

Art by Raymond Parrish, author of Stranger In A Strange Land, the life of Hugh Garner

## "SAVAGE!!!"

"Pow! – Pow! – two lightning shots to the head!... I reeled, staggered... he charged – and then I *knew* I was in for the fight of my life!"

"He was out to kill me! I could see it in his eyes – filled with hate! His name was Sid Commandant, Chief of the Wahta Mohawks in Bala, Ontario. And although we had never met – he came at me like I was his worst enemy!"

"We slammed into each other like colliding locomotives – a concussion so violent that nothing on Earth could have separated us! A fury of flying fists, feet and rage – we were locked in mortal combat! He was trying to beat me to death – and would have succeeded had I not been in the great shape that I was! He went for the hunting knife at his side – but I didn't give him a chance to pull it!"...

"An invisible thread connects those who are destined to meet, regardless of time, place or circumstance...."

(Ancient Chinese Proverb)

\*Editor's Note: for the sake of historical accuracy I shall refer to Canadian and American Natives as "Indians" which was their original appellation, and therefore *not* to mean people from India.

...Recently (2006) I read in the Toronto Star about the death of one "Sid Commandant, former Chief of the Wahta Mohawks in Bala, Ontario; age 79." It was penned by Star obituary writer Catherine Dunphy and it read like a hagiography; you'd think she was putting him up for sainthood! I decided to call Catherine, since I knew her casually, and *this* is what I told her about the erstwhile Mr. Commandant: ...

Back in 1962, Bala was – and probably still is – a favourite swinging vacation summer hot spot for both wealthy Americans and Canadians. It's located slightly north of Gravenhurst and a whole lot more north of Toronto (about 150 clicks). Not only did I play and party a *lot* up there in my youth, but old Sarah Bonus, Gravenhurst's tea cup reader-fortune teller, was my great Aunt who took care of me for a year while my mother travelled with the giant carnival conglomeration, Conklin Shows. In those days carnivals were bigger than most circuses. She being a high platform diver, 110 ft. into a "damp sponge" ringed with fire, as was my dad, Captain Tony Carr. I stayed with Aunt Sarah until I was weaned from the bottle and old enough to travel with my mother and two aunts, Dixie and Dot (Vivian and Dorothy), my dad by then already having long since flown the coop to Hollywood....

In Summer, Sarah would sit me in my highchair and place me outside on the porch, facing the cemetery. It seemed even then that Destiny took a hand and started grooming me for my ultimate profession as nexus between this world and the next, the one I often refer to as the Electrical Dimension.... From my perch, I would watch the funeral processions come and go, with an infant's curiosity. Of course, I had no idea what they meant.



Baby Anthony sitting in front of Gravenhurst cemetery (Sid Commandant nearly put me in the "grave" in Gravenhurst.)

Ahh, but 1962.... What a year!... In 1962 the Toronto Star and Telegram headlines screamed: "Marilyn Monroe – Dead!" What?... My Marilyn, dead?! My very own, tender teenage years' all-time favourite sex fantasy goddess – dead?!... It can't be! I don't believe it! – Oh, was there ever anything more tragic!!

Mind you, I was simultaneously also madly in love with MGM's Jane Powell; but that was "true love," not the kind of lusty love I felt for Marilyn. Although at 18, I hardly think I could have distinguished between love and "lust". (The former merely a euphemism for the latter.) Jane and I eventually did meet up and came to know each other decades later, during my sojourn in Hollywood; and that's another story. But Marilyn... oh, the agony of it all!

And to think it was only a couple months earlier that I saw her on TV at President Kennedy's televised birthday bash from New York's Madison Square Garden, singing her rendition of Happy Birthday in that sexy, sultry and, oh, so intimate way as only she could do it. Wrapping those luscious, full red lips around every single word and syllable, she slowly and breathlessly purred... "Ha-a-ppy birth-da-a-y to-o-o you-u-u, ha-a-ppy birth-da-a-y to-o-o you-u-u, ha-a-ppy birth-d-a-a-y-y, dear-Mr.-Presiden-n-t, hap-p-py birth-da-a-y-y to-o-o you-u-u..." – in such a way that I was literally squirming in my seat. She wore a pearl-white, skin-tight, beaded dress that looked like it was inside out her skin, or vice-versa! Even though there were hundreds of people in that cavernous banquet hall, the way she and JFK gazed into each other's eyes, you'd think that they were the only two people in the room!... Which led to the (mostly true) rumours that they were, indeed, having "an affair to remember." And even though the Cuban Missile Crisis was then raging – bringing the world to the very brink of total thermal nuclear war - which threatened the destruction of the human race, I couldn't have cared less... my Marilyn was dead ("...sob").

It seems Russia was "secretly" setting up ICBM nuclear-tipped missiles on Cuban soil, only ninety miles from the Florida mainland, pissing off very much President Kennedy. Well, old JFK wasn't having any of that! As the Russian navy approached America's naval blockade surrounding Fidel Castro's Cuban Island fortress, and neither one refusing to budge an inch (they were literally eyeball-to-eyeball), with their big cannons staring down each other's throats, the world held its collective breath and waited.... (Except for me, of course; what did I care, Marilyn was dead... "blub.") Finally the Russians blinked, backed off, and it was over. But it was the closest that Mankind had *ever* come to wiping Himself off the face of the Earth. (...So far!)

Meanwhile at New York's United Nations, Premier Nikita Khrushchev took off his shoe and started pounding his desk with it, in order to make some kind of a point, a point which I don't think anyone even remembers, if they ever knew what it was in the first place. And he didn't even bother to put it back on... just left the smelly old thing right there, sitting on top of the desk....

Of much less interest, at least to me, at 18, was Israel's Secret Service (Mossad). They sent a band of guerilla-style agents to Argentina to capture Nazi Holocaust organizer, Adolf Eichmann, and return him to Jerusalem to stand trial for crimes against humanity (WWII), which they did. He was often referred to as "the indifferent desktop butcher of Auschwitz." On June 1, 1962, they led him out to the prison square and promptly hanged him, for all the world to see....

That year, President Kennedy had personally handed FDR researcher, Francis Kelsey, the President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service for banning the use of the drug *thalidomide* in the U.S.A., thus sparing hundreds of thousands of infants *truly* horrifying birth defects.

