

Editorial

Country music fills head and heart

My latest wanderings through out community - over hill and dale, around Roy and Dale - took me to Norval's Riviera Productions/Club 2000 late last week. The late lamented Riviera Club has undergone numerous ownership changes over the years and similarly, the entertainment packages offered to the public have also undergone numerous facelifts.

The location now goes under the moniker Riviera Productions/Club 2000 and caters almost exclusively to the country and western crowd. In this endeavour, those in charge are doing a bang-up job of providing top-notch entertainment.

Johnny Burke, a Canadian country and western music legend - and treasure, it should be added - was the featured performer the night I attended and although the crowd was sparse, he was full value for a night on the town. Quiet and unassuming off stage, he comes alive once he straps on the guitar and steps into the limelight on stage. You might say he's a cross between Tex Ritter and Buck Owens, with even a little bit of Roy Clark thrown in, in a mischievous sort of way.

I had a chance to sit and chat with Johnny and glance through his bio.

Of undetermined age, Johnny was born Jean Paul Bourque, in the French Acadian community of Rosaireville, New Brunswick.

One of 13 children, Johnny came from a music-loving family and encouraged by a cousin, he learned to play the guitar.

In the '60's, Johnny packed up his six string and trekked to Toronto.

His big break came when he performed at the famous Horseshoe Tavern with a group which called itself The Blue Valley Boys.

For the next four years he backed some legendary country and western music performers including; Lefty Frizzell, Tex Ritter, Loretta Lynn, Red Foley and Charlie Pride, to name just a few.

He backed Carl Smith on the CTV national network program, Country Music Hall, and it was through Smith that he became fluent in English - albeit with a southern United States accent with hints of the 'Cajun' dialect.

His hit record, Wild Honey, was chosen the top single in 1978 and he is still doing studio work and 'taking his show on the road'.

I enjoyed Johnny Burke's company and his music and over my usual fare of milk and cookies reflected back on the time, many moons ago, when I had aspirations of being a star of stage, screen and comedy. As it turned out, mostly comedy.

I worked the road for about two years doing the northern circuit. My erstwhile music career took me to such bastions of civilization as Larder Lake, Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls, Barrie and Sudbury, to name the high points.

With my guitar and rented equipment, I usually just hoped to make enough money to make it to the next stop. All the while hoping to be "discovered."

I did get to meet Gordon Lightfoot's sister, while playing in a Barrie night spot and in retrospect, that might have represented the high water mark.

I remember leaving Barrie one wintry evening, broke, because I had lost most of what little money

"As I See It"

by Colin Gibson



I had the night before in a poker game.

I was hoping to make it to my parents home in Cochrane where I could at least get some decent food and a warm place to lay my head.

I made it to the outskirts of Kirkland Lake, when the storm got so bad, I knew I couldn't continue. I pulled into the first hotel I came to, and after jawing with the bartender, struck a deal where I would be fed and housed for a few days by doing a couple of sets a night for the mostly uninterested patrons of the place.

This worked out alright until I got into a fight with the same bartender, two nights later, and he proceeded to break my guitar over various parts of my anatomy leaving me 'hors-de-combat' - not to mention sore.

I hooked my rented equipment, eventually made it to Cochrane, contacted the store where I had rented the equipment and reported it's theft.

Another time I was working a hotel in Sudbury that, in an understatement, was pretty rough. Believe it or not, there was sawdust on the floor. Not for the dancers, but because the sawdust soaked up the blood from the numerous fights that would break out and it made it easier to clean the place up.

I also had a strange arrangement worked out with the manager. Whenever a fight broke out, I was to get off the stage and out of range until things calmed down. Some nights, I got away with playing only a few songs. Maybe my songs had something to do with the fighting.

One night, this little old guy, bow-legged and buckled over, approached the stage and asked if I could play San Antonio Rose. Always the cool type, I said loud enough so everyone could hear, "I'd sure like to try, Pops."

He beckoned me down to the floor and again, being the cool type, I thought it was because he was hard of hearing.

I never saw the punch he threw, but I remember sliding through the sawdust and coming to rest against a wall.

The old fellow came over to me, stuck out his hand, as I was lying on the floor and said, in a loud voice, "Now can you play San Antonio Rose?"

"Which key do you want it in," was all I could reply.

My music career lasted roughly - very roughly - two years.

This all came back as I was listening to Johnny Burke perform.

Riviera Productions/Club 2000 has another treat in store this coming week for country and western fans when "BIG" Terry Sumson rolls into town.

Country and western music goes right to the head and heart. Especially after you've partaken of milk and cookies.

As I see it, anyway.

