

Coming of age at Brampton A&W

Last week, I drove through Brampton, on the Queen Street strip, lined with fast food outlets and car dealers.

As I drove by, I thought about my coming of age nearly 40 years ago at the old A&W drive-in restaurant that was located there.

In the late-1960s, Brampton had the closest A&W location for Georgetown area car fanatics—it was the place where one could go to ogle the hottest cars on earth.

And one of the most embarrassing moments in my life was the first time I ever visited that A&W—back in those days when waitresses served customers their orders on trays attached to the side window of the car.

The Brampton A&W was my objective on one my first nights on the town with the family four-door sedan.

Accompanied by a young lady, I was doing my damndest to impress her as I backed into the spot. The waitress took the order, and returned with the food, complete with two large mugs of root beer balancing on the tray. She hooked it on the edge of the driver's side window of Dad's 1966 Pontiac Parisienne.

So far, so good—I was soooooo cool.

It was a cold night, so I pulled the food into the car, and rolled up the window, leaving the two mugs of root beer outside on the tray.

As my date and I enjoyed our Teen Burgers, I watched a great set of wheels rumble by and back into the parking spot beside my dad's car.

An impressive muscle-bound red 1969 SS396 Chevelle with massive tires, shook the ground as it parked beside us.

The driver glared in my direction. I grinned back.

Assuming he was impressed with what I was driving, I decided to make small talk.

I rolled down the window—too bad I forgot about those two mugs of root beer.

A
TED
BIT



Ted Brown

You know, there's nothing quite as sickening as the crash of two glass A&W mugs on the pavement beside the car. I just wanted the pavement to open up so I could crawl in.

And the driver of that SS396 Chevelle?

Well, he wasn't at all impressed with the root beer that dripped off the side of his car.

I mumbled an apology.

His reply? Suffice to say it was unprintable.

And I was pretty sure at that point that the young lady seated beside me was about ready to board the first bus back to Georgetown.

As the scowling waitress swept up the glass, I crept out of the A&W, trying to regain some sense of being cool. I beat a hasty retreat back to Georgetown, far from the smirking glances of the patrons at the A&W, but not far enough from the unimpressed girl beside me.

I don't think I ever took Dad's car back there, waiting instead until I had my own car.

And by then, I 'tried' to grow sideburns and my hair so the regulars wouldn't recognize me.

Over the years, we all mortally embarrass ourselves at one time or another. But each time it happens, we find it easier to shrug it off.

One thing is certain—for some reason, that first time is permanently seared in my brain.

And I'm sure the driver of that red 1969 SS396 Chevelle recalls it pretty vividly too.

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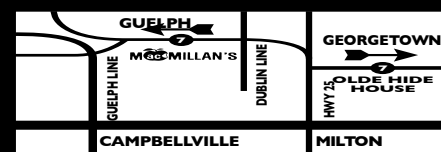
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