

Bill Rea ? Trump seems to be off to a pretty good start

I had to work Friday, so I could only spend a certain amount of time paying attention to the swearing in of American President Donald Trump.

I do work for a company that actually expects me to get a community newspaper in your homes every week, so I have to accept there's a certain amount of labour expected of me, even at moments of history. And I don't think there's much in the way of arguments to be made that the day wasn't very historic, although time alone will decide if it was positive or negative..

But through the magic of computer technology, I was able to take in parts of the occasion, and my wife, who's much more handy with technology than I, had done the necessary fooling around to record CNN's coverage from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Guess how Beth and I killed our Friday evening. Facts are facts, however. We did have to watch Jeopardy first (when it comes to missing certain programs, Beth is very good at putting her foot down), and we both fell asleep about 20 minutes before Trump was to take the oath (it had been along day for both of us). But we did have it on tape, so we watched it eventually.

I enjoyed the entire spectacle. It is a fact that I am rather fascinated by the institution that is the American presidency. It's not that I wish to be an American, or that I have trouble with the way Canada is governed. Our parliamentary system could use some reform, but I have no wish to see it scrapped. Besides, one can be a casual student of an institution without having a desire to be part of it. I am interested in the Papacy, although I am not a Catholic and have no plans to convert.

My attraction might have something to do with the power that the President has. It might also be the history that some of the men in that office have had a hand in making. And, by the very nature of the office, they make a lot of news, meaning it's a topic of study that's rather easy to research.

I have stated repeatedly in this spot in the paper that I am not pleased that Trump won the election in November, but the fact is he did and he has been sworn into the office to which he was duly elected.

Time, meaning the next four years (possibly eight), will determine how good a president he will be. But I have to say I thought he got off to a good start. I listened to his inaugural address, and the words 'pep talk' rattled in my brain. He sounded like he was trying to be inspiring.

True, there are a lot of people in the U.S.A. who don't like the guy and will refuse to be inspired by him, no matter what he might say or do. They will spend the next four years being sore losers. But people with common sense will give the man a chance to see what he can do in the office, because they don't have any choice in the matter any way.

But there's a lot more to the job than being inspirational. He's going to have to be able to get along with members of the Senate and Congress if he wants to get anything accomplished.

But being inspirational is a big asset for a president.

I recall the day Barack Obama was sworn into his first term as president. A Caledon councillor asked me how I thought he would do, and I well remember my reply.

'If this guy can inspire, and I think he can, he's going to do very well.'

I was wrong. The man was not very inspiring.

He made a televised address a couple of years ago on the situation in Syria. I watched it, and listened very carefully. I thought the points he made were well taken, but his delivery was terrible. He came across, not as a leader trying to inspire followers, but as a university professor addressing a room full of undergrads.

I will grant he got better as time went on. I thought his last two State of the Union addresses were pretty good.

I also believe history will judge Obama's administration favourably. Considering the men who have held the office since the end of the Second World War, I consider the great ones to have been Truman and Reagan, and Obama does not belong in that group. He's also not among the men who performed ably despite being handed impossible situations when they assumed the office, like Johnson or Ford. But he also didn't let his personal failings get in the way of his potential for greatness, like Nixon, Clinton or Kennedy.

I would slot him in the middle of the pack, with the likes of Bush Sr., Eisenhower, Carter and Bush Jr. in that order. I'll let history decide exactly where he should go.

And history will decide how to judge Trump.

In the end, it's all up to him.

