

COMMENT

Timmy’s and I turn 50 together

A team from figure skating lessons, through university, jobs and parenthood



LOUISE-ANN CARAVAGGIO

As I drove to work one recent morning, I noted with envy the line-up of cars at the local Tim Hortons drive-through.

I didn’t have time to stop but I wished that I had. Tim Hortons and I have had a long and meaningful relationship. It’s the stuff that memories are made of. Timmy’s is a reasonably priced, comfortable setting and indeed an enjoyable part of being Canadian.

My mother remembers the opening of the first Tim Hortons on May 17, 1964, at Ottawa Street North and Dunsmure Road. Mom recalls the time that customers eagerly awaited the doughnuts at this new, groovy place.

To this day, my mother still anxiously looks forward to her French vanilla coffee and cruller doughnut from good old Timmy’s.

Like me, Timmy’s will be turning 50 this year ... yikes!

In 1976, timbits were born. It was a glorious birth. As a kid, oh how I loved them. I couldn’t get enough. I could scarf down a whole box, no problem.

As a child and into my teens, I took figure skating lessons. I remember getting to the rink at ungodly hours to practise my figures. My parents would stop off at Tim Hortons to fuel up with coffee, doughnuts and hot chocolate for me. I can still recall those delicious smells and I associate them with fond memories from my childhood.

Now on to university. I needed that tea and those doughnuts to help me get through late-night studying and preparing for a variety of presentations at McMaster University. My friend Tim was there for me also during this busy period of my academic life.

When I got my first job, Tim Hortons was part of that experience, too. My colleagues and I would spend time together at the local Tim’s and enjoy laughter, tea, coffee and food for our lunch breaks.

When my children were very young, Tim Hortons was also my companion, helping me get through all the stresses of new parenting and the sleepless nights. As they grew, the children’s Nana and Papa would spoil the kids with Tim Hortons timbits and hot chocolates. I still can remember their sweet, happy little faces.

Today as drum-line chauffeurs and basketball parents, my husband and I require a boost while on the road. We always have to get somebody somewhere.

It’s an easy decision as to where to stop when the Tim Hortons sign is visible. I have trained my eye to spot them far into the distance. Lunch is always fast and easy there.

I have spent time with my now “older” friends just chatting at Hortons, enjoying a laugh and good company over a steaming cup of hot coffee. Sometimes we have met to share sad times and intense conversations.

I have also enjoyed catching up with my daughters at Timmy’s and meeting people from our local church. The place is filled with customers of all ages and I especially enjoy the seniors’ tables all pushed together as they share stories, loud laughter and relish the social time together.

The staff at the Dundas drive-through are fast and courteous, making the experience a positive one. You can see me there a lot. My dog even gets a dog treat at the window, so I am very impressed by their service.

So Tim Hortons, while being a Canadian mainstay, has been a part of my childhood, growing up and still is there for me now. It’s a little bit of home that brings about warm memories. The smells of Tim Hortons products are comforting and a part of the social fabric of Canada.

It’s not just a great cup of coffee, it’s a taste of the Canadian experience that has its roots deeply planted in Steeltown.

Louise-Ann (Pretto) Caravaggio is a writer from Dundas

“I honestly feel that people who neither live nor work downtown nor need to come downtown are just simply saying, ‘Hey, don’t forget about the rest of us.’

HAMILTON COUNCILLOR TOM JACKSON

On how some Mountain residents are feeling left out of redevelopment in the downtown area.

The trouble with bake sales ...

It’s time to stop helping the government provide social services



DEIRDRE PIKE

I’m in the midst of managing a fundraiser for a good cause. I wake up more regularly now in the middle of the night to scribble things down that I must not forget again tomorrow.

I know I’m not alone.

Like so many of you who have a commitment to your not-for-profit work, your faith community or one of the many good causes you believe in, I have volunteered to do some of the following to raise money: Walk, run, swim, wiggle, jump, dance, drum, golf, gamble, kiss, cut hair, bake, dine, drink, eat cookies, collect, donate, buy, sell, bid, wash cars.

