

Bill Rea ? Watching time pass

There is such a concept known as the passage of time.

It's one in which people like me can get lost in sort of philosophic thought, which is not a bad thing, as long as one doesn't hang around there too long.

The concept was kind of driven into my head Friday night at the opening ceremonies of Bolton Fall Fair. One of the speakers made the point that this was the 158th edition of the Fair. It caused me a bit of a start when I realized that the Fair is 100 years older than me. I'm assuming it has always been held in September (I confess I have not done the necessary research to verify that), and since my birthday is in February, that means I had been driving my parents up the wall for about seven months before local organizers put on the centennial version of the Fair.

No, my folks did not take me to the Fair that year. If there was a Baby Contest at that Fair, I did not get a chance to enter it. Even if we had attended the Fair, I doubt my folks would have entered me ? they tended to get a little embarrassed when they won at such things.

But they might have attended the Fair, even though we were living in Toronto at the time (west end, that is). There was a local connection to my family, even that far back ? actually, a lot farther back.

The passage of time included Caledon connections for both my parents, both independent of each other. And both were centred not far from Tullamore, which is near where I now reside.

My mother had friends who lived on what is now known as Airport Road. I learned about that some time after my mom had met a local lass who in time became her daughter-in-law.

My father's connection is somewhat stronger. When his mother's family came over from Ireland early in the past century, they settled in Brampton, and in time, acquired a certain amount of land in the area. One of the land holdings included a plot near Tullamore. My dad's Uncle Clint actually ran a small hobby farm there, and my old man used to tell stories of the times he spent helping his uncle on the land. I was told some years ago that there was talk that my dad was in line to inherit the property, but that never happened.

Yet the passage of time saw me end up here on my own.

Passage like this is marked, sometimes, by the correlation between ages of people and the time that has passed since certain events. For example, it comes as something of a start that my parents would be into their 90s by now, were they both still alive and kicking. They both died in October, so next month will mark the 12th anniversary of my mother's death and the 24th for my dad.

But it also makes me think that my father was in uniform during the Second World War. Since he was 20 when the War ended, I have often thought there would have been some veterans younger than he who saw action in that conflict, but not many. It's sometimes hard to grasp the fact that war has been over for more than 70 years. My father didn't even live that long, and neither did his father.

There was a time in my life when just about every adult I knew could (and often would) offer their sage memories of what went on during those days. But the reality of the passage of time tells me their numbers are dwindling. That's regrettable because of the stories they can tell, which will eventually be unavailable.

I was talking to a man a couple of months ago who had served in the merchant marine. History tells us that might not have been the stuff military war heroes were made of, but it was a bloody dangerous job, and there are many men lying at the bottom of the sea as proof of that.

The passage of time can sometimes rear its head in unexpected ways.

It's been more than 50 years, but people of a certain age have vivid memories of the time when the Beatles were all the rage. I remember watching them the first time they appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show. Being a kid who had just turned six, I was wondering what all the fuss was about.

My wife and I were watching *The Beatles: Eight Days a Week*, the documentary on the Fab Four by director Ron Howard, the other night on TV. It was pretty good. I've seen a number of documentaries over the years about the group, and this latest offering has footage I had never seen before. It included, of course, shots of girls watching them perform and going absolutely nuts, which was to be expected of girls at that age at that time.

Then Beth made the observation that those girls we were watching would all be seniors today. That caused a bit of a jolt in the pit of my stomach, as I again faced the reality of the passage to time.

Reflecting on the passage of time often involves milestones. It was 50 years ago this month that I started Grade 3. Up until then, I had always been quite a well-behaved little fellow in class, seldom drawing the wrath of teachers for acting up. But as time went by,

I had noticed some of the kids who were causing the disruptions also seemed to be having the most fun. It was about 50 years ago that I decided to experience how the other side lived. My teacher that year was one of those hard cases who handed out detentions in bunches. And if enough of the students got out of line, the whole class was kept in after school. I guess my logical patterns of thought were starting to kick in, because I realized there were enough trouble makers in the class that eventually the whole group of us would face punishment. Since I was going to be kept after school anyway, I figured I might as well do something to deserve it and have fun in the process.

The strict teacher notwithstanding, that was a fun year for me, although my parents had trouble understanding why my report cards suddenly started showing negative marks for ?Conduct.?

I should probably be grateful to the school administration for putting me in a class without the traditional trouble makers the following year. I didn't get into nearly as much trouble. If memory serves, I didn't have quite as much fun either.

As time passes by, we have the leisure to reflect back on the old days, to wonder what we would have done differently, or maybe to just realize that the way things turned out hasn't been that bad after all.

And even if time is passing, we still have the future to which to look ahead, and that may not be too bad either.

Who knows? The Jays might still be able to catch Boston. Failing that, there are the Leafs.

