

A meaningful event in Windermere

In the role of a politician in current times, there can be so many disagreeable features.

One inevitably encounters hurtful campaign tactics, deceitful reporting on problems, an unfortunate degree of effort for personal gain, an amazing unwillingness to communicate openly with many of the ratepayers, as well as an astounding generosity in the proposed expenditures of public dollars. For me personally there was always a flip side to those frustrations.

One of the major pleasures in any political career has to be those occasions for meeting with large groups of community-minded citizens at special events in Muskoka. Volunteer or special interest groups provide a plethora of opportunities for sincere and open dialogue - and usually at an event that offers an enjoyable and relaxed learning experience.

At the risk of missing a great many delightful events, I shall mention such things as the

Pancake Festival at the Veitch sugar bush, the perennial corn roast of the Skeleton Lake Association, the annual meeting of the Lions Club in Minett, the RCMP Musical Ride in Bala, the Firemen's Ball in Raymond, the hog-calling contest in Huntsville and the Homebuilders' Show in Gravenhurst.

What a perspective one can gain on public feelings! What a chance to deal with concerned citizens! What a sense of pride one gains for those who strive for the betterment of our region.

Last Saturday reawakened me to the great potential with which we are blessed here. At Windermere, about 100 local people gathered in the United Church for an evening of music concluded by an eye-popping array of "over the moon" desserts prepared by community members.

Without the leadership of Maureen Veitch, this event could not have taken place. Our evening began with a

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A choir of angels filled the church.

series of catchy numbers by the Down Home Band, a popular local group featuring Adam Veitch, his mother Maureen, and the versatile Wilf Creasor plus his wife Sheila.

Missing were Derek and Elaine Mason, a couple who have just returned from volunteer support for hurricane victims of Katrina in Mississippi.

The band certainly impressed its appreciative audience on several occasions during the evening.

Pianists Aaron Shaw and Jason Warnaar did a great job with duets

and solos on the ivories. Sue Einarson of Rosseau provided a wonderful rendition from Bizet's *Carmen*, and Elaine Vida, (known by most through her work at Brackenrig Nursery), added a lovely aria by Puccini. This pair of talented artists teamed up as well for some hit songs from *The Sound of Music*.

Drawing on the talent of our minister, Rev. Karen Menagh, with partners Keith and Charlene Kuepfer, our spirits were lifted by a beautiful rendition of *What a Wonderful World*.

The combined talent from our three little churches in Utterson, Windermere and Rosseau, known as the Evergreen Pastoral Charge, formed a choir of twelve, for an example of how co-operation can benefit us all.

One of the comic elements of the evening was a presentation by Marshall and Joan Emmons. With a great tape of opera music playing, this couple in

formal dress and outlandish wigs provided a lip synchronization of Maria Callas and Luciano Pavarotti for a delighted audience.

At the conclusion of the musical portion of the program, we adjourned to the hall downstairs to discover the most amazing display of luscious desserts. No limits were placed on consumption by those in attendance.

Across the lovely tables set for participants, many issues were discussed informally. It was easy to sense the togetherness of one large segment of our population.

That was when I realized how significant such evenings had been in my life as a municipal politician in Muskoka. Sadly, there appeared to be no current politicians in attendance, and that can only be seen as their loss.