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Goodbye Shelburne

by MIKE BAKER

I always hate doing these things. There's just something about saying goodbye that really rankles with me.

I mean, it sucks, right? You get comfortable in your surroundings. Find happiness at work, and at home. Make friends. Then the rug is inconceivably pulled out from beneath your feet. Only this time, I really shouldn't be complaining about it, as I'm the one pulling the rug.

For those of you who haven't already gathered, this will be the final time you see my name within the pages of the Orangeville Citizen, Caledon Citizen and Shelburne Free Press. As much as I've loved my time with you all here in the Headwaters region, my wife and I have been presented with one of those ?too good to turn down' opportunities to return home.

So, while there's certainly an element of excitement, and at the risk of repeating myself, it still sucks.

While I started my journalism career out in Alberta, spending two and a half years in the middle of nowhere between Edmonton and Fort McMurray, it's here in Dufferin-Caledon where I've truly found my voice, and established myself as a writer and editor.

Looking back, there have been a lot of milestones in the past four years. I became a permanent resident of Canada, after many, many years spent on what, to me, seemed like dozens of visitor and working visas. I got married, and, more recently, my wife and I were approved to buy our first home. In a sense, I think I've evolved into an adult while I've been here.

It hasn't all been sunshine and rainbows, however. There has certainly been some pain along the way. When I left my previous position, in my goodbye column, I included some of my most embarrassing bloopers, I guess as a tongue-in-cheek way to say the paper will be fine, and maybe even better off with me out of the picture! I was lucky that the feature was taken in the comedic way it was intended.

Now, I thought I'd use this space to compare my top two bloopers from my previous position at the Bonnyville Nouvelle, with my top two over the years here in Orangeville, Caledon and Shelburne. I'll let you, the reader, be the judge and decide whether or not I've stepped up my game in recent years.

We'll kick it off with the classics. I'll keep it brief. In Alberta, I reported, during what was my first time covering (and hearing about) chuck wagon races, that a record-setting track time of one hour, 17 minutes and 12 seconds was recently set during a provincial event. I did not attend the race. I reported after the fact, after receiving the results in an email. Now, for someone who had never even heard of chuck wagon racing before, seeing a time listed as 1:17:12, to me at least, meant hours, minutes and seconds. Not minutes, seconds and milli-seconds. Strike one.

Now for number two. I mistakenly reported that a church group was soon to embark on a mission trip to Nicaragura. I described Nicaragua as being an impoverished African nation. Yeah. Really. And I consider myself to be something of a geography buff? There really isn't much of a defense for that one.

So, first on the list here in Dufferin-Caledon, and it's a story I wrote for the Orangeville Citizen back in 2017. This one still hurts and haunts me to this day, because it's a mistake that absolutely should not have happened. In writing a commemorative Remembrance Day feature piece, I retold the story of Sir Fred Heber, a veteran of the Second World War. Only in my original story, I got Fred's last name wrong. I still cringe today when I think about this. While we made up for the error, and Fred was ultimately very happy with what we did, it's still uncomfortable for me even today.

On a much lighter note, there have been several occasions? More than one? Honestly, probably more than five over the years I'd

say? Where I have, for whatever reason, massively fudged up headlines for certain stories. For those who don't know how our systems work, when putting together the week's papers, I generally use the previous issue's pages as a template to work off of. There have been times over the years where I have allowed an old headline to remain in place over the top of a new story. The best example of this, is when I allowed a Christmas-themed ?Santa is coming to town' headline to feature over the top of a New Year's story, talking about a dog being reunited with a family after spending five or six nights out in the wild after escaping. Insert favour Homer Simpson quote here.

There have certainly been some other absolute peaches over the years, but these are the two that stick in my mind. Let's hope that, years in the future, when I'm writing another goodbye column, there's absolutely nothing for me to look back on and poke fun at. Hey, a man can dream, right?

In all seriousness, I want to thank each and every member of the community who spent time reading my many columns and articles over the years, and, importantly, those of you who reached out to engage with me about the many, many topics I've covered. There has been a lot of change in this region in recent years, and I'm sure there will be much more change in the future.

Thanks for the good times, Orangeville, Caledon and Shelburne. I'll sure miss you.