

'Brownstock' not Woodstock

First things first, I wanna say right up front here—I'm not really a 'birthday person.'

I have one every 12 months, I accept one once every 12 months and I carry on.

And I never feel the need to hide my age—most days I'm pretty proud of my vintage.

In my life, I can only think of two significant birthdays. One was when I turned 16 (for obvious reasons) and the other might have been 21 (also for obvious reasons) but the thunder and excitement of that one was dampened by the Ontario government when they lowered the drinking age to 18—two weeks before my 21st birthday.

I can honestly say I was bitter, but I've gotten over it... sort of. (Of course I've never voted Conservative since...)

But this past weekend, I turned 55.

Now I figure 55 is one of those 'manufactured milestone' birthdays. Unlike the 'Big 4-OH' and the even 'Bigger 5-OH,' I look at 55 as one of those intermediary milestones. It's kind of a pre-senior status and allows one to have a senior's card at Zellers and Shoppers Drug Mart, and get used to the idea—something like Junior Kindergarten status when one is going to school for the first time.

Even at 55, I still felt a birthday is another day. Other than being guaranteed some cake after a steak on the barbecue, it's a day, nothing more.

But last Saturday wasn't quite the same.

Youngest daughter Jenn decided she and I should attend the local Highland Games to watch the dancers (like we did when she was a highland dancer). After, I was going to drop her off to go shopping with her older sister.

"Oh Dad, I forgot a textbook," she said as we got back into the car. "I left it at your house."

"That's okay—you and your sister can pick it up after you go shopping," I said, trying to avoid a drive back to Limehouse.

"No, I need it right now," she persisted, "I wanted to do some reading as we drove there."

With thoughts of 'that kid would forget her

Ted Brown



head if it wasn't attached' going through my mind, I begrudgingly drove home to get the textbook.

Coming up the road I saw my sister's car up ahead, turning into my long lane. I figured she was dropping by to cut some peonies for a flower arrangement—she'd done it before.

As I crested the hill into my place, I suddenly saw more than just one car graced the yard. In fact, about 15 cars were parked in the yard, translating into 30-odd people, eight guitars, a couple of banjos, one electric bass and a mandolin.

As I parked the car, Jenn looked at me, smirking, "Oh, I just remembered Dad—I left that textbook in the trunk of your car."

I later learned my lady friend Alison and my four kids collaborated to throw a party in my honour, and in doing so, brought back many of my folkie friends, past and present, to have a barbecue and play guitars all day and half the night.

We called it 'Brownstock', a mini version of the famous Woodstock festival of 1969.

Lots of good food, cold beer and fantastic 'wooden' (acoustic) music filled the day—I can honestly say they 'got' me, hook, line and sinker.

But one significant thing did emerge from the gathering of those folk music aficionados.

I'm pretty sure there'll be another bigger and better 'Brownstock' in the not too distant future.

And with it, with lots more 'wooden' music.

—Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com



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