

AVRO TO WONDERBRA: LOCAL AUTHOR EXPLORES CANADIAN TECH

BRYAN MYERS
bmyers@metroland.com

Basketball, insulin, peanut butter and the jock strap, all have one thing in common: they were invented by Canadians.

"After that, the name recognition drops off and that's always bothered me," said Mark Rector, a professor of electrical engineering at Humber College who is publishing his first book, *Oh Canada! Our Home and Inventive Land*. "I decided to put an end to that one reader at a time."

The book is a collection of stories about Canadian inventors and their inventions - roughly 170 different inventions from peanut butter to the Wonderbra - and a surprising number of them are largely mistaken for American innovation.

"We've pretty much invented every single piece of telecom equipment you can name," Rector said.

While Alexander Gra-

ham Bell was born in Scotland, his invention, the telephone, was made in Canada.

Perhaps Canadian innovations are born out of necessity, Rector said; Canadians are separated by vast distances from coast to coast.

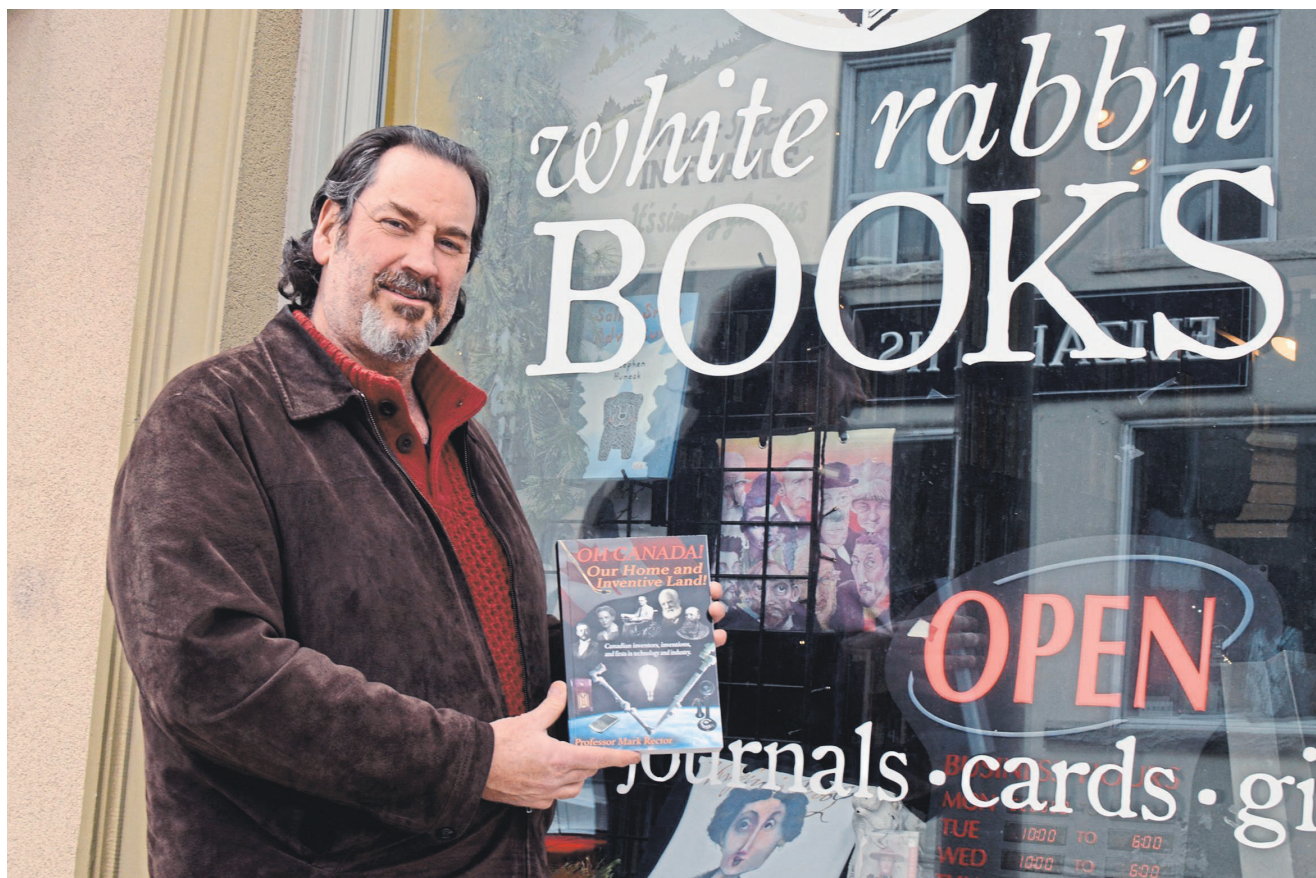
"We're still the largest users of long-distance telephone communications in the world," Rector said. "Probably because we're such a great nation of immigrants."

Reginald Fessenden, born in Canada, invented speech-by-radio technology, though he did that as an inventor in the United States.

"The only thing we can give them credit for is the transistor," Rector said.

Though most people believe it was Thomas Edison who invented the light bulb, Rector shed some light on the real story.

"Thomas Edison bought a light bulb," Rector said. "He bought a light



Bryan Myers/Metroland

Mark Rector, an electronics engineering professor at Humber College, published *Oh Canada! Our Home and Inventive Land*, a collection of vignettes about Canadian inventors and their inventions from the light bulb to the Canadarm.

bulb from two Canadian inventors from Toronto, Matthew Evans and Henry Woodward."

The pair of Canadian tinkers tried unsuccessfully for years to sell the invention to raise capital for production, before eventually selling the patent to Thomas Edison.

Rector said the inventors sold the patent for about \$5,000 - and the product would end up being worth billions.

"Six months later, the

headline on the New York Times was 'Edison invents light bulb,'" Rector said.

But that's not the end of the story: before the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, another Canadian was tasked with improving Edison's bulb. Reginald Fessenden, the AM radio inventor, improved the bulb to the bulbs still used today.

"We got no credit, and it was pretty much all us," Rector said.

Locally, a woman from

Esquesing Township, north of Milton, invented the 'compound heating stove,' becoming the first woman granted a patent in Canada in 1855.

Tired from chores, Rector said, Ruth Adam invented a stove that provided heat and a place to cook, cutting down on the amount of wood needed.

The Avro Arrow was invented at Lester B. Pearson Airport in Toronto, and the Canadarm developed at SPAR Aerospace in

Brampton.

The book is available at White Rabbit Books (118 Mill St.) in Georgetown, as well as independent book stores between Ontario and Nova Scotia. Rector will also be doing a lecture at the Oakville Historical Society on May 15 that is free to attend.

More information about Mark Rector and his book *Oh Canada! Our Home and Inventive Land* is available at www.profesormarkrector.com.



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