Canadians will do almost anything to raise funds to support the things we believe in.

It’s a really great quality we have, but it’s time to stop taking over the role of the government to provide the social services and infrastructure we need, supported through our tax system.

When Mike Harris made devastating cuts to Ontario’s social spending in 1995, I was working at Regina Mundi parish on the west Mountain. The calls to our St. Vincent de Paul Society and knocks on the rectory door easily doubled once people who relied on social assistance were delivered a 22 per cent cut to their income and jobs left town at a rapid rate.

Not only was no one getting off the system, more were in need of its inadequate payments.

Faith communities across the province began having special collections to support their neighbours in need. Food banks began their journey to institutionalization. Organizations everywhere scrambled to take on the government role without the funding to do so.

At the same time, a growing number of politicians picked up the mantra of a zero per cent tax increase while promising no cuts to programs. It isn’t possible and the increased cost on the whole system

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by keeping people in poverty or without the necessary supports they needed clearly put higher demands on other areas like our health-care system.

I don’t remember the hatred of taxes ever being as strong as I hear it today. I recall my parents and their friends laughing gaily as they oft repeated, “Two things you can count on in life — death and taxes.” Everyone got it and no one seemed to resent it.

More people back then would have believed Trish Hennessy from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives when she says, “Taxes are not the enemy of Ontario’s middle class. The public services and supports that our taxes create benefit everyone. They keep our province cleaner, safer, healthier.”

But we’ve lost that lovin’ feeling that led us to believe it was the right thing to do to pool our money and provide great services in our community, province and country.

In school we used to hold bake sales to raise a few bucks for things that were seen as extras — a class trip, special items for a school play, more musical instruments. (Arguably, none of those should be extras.)

Now, with more and more cuts to education, fundraising is needed to purchase not extras but the actual tools needed to study — books, classroom supplies, computers and food.

That’s right, food. Student nutrition programs are essential in our schools for many reasons. And so Tastebuds, Hamilton’s Student Nutrition Collaborative, is holding a fundraiser to ensure the most economically vulnerable kids in Hamilton have access to nutritious food and that every student will benefit from “sprouting healthy relationships with food.”

Even with an increase in funding this year, we are still only receiving 15 per cent of the total cost of these programs and so we run ourselves ragged selling tickets and arranging photo booths and shuttles for bigger and better fundraising events.

To build on an old bumper sticker about schools and the military, it will be a great day when our (fill in the good public service or charity you love) gets all the money they need and the Senate has to hold a bake sale to cover expenses.

Deirdre Pike is a freelance columnist for the Hamilton Spectator who hopes you want to help children and youth “sprout healthy relationships with food.” Check out tastebudshamilton.ca for more or follow @deirdrepike

Children lose out with fearful schools

Bogeyman paranoia where shadows lurk at every corner

THOMAS FROESE

There was a time when a neighbourhood school was a place that nourished your soul. It wasn’t that long ago. I’m not that old.

You’d go to play, say, baseball on Saturday morning or, in winter, hockey on the rink that your Grade 6 teacher lovingly flooded outside the row of windows where even the good students looked out to daydream.

It was a time when you’d walk to school. By yourself. Even when the school bully — her last name, fittingly, Greenall — went that way. It somehow brought out courage that you never knew you had.

Years later, you’d return to shoot hoops in the old playground. And years after that, at its final reunion, you’d walk in to have a former teacher, one who hadn’t seen you for decades, call you by name with an, “Oh my God, it’s Tommy Froese!”

This was my experience. My grade school was that inviting.

The other day I went to register my kids in the Ancaster school near our house. My kids attend for two months annually when we’re home from Africa.

The school had to buzz me in.

This school, the one that removes its outdoor basketball hoops so nobody can play in summers, the one where I’ve never even seen tag played during summer break, now locks its doors during school days.

Not that it’s a bad school. It’s a good school with some fine people. Apparently, like too many others, it’s just a fearful school.

“I see you have controlled access now,” I said to the principal. He mentioned the Sandy Hook, Conn., school murders, and that the province, that is your tax dollars, is paying for new security systems.