Canada shortly followed suit, but unfortunately not before more than a hundred and twenty babies (123 to be exact), were born with severe disfigurements – including flippers where arms, hands and feet should have been.... Tragic.

Speaking of babies, in 1962 China resumed its birth control campaign that they had suspended in '58; the World Health Organization (WHO) offered family-planning advice; and Pope John XXIII convened Vatican II, less than a century after Vatican I was convened in 1869. <sup>1</sup>The world's population in 1962 was 3.1 billion and pilot Major John Glenn was the first American to orbit Earth (three times) in a tiny cramped satellite.

Heavyweight boxer Sonny Liston won the world title when he knocked out Floyd ("glass jaw") Patterson in the first round in Chicago; Ohio golfer Jack Nicklaus, 22, won the U.S. open by defeating Arnold Palmer. Tab-opening pop and beer cans first hit the market! ("....Beer in tin cans instead of long-stemmed bottles? How can you whack a guy over the head with a beer can?!") Sugar-free, cyclamate-sweetened Cola was now offered nationwide; soon to be followed by another artificial sweetener, Aspartame. (Both were – and are today – suspected of being possible carcinogens.)

ABC began color telecasts and by 1967, the year I joined the musical group *The Marquis*, all three networks were broadcasting in color. (Of course that didn't matter to those of us still living in poverty in good *Olde Cabbagetown*, unless somehow soundwaves could be transformed into color images for the *ear*, because all we could afford in those days were radios.) Andy Warhol painted (or photographed) "A Can of Soup," which they called "art"! ...Wow!

Cost of living items in Toronto in 1962... new car, \$3,000; new house, \$12,500; average annual income, about \$5,000 (I was working as a clerk typist for The United Way for \$45.00 a week); average *monthly* rent, \$100.00 – not for an apartment – but a whole two-story house! Eggs: 32 cents a dozen – and gas?... 28 cents a gallon – a gallon! – not a litre. (...One time my best buddy, <sup>2</sup>Mike De Genova and I borrowed his Dad's new car to go to a dance at the <sup>3</sup>Trocadero club, or the "Tick-tock" club, by which it was also known. We pulled into a gas station and handed the attendant 48 cents and two empty glass milk bottles (10 cents each), and asked for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In 1962, the world population was 3.1 billion; now it's closer to 8 billion (2019). Something's *gotta* give!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Founder of a string of gyms called The Muscle Factory and Frog's Gym.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Trocadero was located out along Toronto's Bloor St. W, around High Park.

two-and-a-half gallons. There was no self-serve in those days. They had smiling, uniformed servicemen who automatically – and attentively – cleaned your windows, checked your oil and tires – all without so much as even hinting at a tip. (Unless, of course, you wanted to give him one of your milk bottles.) It was just part of the overall service.

The big movies of the day were James Bond's *Dr. No*, with Sean Connery; *Spartacus*, starring Kirk Douglas; also *Lawrence of Arabia*, featuring Peter O' Toole; and James Stewart and John Wayne in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*; *Days of Wine and Roses*, Jack Lemmon, Lee Remick; *The Music Man*, Robert Preston; *Divorce, Italian Style*, Marcello Mastroianni; Frank Sinatra in *The Manchurian Candidate*; Arthur Penn's *The Miracle Worker*, with Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke as Helen Keller; *To Kill A Mockingbird*, starring Gregory Peck; and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* with the incomparable Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, two "best friends forever" (BFF) ... *not!* 

In 1962 Spider-Man made his first appearance in Marvel comics. The most-watched TV shows in '62 were Dick Van Dyke, Beverly Hillbillies and a young upstart by the name of Johnny Carson. Boogie-woogie Rock & Roll and R&B were just hitting their stride, with names like Chubby Checker ("The Twist"), Neil Sedaka ("Calendar Girl"), Ray Charles ("Doin' the Mess Around"), Chuck Berry ("Johnny B. Goode"), Roy Orbison ("Crying"), James Brown ("I Feel Good"), Four Seasons ("Big Girls Don't Cry"), Dion and the Belmonts ("Cause I'm A Wanderer"); and, of course, The Beatles first big hit: "Love Me, Do!"

Opposite the Rock and Rollers were the romantic crooners: Johnny Mathis ("Chances Are"), Nat King Cole ("Mona Lisa"), Perry Como ("It's Impossible"), Dean Martin ("Innamorata"), Frank Sinatra ("My Way") and Andy Williams ("Moon River").... Incidentally, the mention or sound of someone playing or singing *Moon River* has always made me nauseous, as you will soon learn why....

Closer to home, home being Toronto, Canada: The Three Stooges were appearing at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) Grandstand, performing their slap-stick shticks and shenanigans, followed by their familiar "Nyuck-nyuck" laughter after each bit. In July, the first Canadian medicare plan was launched by Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas and his political party the CCF, and opened the door for Canada-wide socialized medicine, much to the consternation and protestations of most of the Philistine doctors. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker refused to put Canadian forces on alert, ticking off to no end the United States government. Toronto University Professor Marshall McLuhan's book, The Gutenberg Galaxy, is released: "The medium is the message." (I once read McLuhan's palms.) In my opinion, Tommy Douglas' picture should be prominently featured on Canadian one hundred dollar bills because without him we would not have the nearly free medical care that we enjoy today. I can remember a time when it was not so. In those days, if you didn't have the 3 dollars necessary to pay for a doctor's house call, you could die – and many did! Especially in

the slums of Olde Cabbagetown when it *really was* Cabbagetown! (Tommy Douglas is the grandfather of Canadian Hollywood actor Kiefer Sutherland

because Kiefer's mother, Shirley Douglas, is Old Tommy's daughter, who married actor Donald Sutherland.

France's Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle visited Ottawa, Canada, then left with a hardy – "Vive le Québec libre!" – causing a furor right across the country!

The first Shaw Festival opened and Toronto Maple Leafs won their tenth (if you can believe it!) Stanley Cup by drowning the Chicago Blackhawks; Mister Rogers' Neighborhood premiered on CBC: "...Oh, it's a nice day in the neighborhood," etc. – And, oh yes, I nearly forgot, 1962 saw the last three hangings in Canada, two of which I sort of personally witnessed outside Toronto's notorious Don Jail where they executed Turpin and Lucas. (I once did a "sock change" (about 2 weeks) in there myself, a long time ago.) And prior to that, Boyd Gang member Soshan and another guy named Jackson were hanged back to back in 1952. Both comedian Jim Carrey and singer-songwriter Jann Arden were born in '62.

