

A new Olympic ambition for young Canadians

You could have knocked me over with a piece of pasta last week when I heard that Canada had won the 1984 Culinary World Culinary Olympics. Think of it! Twenty-four gold medals. It's enough to make one forget recent hockey humiliations.

Canada has always been a nation of good plain cooks. Here, in the land where Kraft dinner and Pabulum were born, we practise a unique, no-nonsense cuisine that puts hair on your chest whether you want it or not. Back bacon on a bun, fries and canned gravy, macaroni and cheese—we grew up on them. And having grown, we diversified into regional specialties like onion soup and sour cream dip, battered smelts, dulse and cod cheeks. What a gastronomic spectrum!

Yet, we always seem to have a terrible time coming up with a truly national meal when a head of state comes to visit. When the newly elected president of the US comes for dinner at Sussex Drive this will be the menu: cream of fiddlehead soup, Arctic char and/or Winnipeg goldeye, wild rice, maple syrup mousse and a nice cold bottle of Baby Escarpment.

Some years ago, Pierre Berton suggested the following as a typical Canadian bill of fare: Oysters with pigweed, dandelion greens and onions; French Canadian pea soup; roast duck with fiddleheads, mashed pumpkin and potatoes and blueberry whip. Now there's a meal destined to stick to the ribs, and the hips and thighs as well.

We have always leaned to sturdy food

Shirley Whittington



because in this country we need something to keep out the cold. The Dominion of Canada Cookbook, distributed by the T. Eaton Company at the turn of the century features recipes for stewed eggs, collared calf's head and eel pie with strong fish gravy.

None of this would seem to produce a strong ethnic background for championship chefs, but our Canadian culinary team brought home the gold and embarrassed the dickens out of the French, who I hear are in a real ragout over the whole thing.

The US team was so upset it resorted to slander. "The Canadians shouldn't have won," pouted US chef Daniel Hugelier. "Sure, they had clean displays...but they did all the old traditional stuff, nothing original. And their pike mousse was rubbery."

That's a tough accusation to live with, but what the heck. It's probably just sour grapes.

Meanwhile Canadians have a new set of national heroes in the Olympic cooking team, and before long little kids will be begging their parents for copper-bottomed cookware for Christmas instead of goalie nets and ski

boots. Within the next decade, the following dialogue may take place in many a Canadian home:

Mum: Hello darling. How was cooking practice?

Kid: Okay.

Mum: Whaddya mean, okay? Did you make the team?

Kid: Well, not the first string team. But the coach says if I work on my meringue, I'll be his first choice if somebody gets benched. Like today, Ricky Zedlik hadda leave after he stuck his hand in the food processor. And the kid that turned it on got a three minute penalty.

Mum: You didn't make the A team? I can't believe this. Your father and I have been driving you to cooking practice ever since you were five years old. We bought you a garlic press, a salad spinner, a Cuisinart. We sent you to souffle camp. We got you Madame Benoit's autograph. And now you tell me you didn't make the team? What went wrong?

Kid: My stupid custard curdled.

Mum: Your...custard?

Kid: We were making creme caramel, and

I hadda do the custard. And it curdled.

Mum: (annoyed) Creme Caramel? For a primary, Pee-Wee House team? I always knew that coach was weird. He teaches you all this fancy Cordon Bleu stuff, but what about the basics? Can you clean a smelt? Make gravy? You'll go into the Golden Microwave tourney and you'll mess up on something simple like basic white sauce.

Kid: I know. He's always yelling at me because I can't make a smooth roux like my brother could. Sometimes I just want to throw the whole thing up.

Mum: That's no way to talk about food. Listen Sport, get your chin up off the floor and remember that even the greats like Julia Child and James Beard started off with simple things like boiled eggs and Rice Krispie squares. Don't throw in the potholder, not yet.

Kid: (music up—a faintly military combination of Hail to the Chef and Canadian Capers.) Golly Mum, I will. I'll practise every single day and go through all the leagues and divisions and who knows? Some day maybe I can cook in the major leagues.