The Halton Hills HERALD

Home Newspaper of Halton Hills - Established 1866

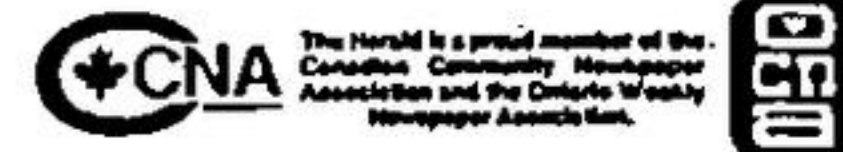
A Division of Canadian Newspaper Company Limited
45 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 3Z6

K. ROBERT MALCOLMSON
Publisher and General Manager

877-2201

EDITORIAL — COLIN GIBSON Managing Editor ROB RISK Sports Editor
Staff Writers: Ben Dummell, Lisa Boonstoppel-Pot
ADVERTISING — DAN TAYLOR, MANAGER Jeannine Valois, Stacie Roberts, Craig Teeler, Kim Haryott
PRODUCTION — DAVE HASTINGS, MANAGER Myles Gibson, Susanne Wilson, Stu Robertson
CLASSIFIED — Joan Mannell, Shirley Jessop
CIRCULATION — Marie Shadbol
ACCOUNTING — Jennie Hapichuk, Accountant and Inga Shier

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Single Copy (in Stores) 25¢
Halton... \$54.00 year
\$29.00 six months
\$16.00 three months
Canada... \$90.00 year
\$48.00 six months
\$27.00 three months
Foreign... \$170.00 year
\$90.00 six months
\$50.00 three months
GST and Provincial Sales Tax where applicable are extra
Second Class Mail Registered No. 0934



The Herald is a proud member of the Canadian Community Newspaper Association and the Ontario Weekly Newspaper Association.

The Herald claims copyright on all original news and advertising material created by its employees and published in this newspaper. National Advertising offices: 65 Queen St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5H 2M8, 884-1710 or 840 Cathcart St., Montreal, Quebec.



National exams would build character

Ever since politicians took up the current debate about whether Canada's school kids should have to face national exams, many of you have been writing in to ask, "Ian, what do you think about this crucial issue?"

Well, actually you haven't. This has been a bit disheartening, but I'm trying to rally.

In any case, I'd just like to take this opportunity to state my opinion. Which is that Canada's school kids most certainly should be writing national exams.

They should be writing them at the end of each school year from Grades 1 to 12, and occasionally during the summer holidays.

This is very important, since it's an excellent way to build their character.

Now granted, I haven't always felt this way. As recently as 17 years ago, I would have argued hotly against the concept of national exams.

This is partly because, in 1974, the nation just wasn't ready for it. And mainly because I was still in school.

National exams and I wouldn't have been well-suited to each other, considering that my approach to high school was always predicated on the theory that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Rather than boring teachers with my presence, I favored making brief - and thus, I hoped, welcome - cameo appearances.

But in the intervening 17 years, I've reassessed my position. In particular, I've recognized the danger in the common misconception that education should be enjoyable, or even educational.

Now that I'm safely out of

Weir's World
by Ian Weir
Thomson News Service



school, I can see the majestic truth of the great dramatist Sophocles' observation: we must suffer to grow wise.

This was certainly the central premise of the great British educational system, as any reader of Victorian novels knows.

In Victorian novels, parents didn't stop to worry about finding a school that would nurture their child's capacity for self-expression. They just shipped him off to Headmaster Hardbottle at Thrashtheboys-on-Bottom.

This was a hit hard on the boy. But it built more character than you could shake a stick at.

Naturally, I didn't have any personal experience with this sort of thing. But I was threatened with it.

It got to be quite a regular occurrence, actually. My father would gaze sorrowfully at my mother, and say: "If Ian doesn't want to abide by the rules of this house, perhaps he'd be happier at boarding school."

The specific boarding school he

had in mind was one run by the Anglican Church somewhere up in the Arctic Circle.

I never found out what this school was really like. But I got the impression that the curriculum consisted largely of 50-kilometre runs through the Arctic tundra under the watchful eye of mad monks.

In retrospect, I'm sure it was nothing like this at all. But my father never seemed inclined to correct my impression.

The closest I ever came to a Traditional British Education was - amazingly enough - in Britain.

I did a year's graduate work at the University of London. An initial shock was discovering that the whole degree rested on four days of exams. A special, bonus shock came when I was sent a list of exam regulations.

My favorite clause was the one stating that, in case of illness, a student was welcome to submit a note from his doctor explaining why he hadn't done as well as he might have on the exam.

In other words, illness was no excuse for missing an exam. If you were undergoing open-heart surgery on exam-day, the surgeons were expected to wheel you into the Hall and help you mark an "X" on your paper.

Your doctor would then write a letter to the university, stating: "Mr. Weir's analysis of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales might have been more insightful if he had not been under a general anesthetic."

And after surviving this, I discover there's strong opposition to the notion of national exams for Canadian schoolkids? Life is just miserably unfair.

Write us a letter!

The Herald wants to hear from you. If you have an opinion you want to express or a comment to make, send us a letter or drop by the office. Our address is 45 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 3Z6.

All letters must be signed. Please include your address and telephone number for verification.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters due to space limitations.