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...1962 was a big year in the world of bodybuilding and weightlifting for me and my two best friends, Mike De Genova and <sup>4</sup>John Strain. Each of us had won our fair share of titles and trophies over that long *hot* summer, culminating with the *Mr. Dominion of Canada / Mr. Physique* contests and Canadian Bench Press competition, held at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) horse palace, during the closing days of the fair. It was sponsored by Dino's Gym. Mike won both divisions in his weight class, 220 lbs., and eventually went on to win the official Weider IFBB Mr. Canada title, in Montreal. John won the Mr. Ontario title in Brantford, Ontario (near the Six Nations Reserve), in the 175 lbs. division while I, in the welterweight class (146-7 lbs), won both the posing competition and the bench press, pushing 340 lbs. at a body weight of 146-7 lbs.

It had been a great summer all 'round, and we three were looking forward to the last, long party weekend of the summer: the Labour Day weekend up in Bala... lots of beer, broads and bedlam. Unfortunately for me, I ended up with a lot more bedlam than beer and broads. What's that expression people use these days?... "Life is what happens to you while you're making other plans?..." Amen to that – in spades!

We had just finished demonstrating weight-training techniques atop the CHUM and CKEY radio stations' broadcast trailers, just inside the CNE's Princes' Gates. The sun was sinking beneath the horizon over Lake Ontario... a great, red orb slowly slipping into the abyss on a beautiful, sultry summer evening... a magnificent sight. But we couldn't wait to get going and so roared up the highway to Bala just as fast as we could possibly make our cars go, so that we wouldn't "miss any of the action."

Mike and I jumped into his mini gray, MGB convertible and John in his brand new, 1962 robin-egg blue Pontiac convertible that Debbie, his girlfriend – whom I had introduced him to – had just bought him, but who definitely was *not* coming along on *this* stag weekend. Besides, she managed an after-hours club on Toronto's then notorious Yonge St strip and so couldn't come, anyway. I went with Mike because in those days if a trip to the moon had cost only a nickel, I still wouldn't have had enough to get off the ground. So off we went – into the wild blue yonder. But if I had "known" then what I would be walking into, I would

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> John Strain, Mr. Ontario, was a biker with the Black Diamond Riders (BDRs) under Johnny Sombrero; but the name was later changed to the Vagabonds. John hanged himself and slit his own throat simultaneously at the Clark Institute in Toronto.... (That's a Scorpio for you; when they do something, they do it right – or not at all!)

have immediately spun around on my heels and made a beeline straight for home... if only I had known.... Yeah, I sure as hell didn't "miss any of the action," all right. That's for sure.... I got more than I bargained for, wa-a-ay more, enough to last a lifetime, as it turned out.

It was near midnight when we finally arrived – and the joint was jumpin'! All up and down the main street, holiday revellers were determined to enjoy the last long weekend of summer. It was definitely a party atmosphere, with all of Main street festooned in papier-mâché lanterns and fireworks exploding out over Lake Muskoka.... Visitors from all across Canada and the U.S. were having a wing-ding – and it wasn't even Saturday night, yet!

Saturday night *was* the main night, and the big dance was at <sup>5</sup>Dunn's Pavilion, where two or three of Toronto's biggest Rock 'n' Roll / Rhythm 'n' Blues bands would be playing:

–Bobby Curtola, David Clayton Thomas and the Shays (Thomas would later become world-renowned as the lead singer for the American group, Blood, Sweat & Tears); Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks (later the Hawks became famous as The Band, led by Bob Dylan). And I – just starting saxophone lessons – couldn't wait to see them. It was a good thing I didn't start playing *before* that weekend. We drank, partied a little, in order to get ready for the next night, then somehow stumbled (or staggered) onto a sort of semi-private beach and decided to sleep (pass out) there in our cars for the night, so that we could rest up to do some really *serious* partying Saturday, Sunday – and, quite possibly – even into Monday morning; that is, if we could last that long. Because as hard as we worked-out all week long at the gym, we partied even harder on weekends…

Come Saturday morning, we woke up with the sun blaring in our eyes and mouths that felt like they were full of sawdust. (And have you ever tried sleeping in a sitting up position in an MGB with blood-sucking mosquitoes and horseflies the size of bats dive-bombing on you, all night long?... Fly swatters were a joke – You needed anti-aircraft guns for those suckers!) Needless to say, we didn't sleep much and by the time the sun rose we were covered in bites. But being young and "invincible", or so we thought, we just soldiered on and proceeded to bathe, pee in the lake, and strut our stuff up and down the shoreline, swimming back and forth to an anchored wooden raft lashed to four hollow metal drums beneath, to keep it afloat. By now, it was getting nigh onto noon, with the boiling sun pouring directly down on everybody. Mike and John were already hitting on a couple of American girls who were here visiting and, not wanting to be a fifth wheel, I decided to bow out and go it alone. Naturally, they were concentrating so intently on the girls that they hadn't noticed me slipping away. I headed to the main drag, which was absolutely jammed with people walking up and down, shoulder to shoulder, and cars driving in both directions, bumper to bumper. Just ahead of me I saw a bridge. A sign said: "Moon River Bridge". And it was even more crowded with cars and people. The pedestrians only had a narrow walkway on both sides of the bridge to negotiate their way. A long 4" x 4" piece of timber running the whole length separated them from the cars. It was hot and slow-going, so I decided to hop over the low barrier onto the main road because there were slightly fewer cars coming across than people, and more room to manoeuver and walk. Now, I was used to people staring at me because of my physique, and so thought nothing of the few wisecracks from (mostly jealous) guys as they passed by me and tended to ignore most of it, or I'd be in a scuffle every ten minutes. It's the nature of the beast, a natural reaction to another male animal, especially if women – or more specifically his woman – happen to glance my way.... I must admit, with all due *immodesty*, that I was then in my prime and at the absolute peak of male pulchritude, both physically and facially, and would confidently strut my stuff all over the place: golden tan, curly hair, sparkling white teeth, long eyelashes, washboard abs and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Dunn's Pavilion now renamed Key to Bala

wearing nothing but a pair of yellow bikini posing trunks and flip-flops. It was akin to waving a red flag in front of a bull.... I guess I was just a cocky kid, just asking for trouble....

