

Years fade away as music of youth fills the air

Driving down the town line that divides Durham and York Regions just north of Stouffville last Saturday afternoon, I suddenly found myself catapulted some four decades back to a time when quality of life was determined by whether or not you could scrape together a dime for a bottle of Coke.

Buddy Holly was singing "Oh Boy" on the car radio, the sun roof was open, and I was beating out a rapid rhythm with both hands against the steering wheel. I don't normally listen to any AM station other than the gold old CBC, but freewheeling down the open road on this spectacular June day, I felt compelled to tune in CHUM 1050, the station that is still playing the same old rock and roll tunes that helped it achieve legendary status back when I was a kid in the 1950s and '60s.

In those days, I was a school boy with a passion for big league baseball, summer holidays and rock stars like Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and, of course, Buddy Holly and the Crickets. Saturday afternoons would find us walking up Bayview Avenue just south of Eglinton in Toronto to pick up the latest CHUM Chart from Mason's Music. For the kids in our neighborhood, the CHUM connection was that much more direct since the children of Alan Waters, the pop station's owner, attended our school. There wasn't a day would go by

that one of us wouldn't pester Jimmy Waters to score us a couple of records from his dad's station. Jimmy, who has gone on to take over the operations of the station, would simply nod his head, walk away, and never give the nifty requests another moment's thought.

There was another kid in the old neighborhood who's father made his own mark in the record business. Rick McKim was determined from the earliest stages of his childhood that he would some day be a disc jockey who would spin the records produced by his dad's Toronto record company, Phonodisc. Rick ate, breathed and slept rock and roll back in those days, and was a walking rock music encyclopedia. That passion never waned, and has led him from Texas to New York in pursuit of his lifelong dream.

But while Rick has never been able to attend any of the old neighborhood reunions held over the past few years, it looks like today may be the day I finally get to play catch up with the kid who broke it to me about Buddy Holly's tragic death back in 1959. Rick was to be among the assembled guests at the annual summer solstice party to be held by his younger brother Dave at the McKim property just north of Uxbridge this evening.

It promises to be yet another one of those unnerving encounters after a hiatus of 30 years, where people who grew up together try to pretend they don't even notice the receding hairline, the wrinkles and the other ravages of time.



From
Where
I Live

Bruce Stapley

But as always, the recognizable voice and the old telltale mannerisms that never completely disappear will help overcome the initial awkwardness. Within minutes, we'll have brought each other up to speed on what we've been doing since the last time we saw each other, and we'll probably be reminiscing about playing road hockey together on the old street.

I suppose that accounts for part of the appeal of listening to the golden oldies all these years later. They remain unchanged by the passage of time, sounding just as tinny now as they did back in the old pre-stereo days.

Now if I could only get my hands on a reconditioned 1957 Chevy convertible!

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