

BIRTHDAY

“Well that’s over for another year”, I said to Valerie.
“Hopefully we’ll have something similar next year. I was referring to my birthday which is on July 4th.

You probably realize that sometimes I exhibit a peculiar sense of humour. It must be the Irish I inherited from my parents. It takes some people a lot of getting used to when I make statements that I think are laugh causing and they either don’t understand or fail to see any humour there. (As the typist for these articles I agree! – Valerie)

I used to say to my son and daughter when my birthday was approaching “It really bothers me on my birthday, which is of course a national holiday in the United States, that so many people are involved in accidents on Independence Day just because it was my birthday. I think I should call the President and see what can be done to stop it.

This became a contest over the years between the kids and me to see who could say it first no sooner than the day before my birthday. “Have you called the President yet?” Allan or Ann would insert into a conversation accompanied by giggles. I also told them that all the firework displays in the USA were for me!

A few years ago my cousin Orville and his wife Nancy who would visit every summer from Florida said “Your yard would make a good place to play croquet, John” Thus began a tradition for several years when we would set up some canvas shelters, two courses for croquet and establish a theme for the invitees to dress appropriately. We had themes like the roaring twenties, the hippie sixties, sci fi, etc and the participants responded with amazing costumes.

We had arranged to hold another croquet tournament in 2002 but Orville died just before the date so that the 2002 tournament was the last in the series.

Early this year in chatting with friends one day it was suggested that we hold another tournament so in her usual fashion Valerie sent out the invitations in January with the theme – hats and costumes suitable for Ascot. As usual we picked the Sunday closest to July 4th which fortunately was July 4th this year.

We held it on Sunday since many of our guests were church members and our priest and his wife, Pat and Beth,

in those early days were great lovers of the game. Unfortunately, this year Susan, our priest who was looking forward to coming had a change of plan and so she couldn’t come but close to 50 people came on the gorgeous Sunday July 4th 2010 to try their hand at croquet.

For your information we don’t let spouses play together, it’s safer that way, so we put all the men’s names in a hat and the ladies draw to determine their partners. I won’t bore you with the other details but we have 4 pair on each of the two courses with only one team winning on each. The winners after all the teams have played are then placed on one course to play to win the game. The top 3 teams win prizes but only the first place team gets their name on a plaque on a cup donated years ago by Orville.

In the past, Valerie and I cooked the BBQ which followed the game, although one year Harley Guernsey who cooks the pork for the St. Philips Pork and Corn Roast cooked the pork for the tournament. Don’t forget the Port and Corn Roast is on at St. Philip’s on Wednesday August 4th –YUM. This year, since we are so much older, we had the food catered by Currahs.

It is interesting to observe how people react in a competition. During the first rounds when everyone is playing it is very friendly but when you get to the ‘play offs’ someone said to me “WOW there are some really aggressive people out there!” My granddaughters who were acting as referees when people wanted some clarification of the rules said that some of the participants made up their own rules. “Not a serious problem” I said, “They just want to win, the same as you and I would if we were playing” I’m not sure the granddaughters bought that explanation!

We haven’t decided whether or not we will hold another next year but it was a great day and I really enjoyed my birthday.

No, I didn’t call the President of the United States and didn’t look at the accident stats.

- John A Jackson