As I continued across the bridge, a brand new 1962 Oldsmobile Super 88 "ragtop" (convertible) suddenly stopped short – just inches from me! Two Indian guys were in it. They stared at me ferociously. I stepped off to the driver's side to let them pass and thought no more of it as I continued to perambulate. But when I came abreast of the driver, a massive shaggy head poked out the rolled down window and yelled: - "Get off the fuckin' road, ya stupid asshole!" He glared white heat at me, while I tried to mumble some kind of an apology... but I kept walking.... I wanted no part of whatever that head was attached to! I tried to imagine what the rest of him must look like, but I didn't dare look back. I don't think I even got ten feet when I heard: - "Hey, you! - C'mere! I wanna talk to ya!" I slowly turned around, already dreading what I knew I would see. Yup. He'd already gotten out of the car and was beckoning to me with his arm to come back as he walked towards me! It was like Goliath challenging David to come down and do battle. I should have kept going; but no, like the idiot I was, I turned and headed back towards him as he came closer and closer. The closer he got, the bigger he looked, and the worse I felt. My heart was pounding like a trip-hammer. He was massive, with a head and face to match. He would have made Dr. Frankenstein's monster look like Peter Pan. Finally, we were tête-à-tête.... And what a face! - scars, blood-red eyes - pockmarks!... And he was no kid, either: fully developed from head to his steel-toed boots; in his late 20s or early 30s and was built like a concrete block! He reminded me of that Japanese sumo killer character in the James Bond movie, Goldfinger.

... "What the fuck're ya' doin' – walking down the middle of the road, ya' goddamn foreigner?!"...

Since he was a lot older than I-I mean, he certainly was no teenager, like myself; and since my generation was taught to respect our "elders," I tried to explain to him why I was. But as I turned my head and pointed down the road in the direction whence I had just come, and started talking, I could never have imagined in a million years what would follow next!

Pow!-Pow! – he caught me with two lightning shots to the head that rocked me to the core! He hit me so hard he nearly knocked out my whole family!... I reeled! ...I had made the fatal mistake of taking my eyes off him for only a split second. I should have known better. I staggered... I was so completely dazed I couldn't even comprehend what had just happened! My knees buckled as I struggled to maintain my balance, but I didn't go down. At first I thought a building had fallen on me, or that maybe a truck had hit me! I was in utter physical shock – couldn't even focus my eyes or my brain – (what was left of it!) – on anything, not even the massive concrete block that was now lumbering towards me for a second attack! I panicked! When he saw I was still standing, he hesitated – then lunged at my throat! At that moment I knew I was in for the fight of my life! He was out to kill me! I could see it in his eyes! A fury of punches followed as he pounded my head – and still gripped my throat! I desperately tried to shake off the numbing dizziness. Then the instinct for self-preservation kicked in and my shock turned to rage! I flew at him like a rabid panther – trying to grab his thick, bull neck in a headlock with one arm so that I could pound his face to a pulp with the other! I wanted to kill him – but I couldn't get a decent grip on his neck because he didn't have one – he was literally built like a bull! His head sat squarely on his shoulders, so I wrapped my arm around the back of his head and kneed him in the face as hard as I could – over and over – and then pounded the side of his head with my elbow and fist with all my might – which was considerable since I had just won the Canadian Bench *Press* title. I hit him with everything I had – *including* the kitchen sink!

Suddenly I felt something crunch beneath my fist!... At first I thought it was my hand shattering, but it wasn't – it was his nose and teeth breaking as pieces of tooth crumbled and fell to the ground, the bits of white bloody teeth scraping against the sun-bleached gravel road of the bridge, like the sound that marbles make when kids clack them together.... That drunken face – if you could call it a face – looked more like a surprised Cabbage Patch doll that had momentarily got stopped in its tracks... but only for a moment... because it stopped him just long enough for him to wipe the blood from his face with his sleeve. But at that moment I realized I must have nailed him with some really good shots. Right in the <sup>6</sup>squash! And it felt fucking great! It was good to see that this prick could *also* bleed! Not only me. And with that kisser, I think I actually *improved* his looks.

I backed away, hoping maybe he'd had enough and would quit (because I sure as hell wanted to!). No such luck. Backing off was my second big mistake. I should have kept right on him.

Truth to tell, I needed a minute to catch my breath. By now my left eye was nearly closed and still swelling badly from the repeated blows which – in the heat of battle – I hadn't noticed. I thought – I hoped – that this might be enough to discourage him. Not a chance! To my horror, while he was wiping off blood with his forearm and looking very much like Dracula, with only his eyes showing above his sleeve as he glowered at me, he began grinning sardonically. A new fear now replaced my spent rage and filled me with a dread that I had never known before!... There is nothing more demoralizing than hitting someone with everything you've got and then have him laugh it off as he comes at you again like a raging bull! I never should have given him the chance to recover... and that was my third mistake... He lowered his massive skull into his collarbone, such as a turtle might do, made a loud whooping sound – then charged at me again! All I could think of was: "Oh-h-h, shit!!"

We started "trading" punches – and I mean fucking good hard shots! And the way he kept slamming me with those pile-driving meat hooks, me thinks it was not a very fair "trade." Now, the other drunken Indian in the car had gotten out. I had completely forgotten about him!... Maybe he was Chief-in-waiting, or something. I don't know.... Anyway, the guy stumbles out of the car – so drunk he starts swinging and throwing wild punches at empty air, long before he ever got near me, from at least ten feet away! Lucky for me he was wa-a-ay to loaded for any of them to ever connect and do any damage....

By now I was truly terrified and thought: "This is it – I'm done for!" – and vainly sought to fight them off – when, out of the blue, a car raced up beside me with the passenger door flung wide open – and a middle-aged man shouted: "Quick, kid – get in!" ...He didn't have to tell me twice! You never saw a guy move so fast in all your life! "Feet! – don't fail me now!..."

This was the end of round one....

