

# Can't beat watching NHL live

**I**t was April 8 – father-daughter night at the Air-Canada Centre. With the date close to my 84th birthday, a generous gift of two treasured tickets made it possible for Mary-Lynn and I to attend. (Believe me, this half-Scottish, half-Irish throw-back to the dark ages of Maple Leaf Gardens would never consider paying \$190 for a pair of ducats in the west-end greys).

What made the evening so special was the fact our daughter's favourites, the Toronto Maple Leafs, were hosting my favourites, the New York Rangers.

So why root for the Rangers, you ask? That's like hoping the Yankees will beat the Blue Jays or the Knicks will rout the Raptors.

It all dates back 73 years when the Rangers defeated the Leafs to win the Stanley Cup. I was 11 at the time. However, with my ears glued to our family's DeForest Crosley, I vividly recall Foster Hewitt calling out in typical Foster Hewitt fashion, "he shoots, he scores!"

The player who propelled the puck past Toronto's Turk Broda was New York's Bryan Hextall, a native of Grenfell, Sask. and whose name is now enshrined in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Over the years I've had many hockey heroes including Syl Apps, Max Bentley, Ted Kennedy, Gump Worsley, Bobby Hull, Rocket Richard, Bobby Orr, Wayne Gretzky and Mats Sundin. But none can equal the prowess of my beloved No. 12.

A dog-eared scrap book dating back to the 1940s includes many Hextall stories and pic-



## Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

tures. A framed Hextall photo holds a prominent place in my Room of Memories.

Sadly, the current Rangers are mere shadows of those smooth-passing, puck-juggling wizards of yesteryears.

But the adulation remains. However, I'm the first to admit this form of idolization, in the heart of Leaf land, comes with a price.

"How can you cheer for New York when you live close to Toronto?" questioned a woman after I told her I was from Stouffville.

I wished to brag that Michael Del Zotto, one of the best for the Broadway boys, hales from my home town, but I could tell

*I wished to brag that Michael Del Zotto, one of the best for the Broadway boys, hales from my home town, but I could tell she wasn't interested.*

she wasn't interested.

"The Rangers aren't consistent," said a man in his 30s, wearing a Mark Messier sweater, "hot one night and cold the next."

I wanted to agree but the score was tied at the time.

Despite an eventual 4-3 New York loss, it was a great game. I enjoyed every minute.

But some theatrics would have been better omitted. Like:

- The belching foghorn following every Toronto goal. Not unlike the docking of the Queen Mary.

- And the bombastic music that continuously rattled the rafters.

What ever happened to the melodious sounds of that magnificent MLG organ?

- And the patrons who, while the game was in progress, insisted on tramping on the toes of fellow fans en route to the washroom or to buy a mug of beer.

- And worse, witnessing dozens depart their \$300 seats to beat the traffic, with only one goal separating the two teams.

That said, watching a hockey game via TV can't compare with being there.

The entire atmosphere was one of enthusiasm and exhilaration.

Take it from one who attends maybe two games a year, it's an experience I'd never forgo.

Even though, at the contest's conclusion, I was dolefully sitting with my head in my hands while daughter Mary-Lynn was jumping for joy.

*Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.*

# Lions have plenty to roar about after 75 years of good deeds

**I**t was an honour to emcee the Lions Club of Stouffville's 75th anniversary celebrations at the Royal Canadian Legion Sunday afternoon.

You have to marvel at the work this group has accomplished since chartering on a snowy night in April of 1938.

In their first month of operation alone, between world wars near the end of the Depression, the Lions already had:

- Delivered milk to six families who had children thought to be malnourished;

- Made plans to host July 1 celebrations;

- Announced the screening of a movie for the community at the Stanley Theatre, now the Lebovic Centre for Arts & Entertainment – Nineteen on the Park;

- Hung 10 framed moral codes in local schools. (I wonder how that would fly in 2013?);

And so it has been for the past 75 years, a growing list of accomplishments in our community.

The Stouffville of today has fingerprints of the Lions all over it.

There are few public structures, from Latham Hall to the train station, and the park picnic shelter to Markham Stouffville Hospital, that have not been Lions of Stouffville projects.

Same for our organizations. Youth sports groups and schools have been particularly blessed by the generosity of the club.

At the same time, the Lions have raised our spirit's and home town pride with their Santa Parade work, Christmas Lights tours, casino nights, road tolls, elimination dances and, of course, their world famous beef barbecue.

And maybe some of the club's finest work is also its quietest, the donations of food, toys and other



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

gifts to our poorest of residents every Christmas.

A scheduling quirk in the festivities — who knew politicians could be so short-winded — had me with 20 minutes to fill between the opening remarks and meal.

Not wanting to subject the full house to my comic stylings, I accepted Stouffville Club President Sharon McClenny's idea and took the microphone to the floor of the legion, asking those in attendance for their thoughts and memories of the club.

The response could not have been scripted better.

Lions past and present, from Stouffville and beyond, and guests shared the funny to the fantastic. It was overwhelming evidence of how one club of volunteers has touched so many.

Tom Gordon of Newmarket, the district governor for Lions International, put it best when he asked those at the anniversary soiree to picture today's Stouffville without the legacy of Lionism.

It was a sobering moment. And so well deserved.

*Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune*

## THIS WEEK ONLINE

### MARATHON BOMBING



Get the latest on York Region runners at the marathon and how people here are reacting.

### PROMOTE YOUR EVENT



Planning an event? Register at our site and you can promote non-profit activities for free.

### DELVE DEEPER



Get the inside story behind our in-depth look at housing in York Region  
▶ <http://bit.ly/Z3DTJM>

## AROUND THE WEB

- ▶ @yorkregion
- ▶ @vaughaneditor
- ▶ @dlkyorkeditor
- ▶ @KimZarzour
- ▶ @AmandaPersico
- ▶ @YRMGphotog
- ▶ @journo\_jez
- ▶ @teresaLatchford
- ▶ @tkibble

# yorkregion.com