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**Bill's
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By Bill Rea

I don't know if it was nostalgia, some form of rekindled interest or the desire for a change of pace, but I genuinely found myself looking forward to the much heralded home opener of the Toronto Maple Leafs last Wednesday night.

I have freely stated in the past that I have become cynical over the years when it comes to professional sports. But memories of "what was" when I was a kid will, I guess, never completely go away.

Since I was a typical Canadian boy, the advent of autumn was bad news because school started again. But there was also the good news that the hockey season was about to start again too. That was enough of a positive to offset the dirtiest look that any teacher could have mustered.

Saturday nights were really something to look forward to, and this was at a time when folks in this

part of the world never got to see the start of the game. In the good old days, when the Leafs winning their fair share of Stanley Cups, the home games started at 8 p.m., but the TV coverage didn't start until 8:30. Do you remember killing time waiting for the voice of Bill Hewitt by watching Jackie Gleason do his Joe the Bartender routine opposite Frank Fontaine's Crazy Guggenheim?

Those were important days for a kid. In fact, it scares me a bit to think that it's been almost four decades since the Leafs last won the hardware, and it angers me a bit more to think there have been some many Toronto area kids who have not had that thrill. I well remember the night in 1967, when the Leafs won a cup that they really weren't supposed to take, watching the game with my mother and brother (Dad was out of town on a business trip). I remember the Leafs were ahead for a

lot of the game, but it looked like the Habs could close the gap, and that worried at least three fans (no prizes for guessing who). I recall puzzling at why a defenceman, namely Allan Stanley, took the crucial, late-game faceoff deep in the Leafs' zone. I have vivid memories of the fans counting down the final seconds of the match (the first time I recall hearing that now commonplace sound from the crowd). And I remember my mother bawling out my brother when he started jumping for joy at the final bell.

Every kid in this part of the world deserves a night like that.

So it was with the appropriate amount of satisfaction that I took in the opening ceremonies last Wednesday.

Actually, I had been listening to the radio throughout the day, and that seemed to be what most people were talking about on the air. The topic even came up in my office a couple of times. Anyone with their ear tuned was reminded how long it's been since George Armstrong last hoisted the cup, and the prospects for this year (hopeful, but not realistically promising).

I arrived home, and my wife and I kicked around what we would do with the evening. After a couple of minutes of this verbal irrel-

evancy, it came out that we were both really interested in watching the Leafs.

It's nice we don't have to wait through Jackie Gleason any more (with all due respect to The Great One).

It was wonderful to see some of the great names from the past being honoured, although any true Leaf fan knows the likes of Hap Day, Red Kelly and Borje Salming are honoured in perpetuity in a lot of hearts.

It was also nice to see some of the faces in the crowd. The camera zoomed in on one man, and I think it was Bob Baun (I stand to be corrected by any fan more knowledgeable than I in such matters).

Hap Day was several years before my time, but such was not the case with Kelly. In fact, he was my favourite Leaf for a lot of years. It really had nothing to do with his hockey skills, which he did have in abundance. In those days, before the popularity of colour TV, he was the only Leaf to wear a helmet, so he was easy for little eyes to spot in black-and-white. Typical little boy thoughts that I think few adults are willing to own up to ever having had.

Then there was Salming, who I think showed a lot more class than he was ever credited with in his playing

days. Perhaps ordinary people like you and me expect too much from our heroes, forgetting that a guy like Salming was retained to help win hockey games, not be PR practitioners. He received a lot of hammering in his playing days that I just thought he never deserved. It was nice to see him recognized one more time.

I've sort of been watching the game while I type these words at the kitchen table. It's early in the second period, and the Leafs are down by one. That's really nothing to worry about, at least at this stage. The season is only about 30 minutes old, with a lot more games and scoring chance to come, along with plenty of pithy observations from know-it-alls like me.

Many of us will follow the team in the months to come, weighing their chances of making the playoffs and agonizing through the ordeal if they do get in.

And aspiring seniors like me will harken back 40 years and dream of seeing just one more Stanley Cup victory parade through the streets of Toronto, while a lot more 30-somethings and those who are younger will dream of seeing just one.

I sometimes forget how lucky I've been to see such parades as many times as I have.

Editorial

Fixed election dates — Big deal!

A bit of a milestone passed recently, although you could be forgiven if you missed it.

It's been determined that we now have less than a year to wait until the next provincial election. That is, of course assuming that Premier Dalton McGuinty keeps his promise to hold them every four years at predetermined dates, the way he promised not to raise taxes. But since he's already had legislation to that effect passed at Queen's Park, it's probably safe to assume that this time next year, we'll be discussing and dissecting the election results.

There are some, particularly in government, who say fixing election dates is a great move on the part of McGuinty. Indeed, Prime Minister Stephen Harper is putting forth similar legislation, and it already has the support of at least one Liberal MP, none other than Lui Temelkovski of Oak Ridges — Markham.

True, ideas like this are attractive for any govern-

ment to push. They are perceived to be beneficial, although we contend that perception is erroneous.

They also offer an easy way for a government to appear it is doing something productive, when in fact it is doing next to nothing.

There is no pressing advantage to fixing elections for every four years over what we have in place now, largely because we already have elections more or less every four years, at least when we have majority governments. True, prime ministers or premiers have a bit of flexibility, such as whether to have a spring or fall campaign. They generally try to stay away from elections in the summer (although there have been exceptions) and a winter campaign is usually the mark of a minority government that has fallen.

It's also true that some governments have called elections well before the four-year mark. David Peterson tried it 16 years ago, and profoundly regretted it by the time the votes

were counted. Jean Chretien tried it too, but he got away with it largely because he was facing fragmented opposition, courtesy of the Reform party and Canadian Alliance.

And the current situation also allows governments to stay in power up to five years, but it's seldom they last that long. A government that goes the full five years is one that's usually afraid to go the voters sooner. The ability to delay is not that great a benefit for a government. If it's out of favour after four years, it's not likely the electorate is going to

be forgiving after five.

There are some who might argue that a government could call what is commonly known as a "snap election." They would do so at their peril. Political parties, whether they be in government or opposition, need some preparation before going to the polls. If it's a minority government, the various parties have to be ready for the government to fall at any time, and everyone knows that. One could argue that a party forming a majority government could call a quick election and catch its oppo-

nents off guard. Not very likely. The governing party has to prepare too, and such preparations cannot be done in secret. Invariably, when the head of a government announces an election dated, it's one of the worst kept secrets around.

So a year from now, expect McGuinty to brag a bit about how his government has fixed election dates in Ontario. Expect some of the same from Harper when he sends us to the polls. But forgive those who yawn and ask what the big deal is. They'll be the ones making the real point.

Letter to the Editor

Think hard about your council vote

First, let me state the obvious: King council is made up of seven seats. Each member of council has equal say. The mayor's vote means no more than any of the other six members. So why, when it comes to decisions being made within the Township, is everyone always blaming the mayor? Why aren't residents

looking closer to home? And why, when people think about voting in the municipal election, is the first thing they think about who will be the mayor for the coming term?

I, as the future of King Township, ask you all to put just as much effort into choosing your next councilor as you are your mayor.

Also, I urge you not to listen to what has been said in the past. Look into things for yourself. Do research.

But please, whatever you do, think about who will best represent you, who has been involved in the past, and who is just putting on a face for the election.

Michelle Poles,
King City