## **Round Two**

... "Jesus, kid! How'd you ever get mixed up with him?" As he sped away, back across the bridge, I blurted out everything that had happened! He shook his head and quietly said: "That whole Commandant bunch are a bad lot. Nothing but drunken brawlers, always in trouble, always in and out of jail.... I hate to say this, kid, but they'll probably come back looking for you, you'd better get out of town.... A cliché, if ever I heard one. But it was also

<sup>6 &</sup>quot;squash" = face

the first time I had ever heard his name: Sid Commandant. But it most certainly would not be the last. And did I take this nice man's very sensible advice? Of course not.

I jumped out of his car at the same place where my friends were still partying with their newly acquired girlfriends, trying to get laid. (Whereas all I succeeded in doing was very nearly getting laid out!) I thanked the man, then ran down to the little beach to fetch them. By now my rage was building again, which was about commensurate with the swelling of my face. Even before I reached the guys, I started shouting to them at the top of my lungs! – all the while frantically describing – with wild, flailing arms and gestures – what had happened and that they should follow me – now! They took one look at my battered face, then John queried, rhetorically: - "What the fuck?!" - which was quickly followed by Mike's snarl of – "Jesus Christ! – you just left us a few minutes ago – what the hell happened?! Looks like somebody beat you with a two-by-four!" "Well actually it was FBI and it all started over a four-by-four," I replied. They looked at me quizzically: "FBI?" "Yeah – Fucking Big Indian!" The three of us quickly headed back towards the bridge – half running, half walking – me in the lead. Suddenly we spotted them! The nice man was right. They were already walking, that is to say – staggering – back through town, looking for yours truly. So like "they" always say: I guess it was meant to be... things just have a way of coming around. They pushed people aside, innocent holiday visitors who were only here for a good time and completely oblivious as to what was coming. These two were a frightening sight to behold. Truly! They left their car sitting right in the middle of the Moon River bridge, parked sideways, blocking traffic from moving in either direction.

With another beckoning wave of his arm he once again challenged me to come forward and fight: "Come on! – come on! – ya' goddamn foreigner! Come on!!" (Maybe he was pissed because I broke his nose.)

This time I needed no coaxing – I was glad to oblige – especially since my friends were there to watch my back and I wouldn't have to fight them both myself.

He reached the end of the bridge about the same time we did, although he was slightly elevated above me. Now I could see the blood pouring from his nose and that filled me with blood lust. I wanted to pulverize and smash his face to bits because now I saw he was bleeding – just like me! And I was the one that made it happen – me! We slammed into each other like colliding locomotives! – a concussion so violent nothing on Earth could have separated us! We locked in mortal combat – a fury of fists, feet and teeth our only weapons! – that is, until he went for the hunting knife at his side – which I didn't give him a chance to unsheathe! It was a dirty, brutal fight that seemed to go on for hours, but probably only lasted about five or six minutes. (In a knock-down, dragged-out street fight it *always* seems like hours – especially if *you're* the one taking most of the shots and getting knocked-down and dragged-out!) Trading punch for punch, eye-gouge for eye-gouge – it was a pitched battle! He was trying to pull out my eyeballs – but then his thumb suddenly slipped inside my mouth and I chomped down as hard as I could – nearly severing it! By now a large crowd had gathered to watch this "Fight of the Century" but they kept themselves at a safe distance while we continued slugging it out.

Eventually he backed me against that four-by-four road railing that separated pedestrian traffic from vehicles. As I was weaving and bobbing – desperately trying to avoid more of his punishing blows, I caught the heel of my foot against the damn thing – and down I went!... I was 18, weighed 146 lbs. at 5 ft., 5 in. tall (or *short*) and wearing only yellow posing briefs and awkwardly fitting flip-flops on my feet; he, on the other hand, was also solidly built, wore a black and red plaid shirt that hung outside his pants and steel-toed, Kodiak-like construction boots which he was about to kick in my head with! He did *not* knock me down. I have *never* been knocked down – or out! – in a street fight.... Although at this point I knew I should have been – and could have been – or worse!

I started to rise, as he bolted towards me, and I cried out – "Mike! Grab 'im – quick!"

At that point, Mike leapt in between us – with John close behind! Now, since Mike was a solid 220 lbs of steel muscle, old Syd was in no hurry to continue fighting. Simultaneously two OPP cruisers appeared out of nowhere and screeched to a halt! Four cops jumped out: – "Alright! Break it up! Who started it?" – as if they really had to ask. Even in my bewildered and bloody state, it hadn't escaped my notice that they were also Indians – all four of them – and no doubt probably related to good old Sid.

There we stood, a tight knit melee of cops, onlookers, my friends – with Sid and I still lashing out at each other – trying to get in a few last punches! The police split us up into two groups while they interviewed spectators and witnesses as to what happened and who started it. Lucky for me, the "old guy" who first came to my rescue and – thankfully – ended round one for us, was also there on my behalf, as were the two women who ran the bake shop, just off to the side of the bridge, and witnessed the whole thing, both rounds.

We were still yelling and cursing each other at the top of our lungs – Sid shouting: "You fuckin' muscle guys can't fight for shit!" Both Mike De Genova and John Strain were respectively former Mr. Canada and Mr. Ontario winners and much-feared bouncers at many of the big downtown Toronto nightclubs and dances – including Club 888 – or Masonic Temple (Yonge Street and Davenport Road) – Playter's Hall (Broadview & Danforth Avenues), Masaryk Hall (Cowan Ave), Brown Derby (Young & Dundas Streets), Brass Rail, Zanzibar Tavern and Le Coq d'Or Tavern. At that, Mike got right up in his face, leaned over the cop's forearm – which was holding Sid back, and barked – "Oh, yeah? Then why don'tcha go 'an take a good look at your fuckin' face! It looks like it went through a meat grinder, you stinkin' drunk!" Mike, with his solid weight, probably could have dropped him with one shot. But Sid's reply? "I don't drink!" "Ha!" – we all laughed in unison. Says Mike: "Are you kiddin'? You *reek* of it! I can smell it from here!" – which was a good three or four feet away, and so could the cops. And so could everybody else around us!... "Fire water make Injun heap crazy!" cracked John.

The police put Sidney in the back of the cruiser while I slid down the river bank to splash my swollen eye with cold water. One of the officers came down and sat beside me and began giving "reasons" why pressing charges would be a "waste of time and expense," given that I would have to come all the way back up here for the trial, plus get a lawyer, and so on.

