

OPINION



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Sun-Tribune

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COLUMNS

Greetings from the land of rivers, bridges and Yinzers

You're going where
for a long weekend,
Mason?" the ques-
tion continually
came.

The answer was
always "Pittsburgh".

People made faces. Like I was
heading for recreational dental
surgery.

"This place isn't what it was 10
years ago," the clerk in the auto
parts store – blew a tail light on
the interstate – said early Satur-
day morning. "There's lots to do
here now."

Yes, indeedy.

Five hours apart, you won't con-
fuse Toronto with Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh's population is just
over 300,000. Toronto has 2.8
million, about the same as the
seven regions making up greater
Pittsburgh. The Toronto area is
up to 6.05 million.

Toronto's on a lake. Pittsburgh's
got rivers and more than 400
bridges crossing them.

The city is carved between that
water and scenic hills, which you
can ride on a pair of inclined plane
railroads, or funiculars, which is far
more fun to pronounce.

Roads wind and don't run in a
grid, which challenged my GPS to
keep up. Hometown drivers are,
shall we say, aggressive, with no
fear of burning out turn signals.

Out of their vehicles, Pitts-
burghers, or Yinzers as they
call themselves, are extremely
friendly folks.

Pittsburgh is a big-time sports
town. Every second male over
the age of 12 must wear a Pirates'
baseball T-shirt, apparently. Caps
are optional, but often included
in the ensemble. Gotta be a law.

Even the security guard at a
gallery — the Andy Warhol was a
favourite — we toured was abuzz
about "the Buccos".

"Did you see the game?
Another walk-off. Wow," he
asked, while reviewing the high-
lights on his phone.

We found the name of the late
Bob Hassard of Stouffville in the
impressive sports wing of the
Heinz History Center. The former
Main Street insurance broker
played for Pittsburgh's American



Off The Top
with *Jim Mason*

Hockey League team in the 1950s.

The NHL Penguins aren't on
the front page — although they
are for sale. There's a magnifi-
cent statue of co-owner Mario
Lemieux out front of their Con-
sol Energy Center and shelves
stacked with yellow and gold Phil
Kessel T-shirts inside, Leaf fans.

(On the flipside, Russell Martin
— the Pirate turned Blue Jay catcher
— shirts are in the discount bin
on The Strip, Pittsburgh's popular
version of Kensington Market.)

Jerome Bettis, another Pitts-
burgh sports legend, will go into
the Pro Football Hall of Fame
next month. His restaurant is
nestled between the Steelers'
and Pirates' stadiums, on the
riverfront next to the Mr. Rogers'
— Fred's from here — statue. It
features a one-way mirror above
the urinals, allowing guys to gaze
out over the bar. That was odd.

While in the neighbourhood,
check out Randyland. Hilton
waiter turned artist Randy Gilson
bought a run-down building for
\$10,000 with a credit card and
turned it into "Pittsburgh's most
colourful landmark". The walls of
the courtyard, which is packed
with painted repurposed items,
are bright murals.

We ate well in a Catholic
church converted to a brewery, a
Thai garden and at an Italian spot,
serenaded by Steve Miller playing
the soccer stadium next door.

We'll be back, you Yinzers.

*Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.
Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor*

Astronaut had to meet our Nadine

Two thou-
sand and fif-
teen is a year
Whitchurch-
Stouffville's
Nadine Carter will never
forget.

The 11-year-old Grade
7 Glad Park Public School
student has, through pur-
pose and determination,
accomplished more than
most adults will achieve in
a lifetime.

Through research and
inquiries that, thanks
to the aid of Oak Ridges-
Markham MP Paul Calan-
dra, prompted an appear-
ance before Whitchurch-
Stouffville council, Nadine
has had the feats of Cana-
dian First World War air ace
Capt. Arthur Roy Brown
of Bethesda appropriately
recognized.

On June 4, she, accom-
panied by her parents,
David and Chantel Carter,
along with her uncle and
aunt, Michael and Gabri-
ella Bennett of Richmond
Hill, attended an induc-
tion ceremony at Cana-
da's Aviation Hall of Fame
in Toronto. There, Capt.
Brown along with four oth-
ers, were installed. Nadine
was seated at a table along
with several members of
the Brown family.

During the four-hour
observance, Nadine rubbed
shoulders with many avia-
tion dignitaries including
Chris Hadfield, the first
Canadian astronaut to walk
in space. A photograph of
the two, along with a per-
sonal autograph will be for-
ever treasured.

"I was surprised when Mr.
Hadfield said he wanted to
meet me," she said modestly.
Nadine and Capt. Brown's
granddaughter were formally
introduced to the audience.

Nadine said follow-
ing her meeting with town
council in March, a second
discussion was arranged by
Ward 6 Councillor Rob Har-
grave with the Whitchurch-



Roaming Around
with *Jim Thomas*

Stouffville heritage com-
mittee. Since then, the Last
Post Fund in Montreal has
acquired a plot in Toronto's
Necropolis cemetery for
Capt. Brown. At this site, a
marker, emblazoned with a
Royal Air Force emblem, will
be positioned. Nadine's still
hopeful a suitable plaque
honouring her hero will be
located at the former Brown
farm on Warden Avenue.

While the Aviation Hall
of Fame event was exciting
in itself, the enjoyment for
Nadine didn't end there. She
was the recipient of a gift
flight hosted by Lesley and
Jeff Page and their organiza-
tion called the Young Eagles.
Accompanied by her father
and sister and with Lesley at
the controls, they flew out
of Oshawa Municipal Air-
port, east over Bowmanville
and north above Mosport
Raceway. On three sepa-
rate occasions during the
20-minute flight, Nadine
expertly handled the Cessna
172 craft.

"It was cool," she said, "I'd
never even ridden in a plane
before, let alone fly one."

Asked if the Cessna
had foot pedals, Nadine
replied yes, it did. "But my
legs weren't long enough to
reach that far."

Tribute to secretary

Where there's love,
there's respect. Where
there's respect, there's

admiration.

This is the lasting legacy
left by Vikki Staite within
the hearts of staff and stu-
dents at Stouffville's Sum-
mitview Public School.

Mrs. State, office recep-
tionist and secretary from
1995 to 2015, was posthu-
mously honoured at a year-
end assembly June 12.

Because of her love
for honeybees, a beauti-
ful mural was created by a
group of 15 senior students,
a painting that now holds a
prominent place near the
school's interior entrance
along with a floral bouquet
in the shape of a honeybee
and an appropriate poem.

Whitchurch-Stouffville's
Diane Ward headed up the
assignment.

"I was honoured to be
involved in so wonderful a
project," she said.

The principal focus of
the mural is a beehive with
Mrs. Staite symbolizing a
queen bee mascot looking
down on swarms of smaller
bees, denoting hundreds of
children under her watch-
ful eye. Bodies of the small-
er bees comprised thumb
prints made by the princi-
pal, secretary, students and
custodians. Wings were
attached later.

The fact Sunmitview's
school teams are known as
The Stingers, added empha-
sis to the poster. It was also
topical, explained Ward
since honeybees are now an
endangered species.

"Because the boys and
girls loved Mrs. Staite so
much, they needed a way
to honour her memory,"
Ward said. All submissions
were accepted and final-
ized through a proper vot-
ing procedure.

"It was amazing the way
the students worked togeth-
er," Ward said. "I felt privi-
leged to be a part of it."

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