

Greetings from Ontario, Canada

Keith Saunders, Ontario's senior vet extraordinaire, was at it again this time in Phoenix, Arizona. Keith captured the Autumn Grand Singles Championship over a field of 409 participants. Not only did he run the program singles but prevailed in a shoot-off by smashing another 375 clays. Another of our senior vets, George Jonckhere, made the shoot-off with a perfect 200 as well but exited without a trophy. What this tells me is that age is little barrier in ATA trap. Well done gentlemen.

That leads me to some myths versus reality:

1. Myth: Ontario has pretenders not contenders.

Reality: Keith and George (and that's just in senior vet).

2. Myth: Because of our harsh winters, we Canadians have little sense of humour.

Reality: The following "Canadians" may have made you chuckle over the years: Wayne and Shuster, Rich Little, Jim Carrey, Russel Peters, Seth Rogan, Mike Myers, Leslie Nielson, John Candy, Martin Short....not bad "eh".

3. Myth: Only Americans have the real "Rambo's".

Reality: Canadians are anything but pacifists when the going gets tough. Canada has never lost a war that it fought in – War of 1812, World War I, World War II, Korea (officially I suppose still a "cease fire"), Afghanistan (although it may be an overstatement to consider that war on terrorism to have been won). Canadians love our hockey and even the Soviet goal tender in our now famous '72 USSR – Canada Summit Series gave a fitting tribute when he said "The Canadians have great skills and fight to the very end". [Please – somebody pass this message on to the Toronto Maple Leafs who have not won a Stanley Cup since 1967.]

4. Myth: Air aces (an ace has a minimum of 5 confirmed "kills") in World War I came exclusively from U.S. and Germany.

Reality: Four of the top seven World War I aces were Canadians and all crack shots – William "Billy" Bishop (72 victories), Raymond Collishaw (60 victories), Donald MacLaren (54 victories) and William Barker (53 victories). These were the original Crazy Canucks who regularly dropped leaflets over enemy airfields advising German pilots when they were coming and inviting the enemy pilots to "come on up". Bishop and Barker won the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry. And just for good measure the pilot who is credited with shooting down the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen (with some help from the Australian down under) was Roy Brown from Carleton Place, Ontario (near Ottawa).

5. Myth: Many concur with observations made by American military writer Max Boot who wrote some time ago in Commentary magazine that Canada is a country that most Americans consider a “dull but slavishly friendly neighbour sort of like a great St. Bernard”.

Reality: Boot needs to hone up on some Canadian history. He owes his freedom in part to courageous Canadian soldiers and fliers of the world wars who held off the Germans while America struggled with isolationism. Take, for instance, the heroics of World War II Winnipeg native, Sir William Stephenson who:

- Ran the undercover British Security Coordination (BSC) under the code name “Intrepid” from Rockefeller Center in New York as a liaison between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill;
- Invented the machine that transferred photos over the wire for the Daily Mail newspaper in 1922;
- (Most Americans and Canadians for that matter were not aware that the BSC was even there or that it was stocked with Canadians secretly working to preserve North American freedom from the Nazis.)
- Intrepid trained Ian Fleming, author of the James Bond series at Camp X, the secret spy school near Whitby, Ontario:
  - Five future directors of the CIA also received special training there;
  - Maybe Bond’s 007 licence to kill status, his gadgetry and the “shaken, not stirred” martinis, among the strongest in North American, came from Stephenson;
- When Intrepid was presented with the Presidential Medal of Merit in 1946 by Wild Bill Donovan, head of the U.S. OSS (forerunner of the CIA), Donovan said “William Stephenson taught us everything we knew about espionage”.

Footnote: I suggest if you get a chance to read Bill O’Reilly’s book “Killing Patton”, you will understand the significant roll played by “Wild Bill Donovan” in the war effort.

6. Myth: Canadian inventions are pretty well restricted to Dr. Frederick Banting who discovered “insulin” and Alexander Graham Bell who invented the “telephone et al”.

Reality: Just a few other inventions include: the oxygen mask, the anti-gravity suit (forerunner to the space suit), the Avro Arrow “team” whose expertise helped build the American space program and this included Jim Chamberlin, chief designer of the Jetliner and the Arrow, and who was one of those responsible for the design and implementation of the Gemini and Apollo space programs. And, to make everyone’s life easier, Canadians invented Pabulum, the electric oven, standard time, the snowmobile, plexiglass, the pacemaker, etc. etc.

7. Myth: Basketball is one of America's premier participation and spectator sports.

Reality: A Canadian, James Naismith from Almonte, Ontario, invented the game. Americans picked up the ball and dribbled with it from there.

8. Myth: Canadians have an inferiority complex.

Reality: Never mistake quiet confidence for weakness. Many a bully has learned that the hard way. Most Canadians are self-effacing and do not brag. That does not mean Canadians do not know who they are. Canadians can be caring but tough, fun-loving but polite and creative, and Canadians share with each other and the world. Canadian history is exciting but, for the most part, Canadians do not toot their own horn. We are proud to be part of the friendly, confident "Great White North". So when senior veterans like Keith and George and so many others do us proud, you are unlikely to hear either of them bragging about their accomplishments. They, like so many Canadians, walk softly but carry a big stick.

Editorial Note: Much of the research done for this article must be credited to Gerry Boley, a high school teacher, university lecturer and writer who hails from St. Catherines, Ontario.

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