

# Canadians

An article posted in the Buffalo News by Gerry Boley

Misconceptions in the United States about Canada are quite common. They include: there is always snow in Canada; Canadians are boring, socialists and pacifists; their border is porous and allowed the Sept. 11 terrorists through; or, as the U.S. Ottawa embassy staff suggested to Canada Day and America's Independence Day, this is a great time to clarify some of these misconceptions and better appreciate a neighbour that the United States at times takes for granted.

With the exception of the occasional glacier, skiing in Canada in the summer just isn't happening. Frigid northern winters, however, have shaped the tough, fun-loving Canadian character. When it is 30-below, the Canucks get their sticks, shovel off the local pond and have a game of shinny hockey.

The harsh winters have also shaped Canadians' sense of humour. Canada has some of the world's greatest comedians, from early Wayne and Shuster, to Rich Little, Jim Carrey, Russel Peters, Seth Rogan, Mike Myers, Leslie Nielsen, John Candy, Martin Short, Eugene Levy and "Saturday Night Live" creator and movie producer Lorne Michaels.

The suggestion that Canadians are soft on terrorism is a myth. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau backed down the Front de Liberation du Quebec terrorists during the 1970s. And the 9/11 Commission reported that terrorists arrived in the United States from outside North America with documents issued to them by the U.S. government. Likewise, the Canadians in Gander countered despicable terrorist acts with love and caring to their U.S. neighbours when planes were diverted there.

Americans glorify war with movies, but it is the Canadians who are often the real "Rambo." The Canadians are anything but pacifists and their history is certainly not dull. Be it on the ice or battlefield, this warrior nation has never lost a war that it fought in – War of 1812 (versus the United States ), World War I, World War II, Korea and now Afghanistan. During the '72 Summit Series, Soviet goalie Vladislav Tretiak said, "The Canadians have great skills and fight to the very end."

In hunting the Taliban in Afghanistan, U.S. Commander and Navy SEAL Capt. Robert Harward stated that the Canadian Joint Task Force 2 team was "his first choice for any direct-action mission."

# Canadians

Contrary to Thomas Jefferson's 1812 comment that, "The acquisition of Canada will be a mere matter of marching," the wily Native American leader Tecumseh and Maj. Gen. Isaac Brock captured Brig. Gen. William Hull's Fort Detroit without firing a shot. The Americans never took Quebec and when they burned the Canadian Parliament Buildings at York, the

White House was torched in retaliation. Canada consolidated its status as a warrior nation during World War I battles at Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Somme and the Second Battle of Ypres, where soldiers were gassed twice by the Germans but refused to break the line. By the end of the war, the Canadians were the Allies' shock troops.

In the air, four of the top seven World War I aces were Canadians. Crack shots, the names William "Billy" Bishop, Raymond Collishaw, Donald MacLaren and William Barker, with 72, 60, 54 and 53 victories, respectively, were legendary. These were the original Crazy Canucks, who regularly dropped leaflets over enemy airfields advising German pilots that they we're coming over at such and such a time, and to come on up. Bishop and Barker won the Victoria Cross, the highest award for gallantry.

The pilot who is credited with shooting down the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, with a little help from the Australian down under, was not Snoopy but Roy Brown from Carleton Place, Ont.

During World War II, Winnipeg native and air ace Sir William Stephenson, the "Quiet Canadian," ran the undercover British Security Coordination under the code name Intrepid from Rockefeller Center in New York, as a liaison between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Stephenson invented the machine that transferred photos over the wire for the Daily Mail newspaper in 1922. Americans were not aware that the BSC was there or that it was stocked with Canadians secretly working to preserve North American freedom from the Nazis.

Also little known is that Intrepid trained Ian Fleming, author of the James Bond series, at Camp X, the secret spy school near Whitby, Ont. Five future directors of the CIA also received special training there. It is suggested that Fleming's reference to Bond's 007 license to kill status, his gadgetry and the "shaken not stirred" martinis, rumored to be the strongest in North America, came from Stephenson.

When Wild Bill Donovan, head of the U.S. OSS, forerunner of the CIA, presented Intrepid with the Presidential Medal of Merit in 1946, he said, "William Stephenson taught us everything we knew about espionage."

# Canadians

American military writer Max Boot wrote recently 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." Boot needs to come to Canada, have a Molson Canadian and chat about Canadian history. He owes his freedom to Canucks such as Stephenson and the courageous soldiers and fliers of the world wars who held off the Germans while America struggled with isolationism.

Canadian inventions such as the oxygen mask and anti-gravity suit, the forerunner of the astronaut suit, allowed U.S. and other Allied fighter pilots to fly higher, turn tighter and not black out with the resulting G-force. The 32 Canadians from the Avro Arrow team helped build the American space program and were, according to NASA, brilliant to a man. The most brilliant, Jim Chamberlin, chief designer of the Jetliner and Arrow, was responsible for the design and implementation of the Gemini and Apollo space programs.

Although Canadians have had a free, workable medical system for 50 years, they are not socialists and there are not long lineups, as some politicians opposed to Obama care suggest. This writer has had a ruptured appendix, hip replacement, pinned shoulder, blood clot, twist fracture of the fibula and broken foot, and in every case, there was zero cost to me. Canadians have and value a medical system for all Canadians that is free with minimal waits. That is not socialism; that is caring about fellow Canadians.

Americans may be surprised by the Canadian content in their life. Superman – "truth, justice and the American way" – was co-created by Canadian Joe Shuster, the Daily Planet is based on a Toronto newspaper, and the 1978 film's Lois Lane, Margot Kidder, and Superman's father, Glenn Ford, were both Canadians. The captain of the star-ship Enterprise was Montreal-born William Shatner. Torontonians Raymond Massey played Abraham Lincoln in 1956. And as American as apple pie? Ah, no. The McIntosh apple was developed in Dundela, Ont., in 1811 by John McIntosh.

Many of the sports that Americans excel at are Canadian in origin. James Naismith from Almonte, Ont., invented basketball. The tackling and ball carrying in football were introduced by the Canucks in games between Harvard and McGill in the 1870s. Five-pin bowling is also a Canadian game. Lacrosse is officially Canada's national sport, and hockey – well, Canadians are hockey. And Jackie Robinson called Montreal "the city that enabled me to go to the major leagues."

# Canadians

To make everyone's life easier, Canadians invented Pabulum, the electric oven, the telephone, Marquis wheat, standard time, the rotary snowplow, the snowmobile, Plexiglas, oven cleaner, the jolly jumper, the pacemaker, the alkaline battery, the caulking gun, the gas mask, the goalie mask and many more.

Canadian inferiority complex? That is another myth. Never pick a fight with a quiet kid in the schoolyard. Never mistake quiet confidence for weakness. Many a bully has learned that the hard way. Canadians are self-effacing and do not brag. That does not mean we do not know who we are. We are caring but tough, fun-loving but polite and creative, and we share with each other and the world. Our history is exciting but we don't toot our horn. The world does that for us. This is the third year in a row that Canada has been voted the most respected country in the world by the Reputation Institute global survey.

Perhaps once a year around our collective birthdays, Americans can raise a toast to their friendly, confident neighbour in the Great White North.

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