

Trip to Ottawa renewed my respect for soldiers

Having succeeded in offending my mother in law, my best friend's daughter, as well as all the pigs and teetotaler types in town in recent columns, I thought it would be best for me to get out of town last Saturday.

Packing my daughter and her boyfriend, my eldest son's lady love, and a cooler full of sandwiches and Mountain Dew, we headed east to Ottawa.

The purpose of the weekend sojourn was to give my college boy/son Shane a boost, a break from the pressures, both academic and financial, which tend to dominate the lives of those trying to better themselves through higher learning.

After all, there's nothing like a skate along the Rideau Canal with your beloved on a Saturday night, and a care package deposited in your empty freezer, to pick up the spirits of a book-bound student.

But while the weekend was designed for the benefit of Shane, it turned out to be a most rewarding outing for the old man as well. No, he and I didn't sit up all night bonding in a way we had never done before. Are you kidding?

The only thing I have in common with this deep thinking philosophy major with the penchant for original theological, political and social thought is that we share the same last name — just as my dad and I inhabited different planets when I was in my early 20s.

What helped make the weekend so notable — apart from getting to witness first hand the incredible damage to trees from Kingston to Ottawa as a result of the recent ice storm — was a visit to the Peace Tower Sunday.

This 92-metre focal point of the Parliament Buildings is both inspiring in its timeless majesty, and poignant in its recognition of the devastation of war. As the eager-to-inform elevator operator told us, the tower was built after the First World War, the 'War to End All Wars', as a tribute to the roughly 50,000 Canadians who lost their lives in that horrendous conflict.

But the Memorial Chamber had to be extended when the Second World War proved how wrong we were to assume the same thing couldn't happen again. It ended up honouring the Canadian dead from all wars fought since 1867.

You just can't help but feel a sense of utter reverence, as well as despair, upon



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

perusing the definitive poem in memory of fallen soldiers, In Flanders Fields, etched into the marble wall.

Touching also is the reassuring Psalm emblazoned on another wall, along with a poem by a Canadian soldier saying how he must go off and fight so that his mother on the prairies will never have to walk down a street surrounded by burning buildings.

Looking at the books listing the names of the dead, I couldn't help but think of the young boys who had never been off the farm, or out of their small Canadian towns, suddenly shipped off to take part in a most gruesome experience overseas in the name of peace.

It made me appreciate this country's reputation as a peaceful, non-aggressor nation, one whose past includes huge sacrifices to assure the security of other non-violent peoples.

And I'm sure I'm not the only one to stand and silently shake my head at how anyone would entertain the most remote notion of ever wanting to break up this special country.

The view from the observation tower is magnificent, revealing the stark contrast between the venerable old Parliament buildings and the dazzling modern tow-

ers visible just a few hundred yards away. Heading back down the elevator, we slipped past the 53 carillon bells, ranging from 10 pounds to over 10 tons, used by the Dominion Carillonneur to entertain visitors to the Hill with recitals.

After being surrounded by the ghosts of Canada's past, I felt like Cinderella at midnight as we strolled back into the reality of a 1998 Ottawa afternoon. And no, I'm pleased to report the old man didn't fall down once skating on the Rideau.

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We wish to draw your attention to the following in our current "Save Now!" flyer:
 Page 12: Heated car seat cushion, 32-1464-4. K-Tel has recalled the 12V Masseur Cushion with Heat due to serious safety concerns. Product will NOT be available and no rainchecks will be issued. Also:
 We wish to draw your attention to the following in our current "Storewide Savings" flyer:
 Page 9, Item 11: Bookcase shelf, 68-0763x. Copy should read: 3 shelf bookcase, NOT 4 shelf.
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