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## Bill's Bulletin Board

By Bill Rea

I write this with a certain amount of reluctance, realizing these are probably thoughts most people in these parts are not terribly interested in, given the season and recent weather.

My thoughts are dealing with hockey. Not ice hockey, you understand. Over the last couple of years of trying to skate, I have come to a sure and certain realization that whatever skills along those lines I might have possessed in my youth, the ravages of middle age have taken away in spades.

No, I refer now to the true past time of many a Canadian youth - ball hockey, or more specifically, street hockey.

Thoughts along those lines were driven home to me a couple of weekends ago, owing to two separate events.

One was a ball hockey tournament in Nobleton, as I watched a number of men occupying a Saturday the way I filled more than a few Saturdays as a kid, at least when my parents didn't wish to distract me with such unimportant rubbish as cutting grass, shoveling snow, cleaning my room or doing homework.

Never mind that it was a bloody hot Saturday in May. I envied those guys who were playing. I was old enough to be the father, if not grandfather, of most of them on the playing sur-

face. Yet, the most subtle invitation to join the ranks probably would have been accepted with alacrity, provided one of the young men present was prepared to lend me a stick, and as long as I was assured someone there was familiar with CPR.

Alas, work required me to be elsewhere that day.

I spent part of the following day (Sunday) at a funeral home in Toronto, paying respects to a deceased man I only met twice, and shook hands with but once. Although our acquaintance was limited, I knew him to be a good and friendly man. But I was thinking of his children. I had played street hockey with them as a kid. It had been some years since any of us met, so it took me a few moments to recognize most of them, and it took them even longer to connect with me (the last time I saw any of them, I didn't wear glasses, and I had much darker hair).

"Bill Rea," I said to each in turn as I met with them. "We used to play street hockey together."

I don't know if the name always connected, but the street hockey references surely did.

Many kids who grew up in this country and culture have memories of playing street hockey, although I guess it's really an urban phenomenon. I doubt

youngsters living on King Road or Highway 27 would have had much of an opportunity. I was lucky enough to live on a cul-de-sac as a kid, so as long as there weren't any cars parked inconveniently (and most of the neighbours were pretty accommodating when it came to not parking on the field of play) games could go ahead. And they frequently did.

There were always plenty of sticks available, including for kids who were visiting the street and were invited to join the game. In true street hockey fashion, there was never a case of too many bodies. Even breaking a stick didn't have out put one out of action for too long. These were the days of the plastic replacement blades, and having a father who was a part owner of a Canadian Tire store meant obtaining one required little more than a phone call on my part (and occasional assurances that the snow would be shoveled or some other chore completed by the time he got home).

We had our rules, but I guess the rules varied from street to street. Slap shots, for example, were only permitted from the shooter's side of the centre line, and as some of the kids got older, they weren't allowed at all, unless the shooter himself wanted to run all the way down the street to fetch a ball that had gone wide. There was a time when retrieving such shots was the job of the littlest player in the game, and before you get too mad at me, I should point out there were a couple of years when I occupied that position. Also, players were only allowed to go behind their own net after the ball (that rule was in interest of

keeping the play where it was meant to be, and not in someone's driveway.

Like any type of activity in which kids engage, there was always the chance of some injury. In a lot of cases, the victim would run home and rat on the whole group, which sometimes brought the action to a premature end. But more often that not, the injured kid would suck it up, pick up his or her stick and plot some form of revenge after play resumed.

We used tennis balls, because they were available, as well as being light and not likely to cause injury to a kid stopping a speeding one with a leg, arm, eye, etc., that is if they were dry. Those of you who played with a tennis ball must recall how much it stung if you got struck by a wet one, especially on a cold day and you were wearing jeans. I remember one such game, in which I let fly with a particularly fine, hard shot after retrieving the ball from a puddle. I had just completed my follow-through and was admiring the trajectory when I realized one of the opponents had got in the way. I could tell that because of the awful, blood-curdling screech he let out just after the still soaking-wet ball bounced off his thigh. It was a memorable moment as I ran for my life from this guy, who was swinging his stick as if he intended to use it to amputate my head (I'm sure that was one of the acts he was considering in his frantic state of mind). It was an interesting foot race. I was older, bigger and faster than my opponent, and he was still partially crippled with pain from the shot he stopped to initiate this contest. On the other hand, my

running was hampered by the fact I was laughing so hard.

I'll bet none of you ever realized I could have been such a rotten kid, but I was. I actually think I was more worried about what this kid's father would do to me than warding off blows from a hockey stick. His dad was a judge.

I can't believe my memories are particularly unique. Any of you who played street hockey must be able to match any of my stories, if not top them. It's almost an institution in this country.

I really came to understand that a couple of years ago. The community in which I was working at the time was considering installing traffic calming measures in some of the neighbourhoods, and the public meetings called to have the issue discussed tended to get pretty lively. One such discussion centred on whether such measures would hamper or enhance kids' opportunities to play street hockey. Things got heated and they reached a boil when one man loudly proclaimed, "It is the God-given right of every kid in this country to play street hockey."

It was a big mistake to drag the Almighty into the discussion, because the debate became a lot more theological in nature from that point on.

I had a lot of fun writing that story.

While I don't think there are any Scripture passages that address street hockey, I would still have to defend a kid's right to play it, under the appropriate conditions.

I think any adult who would try to curtail it probably missed an important part of growing up in this culture.

## Editorial

# Kingfest should be a phenomenal event

What we are being promised at the Kingfest Music Festival, which goes this weekend at Seneca College, is very hard to describe in just a couple of words.

A casual glance at the list of performers scheduled to appear, the activities planned for the different stages, the events that will be taking place over two days and three evenings, the magnificent setting is almost overwhelming.

We anticipate people taking in the festival are going to be hard-pressed when it comes to making up their minds where they want to go and what they want to do next.

It is going to be one

packed weekend, with a scope of activities that takes one's breath away.

We look at what's in the works and we're overwhelmed too, at the organizational effort that has gone into bringing this all about. One might think it all impossible, were we not on the verge of seeing it all come together.

The line-up of entertainment is nothing short of fantastic, featuring the likes of Sloan, The Trews, Joel Plaskett Emergency, The Salads, The Jim Cuddy Band, Prairie Oyster, Bruce Cockburn, Sarah Harmer, among many, many others.

And it's all for a good cause, with the York Region

chapter of Habitats for Humanity being the major beneficiary of the festival.

Events like this don't just

happen. A tremendous amount of work, sweat, effort and organization went into it.

### Letter to the Editor

## Great concert at museum

King Township sure knows how to make someone feel welcome.

The four visiting classical guitarists from Denmark experienced the warmth of the King community at their June 7 concert.

The Corona Guitar Quartet concert, presented by the Arts Society King and King Township Museum, was a great success. The quartet impressed

the audience with their diverse repertoire, from the classic J. S. Bach to the minimalist Wayne Siegel. The audience's response was overwhelming. Kathleen Fry's refreshments during intermission hit the spot.

The evening ended on a high note when each musician received very special mementos: Councillor Jeff Laidlaw's photo book of King Township and Gordon

and Judy Craig's homemade maple syrup.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all who came out, with special thanks to Mayor Black, members of Arts Society King, King Township Museum and Laskay Hall. The quartet thoroughly enjoyed their stay and is hoping to return soon.

Ruby and Mike Stoffregen,  
Schomberg