Mum: Their scouts are looking all the time, son. And, then it will be time, to go into training for the Olympic team. Just hold that dream, and practice, practice, practice. Now sweetheart, I want you to take this cream...

Kid: Yes?

Mum: And beat it. Mummy wants to watch General Hospital. Today the Chief of Staff gets food poisoning.

Beats the hell out of sleeping in a box-car

IT'S been a long way from there to here. Just 40 years ago, I was lying on the floor of a box-car in north-east Holland, beaten up and tied up. And half-frozen. And half-starved.

Today, I'm sitting in a big brick house, with the furnace pumping away, a refrigerator stuffed with food, and my choice of three soft, warm beds.

Forty years seems like eternity if you're a teenager, but they've gone by like the winking of an eye, as most old-timers will confirm.

Back then, I was tied up because I'd tried to escape. It wasn't pleasant. They had no rope, so they tied my wrists and ankles with wire.

I was beaten up because I'd managed to pilfer a sandwich, a pipe and tabacco from the guards' overcoat pockets when they weren't looking, and these, along with a foot-long piece of lead pipe, popped out of my battle-dress jacket when the sergeant in charge of the guards gave me a round-house clout on the ear just before escorting me back onto the train headed for Germany.

Served me right. I should have ignored all that stuff we were taught in training: "It's an officer's duty to try to escape," and gone quietly off to sit out the war, which I did anyway, in the long run.

But the next few weeks weren't pleasant. I couldn't walk, because my left kneecap was kicked out of kilter. Every bone in my body ached. My face looked like a bowl of borstch, as I discovered when a "friendly" guard let me look in his shaving mirror.

Worst of all, there was nothing to read. When I have nothing to read, I start pacing the walls. But I couldn't pace the walls because I was on the floor, and tied up. Anyway, the light wasn't so good. One little barred window.

Bill Smiley



Perhaps even the worstest of all was my daily ablutions. And I don't mean washing one's face and armpits. I had to be lugged out of the box-car by a guard, since only one leg was working, helped down the steps, and ushered to the railway bank.

Ever try to do your dailies (and I don't mean push-ups), with two hands planted in cinders, one leg stuck straight ahead, the other propping you up, and a guy pointing a revolver at you? It's a wonder I wasn't constipated for life.

One day the guard almost shot me. I never understood why. He was a rather decent young chap, about 21, blond, spoke a bit of French, so that we could communicate in a rudimentary way. He was a paratrooper who

had been wounded in France and seconded to the mundane job of guarding Allied prisoners.

He hadn't taken part in the kicking and punching at the railway station, for his own reasons. Perhaps pride. He was a soldier, not a member of the Feldgendarmarie.

But this day he was out of sorts. Perhaps sick of being a male nurse. His eyes got very blue and very cold, and he cocked his revolver. All I could do was turn the big baby-blues on him and mutely appeal. It worked. He muttered something, probably a curse, holstered his gun, shoved me roughly back into the box-car.

Why did Hans Schmidt (his real name) not kill me that day? He was fed up with a job on which rations were minimal, comfort almost non-existent, and duties boring and demeaning.

There was another Schmidt in the detail, Alfred. He was a different kettle, though he, too, was a wounded paratrooper. He was as dark as Hans was fair, as sour as Hans was

sunny. He would have shot me, in the same mood, and written it off as "killed while attempting to escape." Luck of the draw.

Another hairy incident in that October, 40 years ago, was the night the train was attacked by a British fighter-bomber, probably a Mosquito, perhaps even navigated by my old friend Dave McIntosh.

I was dozing, on and off (you didn't sleep much, tied up, on the wooden floor of a box-car) when there was a great screeching of brakes, a wild shouting from the guards as they bailed out of the train, then the roar of an engine and the sound of cannon-fire as the attacker swept up and down the train, strafing.

As you can understand, I wasn't hit, and the bums in the aircraft didn't even put the train out of commission, but have you ever seen a man curled up into a shape about the size of a little finger? That was ich.

Sorry if I've bored you with these reminiscences. But they are all as clear, or moreso, than what I had for lunch today.