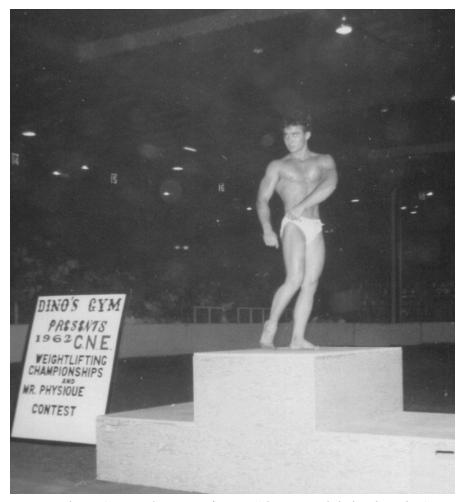
Sid Commandant was Chief of the Wahta Mohawks in Bala and the most feared man in the district.... A Professional boxer, bouncer, brawler – and, according to the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) – "had a criminal wrap sheet as long as *both* your arms extended end-to-end! It listed a couple of hundred assault-and-battery charges.... "You're just damn lucky he didn't pull a knife on you!" opined the cop. "Oh, yeah? He tried – but I didn't give him a chance to grab it!"... Obviously the cop was trying to protect one of his own. Besides, at my age and considering my Cabbagetown economic and educational background, what did I know about pressing charges, even if I could have afforded a lawyer. As far as I was concerned, this was just another fight – albeit the most ferocious I had ever been in (up to that point). And I told the cop just that, as he gazed out across Moon River with something resembling a slight satisfied smile....

"Besides," he continued, probably trying to assuage my battered ego, "You gave him a pretty good going over – and no one I know of around here can make *that* claim. He's a bad hombre. But if you think he's bad, you should meet his brother – he's even worse!" ...I just stared at him... speechless.

Although it's true I busted his nose (which at this point was still pouring blood) and knocked out some teeth – or maybe they were just dentures – I'm not sure, I still got the

worst of it, by far. Maybe if I hadn't been fighting half-naked and wearing flimsy sandals, I might have inflicted more damage, because at the end of it I wanted to kill that bastard as badly as he *wanted* to kill me – me, this "fucking foreigner," who was nearly half Mohawk!... I stood up and wobbly started back up the hill to the bridge. The cop said: "You'd better get that eye looked at when you get home."

"Are you kidding?" I replied. I'm not going anywhere, except to the dance tonight at Dunn's.... What?... Ya' think *this* is gonna stop me?"



Anthony Carr in the "suit of armor" he wore while battling the Savage!

Mr. Physique / Mr. Dominion of Canada, 1962

By the time we got to Dunn's, later that night, we three were nearly as polluted as Sid had been that afternoon.... Me, I looked a sight, with my bashed-in face and two very large muscle-bound sidekicks. We didn't have much trouble getting in, though. The place was so packed we could hardly get through the door, much less get on the dance floor. And besides, the only reason the doorman let us in is because he – and nearly everybody else in the place – knew, or heard, that I was the guy who took on the mighty Sid Commandant and fought him to a (near) standstill, and they wanted no part of anyone who could go the distance with him.

...What they didn't know is that had I realized who it was I went up against, I surely would have spun around on my heels and – once again – run in the opposite direction as fast as my little legs could carry me! (Eventually, though, I'm sure he would have found me. Indians *are* good trackers.)

But I didn't run because people were watching. Some men just can't run away because their pride won't let them, even if they get killed for it. Mind you, I have run away many times in the past from drunken Indians that seem to abound in Northern Ontario towns: - Sudbury, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Thunder Bay (formally twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William), Moose Factory, Kenora and, the pièce de résistance - Wawa, Ontario. But in these cases it was usually an empty street in the dead of night in freezing winter. Yes, I have occasionally been confronted by a drunken Indian, or two – and sometimes several! – who arbitrarily decided I was his worst enemy and thus wanted to kill me! Since there was no one around for me to be humiliated in front of, or to note my cowardice, I simply ran. I perfectly and sensibly said to myself: - "Who the fuck needs this?" – then turned and took off like a jackrabbit in heat. I mean... there was no one around to impress and, more importantly, no one whom I had to protect or at least whose back I had to watch. Only then would I run, because my ego or a family member or friend was not being threatened. And I am, if little else, all about family and friends. (That is to say true friends. Even if I am not the truest friend of the type I respect and whom I would want to watch my back.) I have seen people flee and desert friends – and family – in times of crises! But "Judge not lest ye be judged", because the instinct for self-preservation is so strong that no one, and-I-mean-no-one can know what one will do until that given moment arrives!

\* \* \*

...Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Dunn's dance, that is, I was now the centre of attention because of the "Battle of the Bridge." (Or should that be the "Battle of the Bulg"-ing eye?) I was now surrounded by a bevy of golden tanned beauties, in awe of my multi-colored, bulging, pulsating shinner which seemed to *glow* in the dark... For some reason, women are generally attracted to guys who like to fight (which *definitely is* not me). It makes them feel secure. As does money. So tough guys with money equals security. Professional men (boxers, doctors, lawyers, accountants) – all represent either physical protection, financial security, or both. It also helps if he's handsome plus tough (like my dad was). But if you look like Mortimer Snerd or Ichabod Crane ("The Ghost of Sleepy Hollow") – and have *no money?...* Well, pal, it's pretty much gonna be Mary Palm and her five sisters for *you*, for a long time to come. At the dance, a pretty little blonde approached me, stopped, looked me dead in the eye (my good eye), dove into her purse and brought out something akin to a shiny little space alien weapon, and then came at me with it!... It was a tube of flesh-coloured make-up, but it didn't help much.

## **Epilogue:**

When we finally got back to Toronto, late Monday night, my mother was already in bed; so I, too, immediately followed suit. Tuesday was a work day. I was employed at Stoodleigh's Restaurant, which was then located inside the old newspaper Toronto Star building at 80 King St. West. It was a well-known buffet-style eatery, and my job was to lay out the silver trays of hot food that the cooks had prepared, as well as help serve the rush of hungry people – mostly Star newspaper writers, including Gordon Sinclair, Pierre Burton, Allen Spraggett, Ted Reeve (Ted Reeve Arena).



