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SPORTS

Things you may not have known about departing IFP reporter Eamonn Maher

Reporter's roots in Georgetown trace back to 1970s



EAMONN MAHER
Column

After 12-and-a-half years at the IFP, I've decided to leave the newspaper to pursue other interests. It was a difficult decision, since I've enjoyed my time here in Halton Hills and because writing for a newspaper is what I've wanted to do ever since I delivered The Mississauga News and Toronto Star as a youngster.

With age 50 coming up next year it just seems like time to do something else, but thankfully there's a plethora of fond memories of my time here.

My connections to Georgetown go back to the late 1970s when my maternal grandparents, dairy farmers from Northern Ireland, visited first-cousin Josephine Morrow on a summer afternoon and I tagged along.

Morrow's daughter, current Vancouver resident Mary Lynn Machado, is probably best known as one of the Academy Award-winning animators of the ill-fated baboon in the Hollywood movie Life of Pi.

(There's also a first cousin named John Maher, the drummer for the popular 1980s' British punk group the Buzzcocks. And no, my father Bill is not the guy who hosts a weekly political talk show on HBO).

Anyway, as someone who is blessed/cursed with a photographic memory, I still carry vivid images of my 70-something grandpa Charlie challenging a terribly bored eight-year-old to a sprint race in a Georgetown backyard, dubiously pulling up lame near the finish line to let me win.

Another cousin on my family's side in George-

town, Jean Stamp, prepared and presented a scrapbook of articles and video of former Jr. A Raider-

captain Frankie DeAngelis during his three years here, which helped land the smooth-skating defender a U.S. college scholarship. I didn't realize until the article was published that Jean was a relation.

Two neighbours of ours in the Clarkson area of Mississauga played for the powerhouse Streetsville Derbys' Jr. B hockey teams in the early 1980s, and to an atom house-league plugger, those guys were like the juggernaut New York Yankees.

My dad and I followed the dog-food-sponsored Derbys' games around the province, including a trip to Georgetown one frigid Saturday night to play the last-place Gemini.

Few people were in the Alcott Arena stands that night, but the club was obviously well supported as the first draw prize I ever won in my life was a bucket of Mary Brown's Chicken, for which I'm forever reminded has The Best Legs in Town. Thanks again Finn!

Before getting hired at the IFP, I attended a couple of games at the 2005 Dudley Hewitt Cup the Georgetown Jr. A Raiders hosted and won, beating the St. Michael's Buzzers and future NHL speedster Andrew Cogliano 3-0 in the final.

What struck me most and what is still a pet peeve of mine was that at times

Cogliano only required a stride or two to get through the Alcott Arena neutral zone, which from blue line to blue line is just 35 feet.

The explanation for this, according to former Raider coach Jay Anderson, is that the OHA sent out a directive to its centres in the mid-1970s that any new arenas built would be required to adhere to specific rink dimensions that included a minisize neutral zone. Thankfully it didn't become a trend.

Among the highlights of my tenure here was the Halton Hills Jr. B Bulldogs' run to the Founders Cup national lacrosse championship run in 2010, so many achievements by elementary and high school students, as well as the fantastic Georgetown Eagles' AAA youth baseball teams that captured Canadian championships as peewees and bantams under the direction of former Toronto Blue Jays' scout Bill Byckowski, local native Scott Van de Valk and former Toronto Sun baseball columnist Bob Elliott.

Even though I still feel like a relative newcomer, it's been satisfying to see the development of the town's recreational facilities, such as Trafalgar Sports Park, arena expansions and the Halton Hills Sports Museum, for which I have served on the Hall of Fame selection committee.

There are so many wonderful people I've been fortunate to deal with here and I'll try to reach out to as many as I can this week.

Going to miss being in the loop on the local scene but I feel like the newspaper is in good hands of our excellent reporters Alex Heck and Veronica Appia.

Cheerio!
- Eamonn Maher is a reporter with the Independent & Free Press and can be reached at emaher@metroland.com.