taking one in hand I am thankful I changed my mind. According to the label on the back of this yellow gripper, it bills itself as, in order, ?a jar opener, non-slip coaster, light bulb remover, screw driver gripper, sink stop, garlic peeler, loosens medicine bottles, protects table tops.? Writing this a few hours later, I can attest to its first claim, but I look forward to trying out the rest. I don't know about you, but when I think it comes to using this as a sink stopper and garlic peeler, it might be a good idea to choose one or the other!