The Stoodleigh Restaurant at 80 King Street West, Toronto

\* \* \*

...I should mention at this point that before I started working at Stoodleigh's, I actually once had a job – albeit briefly – at the Star as a copy boy. A copy boy – and they were always boys in those days, not girls – was someone who ran back and forth from the desks of the writers who were frantically pounding out their stories on manual typewriters – not even electric ones – and then after ripping them from their machines, would hand them off to the copy boys who would in turn run them down to the composing room, much like a relay race; only instead of handing off a baton it was a roll of typing paper. The groups of cloned, middle-aged composing guys – and they all looked the same, in that they wore wire-framed spectacles, green plastic brim caps and white shirts under black vests that never seemed to have the buttons done up – would then grab the copy and start typesetting the story in large, rectangular metal trays (much like baking pans) called "beds," so that they could meet the daily deadlines; which in those days meant at least four daily newspaper editions: the 2 star edition, three, four and, finally, the 5 star edition at around dinner time. I took the job with a foggy notion that someday, somehow, I might become a writer – or, something much more lucrative, a compositor; because I had taken up the practice for a semester or two in high school (Western Tech). But as usual, I screwed that up, too. Like most jobs I lost, it usually was because I couldn't get up in the morning and thus always showed up late and got canned:

"Tony! You should have been here at nine o'clock!"

"Why? What Happened?"

"It's nine-fifteen! You're fifteen minutes late!"

"Well, don't worry about it, boss, I'll make it up to you by leaving fifteen minutes early."

....And that was that.

The copy boys would compete fiercely with each other to get "his guy's" story down to the compositors first, in order maybe to get some perks. Maybe his guy would "put in a good word" for him, or perhaps get him a raise, or maybe a chance to typeset. Compositors made

great money in those days. Each page, or "bed" of type for the newspaper, would weigh about a hundred lbs; then it had to be locked into place with a key; and then they'd start the next page, until the whole paper was "put to bed", as the expression goes. That's why compositors made such good money. And it would all have to be proof-read, as well; which is why they also employed a legion of proofreaders.

\* \* \*

My mother always got up extra early on weekdays, because she knew she'd have to spend at least half-an-hour yelling at me to "Get up – you're gonna be late!" I have *never* been a morning person, which probably accounted for my drifting from job to job until Destiny gently "nudged" me in the direction of music, after which I knew then that I would *never* have to get up in the morning again... unless it was because I was "still up" from partying the night before. Much later in life, Destiny would again sneak up from behind and "nudge me" – that is, kick me in the derrière towards my *true* calling: "A Prophet Of The End Times," for goodness sake. However, I digress....

When I woke up the next morning and went into our Cabbagetown kitchen to eat breakfast, my mom turned from the stove, carrying a bowl of porridge, and shrieked! – "What happened? – Who did that to you?!"

After I told her the whole story, she literally ran to the phone and called Roy Pasquale, my defacto Godfather. I just shrugged it off and left for work at Stoodleigh's. When I arrived I put on my white chef's hat and tunic and took my place in line with the other servers behind the serving counter. My co-workers were aghast, to say the least, not to mention the regular onnum gatherum of August patrons – Sinclair, Burton, Ted Reeve, religion editor, Allan Spraggett – and they all knew me during my short stint upstairs as copy boy.... I think I took that restaurant job just to be near the action... "Hey, Tony, wha'ja' do – forget to duck?" and "Wha'd the other guy look like?" – the usual cracks.

But I noticed that most of the regular customers – especially the older women – were avoiding me like the plague and going over to the other servers for their goodies. One of the waitresses, a nice middle-aged woman who'd worked there for years, took me aside and also tried to apply her makeup to my eye; but alas, to no avail.

Finally, Stoodleigh's general manager called me into his office, and said: "Sorry, son, I have to let you go. Your face is making the customers queasy. "Well, screw you, too, pal!" I thought. "You're no trip to Hollywood yourself!"... So I got my final pay envelope, took off my chef's hat and stepped out into the bright afternoon sunshine, wondering what to do next?... Yeah, that Sid Commandant sure did a number on me, all right... Sid Commandant... Sidney.... What kind of a name is that for a Native chief, anyway... sounds more like an Indian Jew. Oy gevalt!

What I didn't realize at that moment but learned later on, was that Roy Pasquale and his foster brother, former Canadian Bantom-weight contender, Marvin <sup>7</sup>"The Weasel" Elkind and another bantamweight champion, <sup>8</sup>Norman "Baby" Yack, big Danny "Flaty" DiFlorio, <sup>9</sup>Howard "Baldy" Chard, <sup>10</sup>Walter "Heavy" Andrews and my dad, <sup>11</sup>Tony Carr, Sr. – had all jumped into Roy's big green, 1962 Cadillac Eldorado and headed north to Balla, in search of – you guessed it – the "tough" Injun....

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The Weasel: best seller by Adrian Humphreys.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Norman "Baby" Yack – Bantamweight division winner of over 90 fights.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Howard "Baldy" Chard – Toughest bouncer and bare-knuckle fighter in Toronto's history.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Walter "Heavy" Andrews – Professional boxer, one time manager of Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Captain Tony Carr, Sr. – High Platform Diver, Conklin Shows; Golden Gloves champion; good friend of Roy Pasquale and "The Weasel" and "Baldy" Chard and "Heavy" Andrews....

By the time they arrived, as the story goes, they were so liquored up from passing several bottles back and forth during the two hour drive up there, that they immediately jumped out of the car on Main Street and started asking people all over town: "Hey, buddy – d'ya know an Injun' named Sid? These guys looked completely out of place in that small hick town, especially now that all the tourists had left after that final long weekend of the summer. And if I thought Sid looked fierce (which he did!) these guys were out for blood – *literally!* – and left no stone unturned. They asked store-owners, local beer joints, particularly the one where Sid was said to be the bouncer. They even drove onto the Reservation, but no soap. None of the Natives would give him up, and certainly none of the townspeople, probably out of dread. After all, they had to live there and possibly feared retribution. But let it be known that had they found this so-called "tough guy," who didn't dare show his "face" to some *truly* tough guys, there barely would have been enough left of him to stuff into one of Roy's dog food cans, which was one of the by-products of the abattoir he co-owned with a couple of mob friends and where old Sid would no doubt have wound up for sure. Absolutely.

