

World of Commodore Toronto
December, 1989
As remembered by Rick Washburne

No one else was available to make the trip, but I had never been to Canada so I decided to head to Toronto for another Commodore event. I arbitrarily decided to cross the border north of Detroit, which is when I learned that there are no bathrooms anywhere in the entire Northern Peninsula.

Oh, shut up. Sure, they have them NOW...

The crossing guards (you know, that's probably not what they're called) were as nice as could be and I was on my way over the bridge in no time, which is two hours in Canadian Time. I got used to the Kilometers Per Hour signs, but never set my mind to realize that the sign that said "Toronto 185" wasn't in miles, so I was quite surprised when two hours later I was unpacking my suitcase.

It was late, so I just checked into the Econo-Flea and readied myself for bed. Part of that process was to sit on the throne, so to speak, and there was a brief moment of vertigo followed by myself, and the fixture, crashing to the floor.

I called the front desk with my dilemma, and the news wasn't good. They couldn't fix it, and no available rooms. They then asked me for my room reservation to "see what they could do." As I was reading the reservation code to the operator, I noticed that the last letter of the alphabet was included, and I, World Traveler and Genius, realized that if I used the name of that letter that we use in The States, they would have no idea what I was talking about.

Make that "World Traveler, Genius, and Obnoxious Elitist."

So, I read the code in the only way they could understand. "Five, Three, Ex, Tee, Zen..."

"(giggling) Eh, are you from The States, perhaps?"

I was shocked, my cover blown. But I said "Zen!" Oh...drat.

Apparently my \$7.36 Canadian that I invested in the room wasn't enough to buy any assistance, so I ended up sleeping in the other bed in Nick Zelinsky's room, a Q-Link music area SysOp.

It was a long stay.

The next morning I headed to the Convention Center and got another quick lesson in all things Canada. It is illegal to drive without your headlights on regardless of time of day or weather. It was just a warning.

I stopped at a Pepsi machine and was all giddy about buying a soda with a Loony, and then I headed to the booth. Sales were actually pretty good, even though the vast majority of the customers who stopped by had never heard of the SID Symphony Cartridge, didn't know of Craig Chamberlain, and may have been completely deaf. But they all seemed to come back, one by one, and buy a cartridge and/or book.

As it turns out, a lot of C-64 users, mostly from Michigan, came to the convention and paid C\$18.00 to get in, only to find out that the convention was almost entirely for Commodore PC's, PC software and peripherals. With our booth and one other being the only ones catering to the 64, these folks were determined to buy SOMETHING before they left.

When leaving glorious Canada with my token stuffed moose head and a tendency to add “eh?” to the end of every sentence (even though I met no one who talked like that, eh?) I stopped at the Border Guard Shack (probably not called that, either) and the Mouny saw a cooler in the passenger seat. He asked, so I opened it, revealing six clear bottles of Vernor's Ginger Ale (Flavor Aged in Oak Barrels). Unfortunately, Max the Mouny was optically-challenged and the bottles had no labels, just microscopic printing on the bottle caps, and the delicious carbonated nectar looked WAY too much like beer, (well, hey, it is ALE, in name, anyway), so it took four of Canada's finest Mounted and a magnifying glass to finally agree that “Carbonated Water, Corn Syrup...” was the beginning of a benign substance, not proof of an attempt at skirting border duty.

I said “duty.” Huh huh huh...

There was an exchange of laughter over this, and then an apology. But then I exchanged my C\$ back to US\$ and discovered that by merely crossing the border and back I had lost 15%.

Hooray...