

BROCK'S BANTER: The Newmarket 6

Farewell to the Newmarket Six and 2013

By Brock Weir

On Friday afternoon, I was asked by one of the players in the Buck Trial, a trial of which I think it is fair to say has dragged on far longer than anyone anticipated, if I was going to be back in court when it resumes at the end of next month.

?Yes,? I replied with a weariness that was apparent even to myself.

But, as that elevator went down to the ground floor, it almost seemed like a rhetorical question. After all, we have all been stuck in Courtroom 403 for five straight weeks (with the exception of two days spent in room 404, a courtroom clearly designed on rejected plans for a CNE funhouse). Whether anyone had anything personally riding on the outcome or not, time conspires to create an almost emotional investment in its outcome.

Therefore, my heart sank a little bit on Monday when it became clear dismissing the six member jury would be on the table that week, with a decision likely rendered by Thursday. It wasn't for the arguments of either the plaintiff or the defendants, but for those six unfortunate souls who had been sharing in the five week ordeal, copiously taking notes, diligently scrutinizing both evidence and witnesses, and keeping wonderful poker faces at some of the colourful flourishes thrown around the courtroom from time to time and from all sides.

It had been fascinating to watch their reactions to those instances and ponder what was going through their minds. Perhaps a barometer was how furiously they were writing, how they were shifting in their chairs, or seeming to get lost in their thoughts for a second considering what might be a key legal point. My own thoughts then turned not only to what was going through their minds, but what kinds of things they weren't doing.

What would they be doing had they not been holed up in that courtroom keeping a balanced weight on the scales of justice? Would they be working at a desk or out on the road in their chosen field? Would they be tending to someone's health, or a steady flock of customers looking to complete their Christmas shopping? Teaching kids or waiting for the kids to come home from school?

By week five, despite having my own backstories made up in my mind for each of them, I was nowhere closer to knowing the truth, other than the conclusion I did not go to elementary school with Juror #3 as I originally suspected.

So, when Justice Edwards gave the jury his decision on the jury's fate after already releasing it to the rest of the courtroom, I was watching closely to see how they took it. Those well-practiced poker faces did not betray any relief or excitement, nor did it reveal any dismay or frustration. It was very impressive. Any springs I may have detected in their respective steps I chalk up purely to wishful thinking.

Personally, if I had been up there for five weeks, missing so much of my own life to any particular case, it would have been highly disheartening not to see it through to the end, although being able to tackle a mounting to-do list would have been a welcome change of pace, particularly at this time of year.

So, with the plaintiff, her family, the six defendants, their respective lawyers, media, and a smattering of curious bystanders released back out into the real world, at least until January 22, it was off to tackle that to-do list in earnest, catching up on work that had, by default, been forced to take a back seat to the case dragging on in Newmarket, taking advantage of valuable writing time, now-rare opportunities to check a few people off my Christmas shopping list and, most important of all, catch a few winks. I'm sure everyone in that courtroom had a remarkably similar list.

So, as this is our last issue of 2013 before returning once again to a nice and fresh New Year, this trial has been a remarkable close to a rather remarkable year. It is a year that has weathered teachers' strike action, giving students at Aurora High School a valuable lesson in taking their extracurricular activities, particularly when it comes to visual arts into their own hands, brought two visits of the Grey Cup to Aurora, and braved a brass-monkey freezing February 3 to help Aurora officially ring in its 150th anniversary.

From that auspicious start, it has certainly been a year to remember from the highly entertaining and well-executed Aurora Tattoo, followed by three days of merriment during the Canada Day Celebrations ? including more people than I have ever seen in Town Park at any one time to catch Lighthouse ? and culminating in the extremely soggy, but warm and welcoming Community Cultural Celebration.

Although I was critical about the amount of time it took Council to get their respective ducks in a row (before they bantered back and forth about which end of the proverbial horse the proverbial cart should be placed) and strike a group to plan a birthday bash, the committee members rose to the challenge.

And they surmounted just about every unexpected issue they found in their way.

I hope that Council pays heed to some of the Committee's recent recommendations to use a healthy portion of their leftover funds to create a legacy, a legacy which can rejuvenate itself and flourish as a lasting testament to this special year for future generations. With that, I bid you a safe and warm Holiday season, and a happy and healthy 2014. See you in January!