He was a fucking mutt, anyway. About a month or two after the fight, I began having trouble seeing clearly out of my left eye and hearing out of my left ear. Several doctors said the severity of the beating had left me with *acute* glaucoma (although I didn't think it was so "cute"), which eventually lead to near-blindness and deafness of that eye and ear, respectively. Today when people ask me how I'm doing, I always say "50-50".

"50-50?"

"Yeah, I'm deaf in one ear and nearly blind in one eye – so 50-50. I feel like half a Helen Keller. I feel like Hell!"

In all the years since, I have hated Sid Commandant with every fiber of my being, right down to the subatomic cellular particle level of my existence. I first tracked down and phoned Sid, years later, when I was playing saxophone with Ben E. King (of "Stand By Me" fame). He was working as a Chauffeur for some local politician. Then I phoned him again, a few years later, to remind him who I was and what he did to me, and that I was going to write this story to "let the world know what a dirty, rotten, vicious prick you really are!"

"I don't remember that," he said. "Of course not! You and your buddy were as drunk as skunks – drunker, even... too drunk to remember anything!"

His reply?... "I don't drink!"

"Right. And pigs can fly. And that's why everybody around us for 20 feet could smell it pouring out through your skin!" ...I called him again many decades later, shortly before his death, in 2006.

He told me he had suffered four heart attacks. I said, "Good.... And the next one's gonna kill ya'!" ...which it did.

As I said, The Toronto Star's Catherine Dunphy wrote a half-page hagiographic obituary about him, raising him almost to sainthood status because of something he did with cranberry crops. Big deal!

I asked Catherine: "Didn't you ask around about this guy, at all?"

Her reply: "Sure I did. I talked to his family and asked them if this rough and tumble guy drank very much?"

"And?..."

They said, "No more than any other Indian."

Right. - "Sheesh!"

I told Ms. Dunphy that I would indeed be writing my own version of this "sainted" man and his "charming personality," and assured her that it would be *slightly* different from her version. She left me with, "But ultimately *you* got the last laugh – you outlived him!"

"How is that 'the last laugh'? He's out of it – and I'm still suffering! He altered my life forever! And not in a good way!"

I told her, "Sid Commandant taught me three important life lessons: firstly, never – but *never* take your eyes off your enemy, not even for a split-second; secondly, that *every* man – and possibly every women – is your potential enemy, until they prove otherwise; and thirdly, that this is a *very* vicious world!... (In case you haven't noticed.)

He meant to kill me! – and fuelled by alcohol he tried his level best to do just that – beat me to death!

If I hadn't been in such top shape, he definitely may have! The only *truly* valuable thing I got out of the whole experience was that he hit me so hard so many times that in all future fights most punches felt like love-taps.... After which I would simply grin (sardonically) – then charge!

So now that I'm old and ready to go, I get to thinking what happened, a long time ago; had a lot of trouble, lot of sorrow and pain, but – oops, oh Lord – I hate Sid Commandant again.... Even after all these years, I'd like to drive up there right now and drag him from his grave and pound the piss out of him!... But to tell the truth, I'm afraid he'd still lay a beating on me!

I don't believe in condemning the children for the "sins of the father." Because I had enough of that myself, since my own father had made his fair share of enemies who tried their damndest to take out their hatred of him on me; after he was dead, of course: "Half-Beat Harold, The Record Man!" Harry Fagan was a Jewish gangster on the Yonge St. Strip who bought and sold *hot* records. (I oughta know, because my drummer, John Kondis, and I sold him most of them.) He was eventually murdered for his money – 15G's – that he carried around.... Looks good on him, too. He was an absolute prick! Then there was Jimmy Leone, the most two-faced, weasley-faced, flat-footed hypocrite to ever set foot on God's good Earth; and Leo Trottier, Sr., gangster and father of Leo, Jr.; but Jr. was a good friend of mine and probably "the greatest R&B sax player who ever lived!" according to the late, great, King Curtis. ... The experience of suffering retribution at the hands of my father's enemies taught me better. For my father truly was the toughest man of his day during the golden era of Toronto city, the 1930's and 40's. He was a Golden Gloves champion in – and out – of the ring and also fought alongside the Jewish guys in the great Toronto anti-semetic <sup>12</sup>Christie Pits race riots of 1933. I could condemn all of Commandant's descendants to Eternal damnation, but I wouldn't do that. And yet, on the day the Great Wall Of Fire comes by, thus shall it be for us all!... save few.

(Amen)

\* \* \*

Sid Commandant was the most murderous savage I have ever encountered, and the most racist. It was the best and the *worst* fight of my life. If there *is* such a place as the Happy Hunting Grounds (or possibly in Sid's case, the un-Happy Hunting Grounds), then I am certain that one day we *will* meet again. And if we do, and the Great Manitou *is* a *just* Manitou, then He will allow us another go around in order to balance out the Books. Only this time I won't take my eyes off him, not even for a Heavenly second....

\*Note: In my world travels as a musician and medium, I can honestly say I have personally perused the pampered pinkies (palms) of most of the prominent world figures of the 20th century. Both the crowned heads of European and Hollywood royalty, including iconic

<sup>12</sup> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christie\_Pits\_riot

screen actors and actresses such as Lillian Gish, Elizabeth Taylor, Liv Ullmann, Glenda Jackson, Richard Burton, Sylvester Stallone; jazz greats Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Alice Cooper (not jazz); Queen Julianna (of the Netherlands), Lady Iris Mountbatten (Queen Elizabeth and King George VI's first cousin), Prince Andrew – and many of the great and noble Native Chiefs of the Six Iroquois Nations spread throughout this Great land of ours and the United States: the Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, Tuscarora and, of course, the Mighty Mohawk Nation.

My maternal great-grandmother, a full-blooded Mohawk, was born near the Lake of Two Mountains, outside Montreal. Her son, Peter Lonsdale, my grandfather and father of my mother (she also a WWII Veteran), served valiantly in WWI at Vimy Ridge as a machine gunner and sniper and also helped build the Empire State Building. Over the many years of my long career, several Native chiefs of the above mentioned tribes occasionally invited me into their sweat lodges. They were honourable and compassionate men. Too bad Sid Commandant wasn't one of them....

"The above is a true and accurate account of what I witnessed during round two of Anthony's altercation with Sid Commandant, since I was not present for round one. But had I been present, I can assure you there never would have been a round two."

Mike De Genova, former official IFBB Mr. Canada.

M De Genova

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