

Massey Hall, Lightfoot and Canada Day - can it get any more Canadian?

I've seen Gordon Lightfoot more times than I can count, but the very first time I saw him perform was in Georgetown, writes Ted Brown



TED BROWN
Column

And with him were his incredible guitarist Red Shea, and equally talented bass player John Stockfish. Both passed on a decade or more ago.

I vividly recall watching Red Shea that night - the first time I'd seen someone finger-pick a guitar. I was just becoming interested in guitar, and seeing his talent was an inspiration.

Red Shea stopped touring with Lightfoot in 1970, and later Stockfish retired too but was still invited into the studio when Lightfoot was recording, to add his distinct sound, like the bass runs in The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.

Those names, Shea and Stockfish, were like old friends, having seen them and others like Rick Haynes (still on bass) and Terry Clements (who took over from Red Shea, and also passed on a few years ago.) I felt like I was at a school reunion.

This was a special con-



Heritage Halton Hills/photo

When the Grand Trunk Railway arrived in Halton Hills in 1856, many rural areas became centres for business, including Norval. This photo from the early 1900s shows Station master Herb Jackson at Norval Station, located over a mile north of the village. Unfortunately, the location may have played a role in the demise of the station, with Brampton and Georgetown stations surviving the rise of the automobile and the Great Depression, while Norval did not.

Canada Day is always a special time for The Sidekick and me as we attend the Glen Williams celebrations every year.

This year was no exception, but we had another activity that day, thanks to a birthday gift from my daughter Maggie.

I received tickets to see Gordon Lightfoot at Massey Hall.

Massey Hall, Lightfoot on Canada Day - can it get any more Canadian than that?

I've seen Gordon Lightfoot at Massey Hall more times than I can count, but the very first time I saw him perform was much closer to home.

He played at Georgetown District High School in 1967 - 51 years ago.

cert, the final concert at Massey Hall before they start the two-year renovations to the grand old hall.

And who would be more appropriate to perform that final concert than Lightfoot?

He's played there more than 160 times.

So at 8 p.m., Canada Day, The Sidekick and I found ourselves seated at Massey Hall, waiting for the lights to dim.

Lightfoot will turn 80 this November, and he is showing his age a bit. But when he stepped out onto that venerable old stage, he received a standing ovation before even plucking a string.

I sat back as he ran through 26 of his songs - some recent, others vintage Lightfoot.

Emotions when through my mind as I was drawn back to being a teenager, listening to those old songs, especially when Lightfoot played favourites like Don Quixote, Minstrel of the Dawn, and Did She Mention My Name?

In 1968, I bought my first "real" guitar, with guidance from good friend Vern Denny. Vern had purchased his "real" guitar a few months before; both guitars were Aria guitars, and we were very proud of them. We called them the "Aria sisters" as they were

purchased only months apart.

Vern would "hold court" in the family room of the Denny residence, and I'd join him as we listened to Lightfoot's music, trying to emulate and copy Red Shea's styles - well into the wee hours of the morning. We'd often be joined by the others in our group - my sister, Mary Lou, and Gord McDonald - as we played, sang and tried to learn Lightfoot's music.

Today, Red Shea is gone, Terry Clements is gone, John Stockfish is gone - and my friend Vern is also gone.

But for a very brief time on July 1, I was trans-

formed from my seat at Massey Hall to another time and place - back to the Denny family room - as the sounds and lyrics washed over me; it was truly magical.

It will be two years before Massey Hall will be reopened, and two years can be a long time for performers in their 80s like Lightfoot.

But here's hoping he can once again return to the grand old hall, and in doing so, I can feel those timeless songs wash over me once again.

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