But, in truth, he added, “If someone wants to get in to do something like that, they will.”

The principal is right. Sandy Hook Elementary had controlled access when it was attacked by a sick young man.

Which is why it’s so disturbing and sad, this bogeyman paranoia where shadows lurk at every corner, as if we’re prone to some sort of American-style siege, this hypervigilance that actually takes some-

thing of great value from our children — and our community — and normalizes what is, in fact, an anxious unreality.

Some time ago I visited another former school, my middle school. I drove the hour or so, parked, then, for the first time in some 30 years, walked in.

Navigating a flurry of coats and day-end activity, I looked into this classroom and down that hall. I poked in the gym and around old corners, my heart racing with the thrill of this inner-childlike tour to ensure everything at the old joint was, more or less, still in place.

Upon exiting, not surprisingly, I was asked some questions. So I explained I’m a former student, in town also visiting my father. But I’m usually away, far away. And, without wanting to cause a stir, I quietly dropped in.

It all worked out, ending with smiles and me sharing some business cards.

And while I don’t recommend this stunt for everyone, the unfortunate point is that my own children will never get the chance to even imagine such a worthwhile effort.

No, when they’re older and want to feed that important part of who they are, rather than naturally visiting the school so close to their Hamilton home, they’ll likely find it more inviting to fly all the way to Africa.

Africa, where school girls are taken hostage in their nighties and bare feet, where there are plenty of other dangers, but less fear.

Well, it’s a new era, say the handwringers. We have to take precautions, you know. Or good God, we’ll be sued!

There’s another angle, though, a more holistic and lively one that says, as a rule, in this world, don’t let your heart be troubled. True, there’s real trouble often enough. But locking your doors never works, anyway. You simply can’t lock it all out.

This is what any kid, or anyone really, needs to be reminded of in our time. Learn to face your troubles. In your deep and quiet places. No, don’t let your heart be troubled.

Author and journalist Thomas Froese lives in Uganda most of the year. He and his family are on their annual stay in Hamilton. Read him at [www.dailydad.net](http://www.dailydad.net) and [www.thomasfroese.com](http://www.thomasfroese.com)

THE SPEC

BRIEFLY

Short and excerpted comments sent to [letters@thespec.com](mailto:letters@thespec.com)

**Linc was great, but no statue needed**

What is it with Hamilton councillors, especially Brian McHattie continuing to propose more statues? Are they trying to make Hamilton the Graceland of Pigeons? Lincoln Alexander was an interesting person, but we have a major traffic parkway and school dedicated to his name, so why do we need to spend more taxpayers money on a useless statue? Congrats to Brenda Johnson for stating that she cannot support this waste of taxpayer money. My vote is with her for mayor, as opposed to any Pigeon Percher.

PAUL CASTELLAN, HAMILTON

**It’s unworthy of you, Hurricane Hazel**

It’s little wonder that a multitude of citizens cannot stomach politics.

Mayor Hazel McCallion, champion of ugly sprawl, transformed the Peel Plain (containing some of the best farmland in Canada) into a vast urban desert during her years as mayor of Mississauga. Now she appears to have no trouble endorsing Premier Wynne, whose Liberal government under disgraced Dalton McGuinty has wallowed in political scandal and overspending for more than a decade. If Ontario voters do decide to vote this inept government back into office, Hurricane Hazel can then also stand amid her ugly sprawl as the endorsing champion of political corruption and scandal, Ontario-wide. And next time round, even more citizens will shun the polling booths.

JIM McDONALD, DUNDAS

**Irony in Cardinal’s abortion stance**

Is it only this skeptic or is there irony in the Cardinal of the Archdiocese of Toronto reprimanding the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada for his dictum that all new Liberal candidates must toe the pro-choice stance he has declared as a requirement to run in the next election? Yet a pro-life and celibate life before a church-sanctioned marriage is a requirement before admission to his organization. Just wondering.

ROB MONTGOMERY

“When my children were very young, Tim Hortons was also my companion, helping me get through all the stresses of new parenting and the sleepless nights.