Forty years. Time to complete the war, finish university, marriage, children, 11 years as a weekly editor, 23 years as a teacher, a year in The San for non-existent T.B., and 30 years as a columnist.

I couldn't hack all that today. But I can go to bed and say, "This beats the hell out of sleeping in a box-car."

Flos building official opening

A double ceremony to mark the province's Bicentennial and the official opening of Flos Township's new municipal building will be held Nov. 3 at 2 p.m.

The public is invited to attend the ceremony and the reception which follows, in the new township office at 14 Queen Street East, Elmvale.

Single-car collision probed

Michael Laurin of Lafontaine was charged Sunday morning by Midland OPP with impaired driving and excess alcohol following a single-car collision 1.2 km west of County Road 6, Tiny Twp.

According to Midland OPP, a vehicle west-bound on Con. 16 left the roadway and entered a field at 5:45 a.m.

Here's a date to remember...

Next Red Cross Blood Donors' Clinic scheduled for North Simcoe will be conducted by the Huronia Branch of the Red Cross on Wednesday, Dec. 19 at the Budd Watson Gallery in Midland.

December's target is 350 pints of blood.

Taylor addresses Club Richelieu

Solicitor General (and MPP for Simcoe Centre) George Taylor was scheduled to address members of Club Richelieu Penetanguishene last night at the club's quarters near Lafontaine. He was to deliver a half-hour talk at 8 p.m.

Floats are needed for Santa Claus parade

Considering entering a float in Midland Civitan Club's annual Santa Claus Parade, Dec. 17?

Theme of the parade is Christmas cards. Contact Mike Tinney at 526-7269 or 526-3069 or Dick Ivens at 526-9814 or 549-2052 for more information.

School boards meet tonight

Both Simcoe County Board of Education and the Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board will be holding separate meetings in Barrie this evening.

Public sessions of both boards get underway at 8 p.m.

Lane markings bring flood of phone calls

Order has been restored to the main intersection in Midland, King and Hugel.

Lanes last week at this time were marked out from an "unapproved sketch." Several days later lane markings were

corrected after town hall received a flood of complaints from the motoring public.

Weather conditions provided light show

Weather conditions were just right, Monday night, to see Huronia Airport's rotating beacon from a number of locations in Midland.

A low cloud ceiling provided a tunnel effect through which the search light managed to shine.

North Simcoe Newsbriefs

Driving will be tricky this week

Frost and fog will be the order of the day for the next few mornings in North Simcoe.

Motorists are reminded to use extra care and caution given the circumstances.

OPP searching for car in hit-and-run

Midland OPP are looking for a car involved in a car-pedestrian hit-and-run accident early Sunday morning on Fuller Avenue.

Pedestrian Laura Grabinski, 15, of RR 1, Penetanguishene, was treated at HDH for cuts and bruises she received after being struck by an

unknown vehicle as she was walking along Fuller Avenue, .8 km north of Bayview Avenue.

Church faces \$5 million deficit

It was reported this week, last month's 12-day Papal visit to Canada of Pope John Paul II cost about \$50 million.

Tuesday, it was revealed the Roman Catholic Church in Canada is now faced with a massive \$5 million deficit.

Fire alarms galore report shows

Sixteen general alarms and seven silent alarms were responded to by Midland firefighters last month.

During the same month in '83, local smoke-eaters answered 25 calls; 14 general ones and 11 silent alarms.

Chalk up busy week for OPP

During the period ending Oct. 22, Midland OPP personnel investigated a total of 119 general occurrences.

They also probed 11 motor-vehicle accidents on area highways, three of which resulted in injuries to some of the people involved in the highway crashes.

Stats tell story

Despite the fact there were 19 reportable and 16 non-reportable motor-vehicle accidents in Midland last month, none of them were of the fatal variety even though 15 persons were injured.

Crime doesn't take a holiday

Crime didn't take a holiday in Midland last month, according to police reports tabed at Monday night's council meeting.

During September, Midland police force personnel laid 43 charges under the Criminal Code of Canada, one under the Narcotics Control Act and 37 under the Highway Traffic Act including 14 for speeding.