

Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

Canada: the best place in the world

We don't need the United Nations to tell us we're the best country in the world. Though the recognition doesn't hurt, Canadians have always known in their hearts that we live in a special land. We have so much to celebrate today. Our political freedoms, our peaceful society, our amazing diversity, our incredible natural beauty and the list goes on and on. Today we should all take a moment to reflect on what makes Canada special to each of us. There are so many great things about this country that it is impossible to try and list them. We have everything, and in such diversity. There is the pristine beauty of Northern Ontario and the haunting call of a loon across a quiet lake as the sun sets. There is the awesome wonder of the Rocky Mountains, which can simply take your breath away. We have coastal beauty on both oceans, coupled with a long and proud sea-faring tradition. Canada has it all. Let's celebrate that fact today and wish ourselves a happy 130th birthday.



Off to Stratford to visit the Queen...

Was at Stratford with the Queen this past weekend. Not that I received a hand-embossed notecard urging I attend "a luncheon to mark the occasion of the Royal Visit to Canada. Signed Liz and Phil. P.S. You bring the beer." No, our encounter was pure serendipity. I was going to be in Stratford for the same reason most people go to Stratford (the play's the thing) and the royal entourage just happened to be there at the same time.

Her Majesty was on hand to open the renovated Festival Theatre, which, at \$14 million, is a bargain. The festivities included pipe bands and much fanfare, all of which I missed, being late in arriving, because of a clause I foolishly signed in my pre-nup agreement to always opt for the scenic route. In this case, the scenic route was a detour through north Brampton and the view of the back-end of a tractor trailer all the way to Guelph. We arrived just as the formalities were ending, but



Minute with Mair

Andrew Mair

still managed to get a glimpse of the Dynastic Duo as they were leaving. It seems the Queen travels in a Chevrolet Yukon 4x4. Surrounded by a motorcycle escort, a swarm of secret agents and a busload of

ladies in waiting and courtly sorts, the Queen and Prince Phillip were whisked off to a lunch, in a 4x4. I thought this was odd. I also felt that blacking out the windows of the Yukon was odd, since it was plainly obvious who was riding within. Not everyone, after all, drives about with a motorcycle escort. In my rush to get to the site, I actually took the back route, and came upon the entourage as it was leaving. Secret service men and police alike seemed fixated on the throng above the motorcade, and I walked casually among them, and got within 15 feet of the Yukon itself as it idled in the parking lot. The pipers played a farewell, and I fairly had to jump out of the way as the motorcade sped by. Still, no one paid any attention to me. I could only think that someone in plaid shorts, running shoes, a Beam Me Up Scotty t-shirt, and a Barenaked Ladies cap didn't appear to be someone bent on regicide. Then the Queen and her lot were gone, fittingly, driving up Queen Street. I was upset I didn't get to meet her. I would have liked to have asked her to autograph a \$20 bill, or at the very least, ask her for Di's number for my younger brother who is deathly afraid of marrying beneath his station. (Notice I didn't say Fergie's number?) My brush with royalty, then, was brief, but I am certain that as I stood there amid all those Men in Black - I am almost positive, now - I have the strongest recollection of Her Majesty leaning forward in the seat slightly, lifting her hand and with regal authority, giving me one of those fancy little Queenly waves. Yup, you can say what you like about her loony offspring, but Liz 2 is a little bit of all right.

Keeping up appearances while on holiday

Time was, going on vacation meant throwing a few basic articles of clothing into a suitcase, adding a toothbrush and toothpaste, and heading for planes and boats and trains to take you away. The trouble with being L is that you need a whole suitcase just to accommodate your maintenance kit. It's all very well to relax when you're on holiday, but one must keep up appearances and besides, I'm not sure even I could cope with the mirror image of Kate unplugged and unvarnished. On my upcoming trip to France, for example, basic emergency tackle will include one of my last, precious boxes of Casting #38, tweezers, creme for putting on under makeup, makeup which disguises some of the ravages of time, creme for removing makeup, hair-removal-creme, eye creme, hand creme, sunscreen, razors, spare contact lenses, solution in which to rinse and store said lenses, drops to alleviate dry eyes (a common complaint in middle age according to my Reader's Digest Medical Guide), glasses for reading (two pairs, both of which will get mislaid within hours of my arrival), glasses for when I'm not wearing my contacts and I'm search-



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

ing blindly for my reading glasses. Then there's my battered black hat for bad hair days, a grave problem in France, where the voltage does not accommodate hairdryers of the North American persuasion. It suddenly occurred to me as I keyboarded in that last bit that there lurks, someone in the bowels of Chateau Gilderdale, one of those international electrical converters which work everywhere in the world except, no doubt, in the quaint little Breton stone house for which my companions and I are bound. So that means I'll be lugging the converter and a hairdryer and the hat, just in case. I haven't even mentioned my drug cache, which will include Tylenol, Midol, bug repellent and antiseptic creme. Because I plan to travel light, for three weeks I will have to struggle by without a computer, cell phone (I don't actually own one, but I know it's

a must-have accessory for empowerment in the '90s) Call Answer, Call Waiting, the Net, television and e-mail. And you thought Dr. Livingstone was a pioneer. By the time you reach my age, you can really relate to the wise words of anon., "Middle age is when we can do just as much as ever - but would rather not." Thus partying on a grand scale gives way to marathon reading sessions, which means I'll have to find room for at least four books. Northern France is about as predictable as England when it comes to weather, obliging the intrepid traveller to cram all-season clothing into the minute space remaining in her suitcase. Oh - I quite forgot - my accommodation sheet informs me we'll have to provide our own sheets, pillow cases and towels as well. Anyone who is planning a similar sojourn should check her health coverage before she goes to make sure it's good for a year or two of psychiatric care, which the trauma of packing alone will render imperative. I'm longing to go on holiday, but I'm beginning to think I'll need a holiday when I get back.

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about us
News
(905) 640-2100
Retail sales
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Classifieds
(905) 640-2874
Distribution
(905) 640-2100
Fax
(905) 640-5477
E-Mail
thetrib@istar.ca
6244 Main St.,
Stouffville, Ont.
L4A 1E2

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