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*Ottawa Outlook, nee North Hero News and World Review …. ……. Mostly stuff no one else would print.*

Friday, April 29, 2011 c:/outlk11, 11wc12,

2011 Letter #6

**Soup & Family, … or more accurately, Family & Soup**

We are writing this on Good Friday. Fridays are ‘Housecleaning Days’ here. Should one clean house on Good Friday? Should we look above and ask? Nah, … let’s just rationalize and clean on Saturday. (One week we rationalized the whole week away.) This letter was started with soup in mind. It ended up more family than soup. Well, … we’re about 60/40 family/non-family so guess that’s OK. One advantage to the written letter, … not interested? Don’t read it. (We never give quizzes.)

Yesterday we made a batch of Italian Wedding Soup (Nancy Jefferson’s) and whimsically began to think about soup. We are soup people from way back and we speak first hand re Bennett, Jefferson and Parent households. Yvette & Rene Parent had homemade soup as a first course at dinner. With Jeffersons & Bennetts it was canned soup for lunch, the former going with Campbells, the latter with H.J. Heinz. Pete and Jean Bennett lived in Pittsburg and had two sons, Charles & John. Jean & Betty were close sisters. Pete was an exec with Heinz. George & Betty would visit from L.I. along with daughter Beth and son Kenneth. Jean would say,

*“Charles, go down to the storeroom and bring up 2 cans of tomato soup.”*

To his mother he was always Charles, to everyone else including Charles, he was Charlie. Ken would tag along. The storeroom was full of cans. And WOW, … none of the cans had a label! Charlie went to one of the shelves, took a can, inspected it, put it back and took another. He kept this one, then another. Fascinated, Ken asked,

*“How do you know one from the other?”*

*“Oh, you just have to know all the codes on the can.”* The storeroom was full of rejects from the factory.

The Jeffersons bought Campbell Soup, except when the Bennetts were visiting. Ending up with two cans of soup for each can she bought was too much for Mother to pass up. Can still see her scrapping out the last smidgeon when reconstituting the soup. Wasting food was a heinous crime in the 30’s and had some remote connection in her mind to the starving millions in China. At mealtime it was,

*“Now eat everything on your plate, the children in China are ……”*

*“Yes Mother.”*

Sometime back in the 30’s the Bennetts moved to Leamington, Ontario where Heinz had their large initial operation and the Jeffersons bought a farm in Northfield, Vermont. Ken’s sister Beth, working in Detroit at the time, would visit the Bennetts over a weekend and feel right at home. Even things in the refrigerator were arranged just like at home. Boy, did these moves ever affect subsequent developments. Charlie & John became more Canadian than American, went to school in Montreal, married lovely Canadian girls, Louise Millington & Lucille Parent and were partners in a summer development on North Hero Island in Lake Champlain in Vermont. Ken married a lovely Vermont girl, Velma Cleveland, as a result of a blind date arranged by Arthur Peterson, a long-time recipient of our letters. One North Hero connection remains. Linda (Bennett) and Norman McDevitt have original lot 14 which was between John’s original 12 & 13 and Charlie’s original 15. They bought the plot long distance from a party in Switzerland. This unlikely cast first got together at Dave Jefferson’s wedding to Nancy Strong in Woodbury CT. Sara Jefferson was a flower-girl, Linda Bennett was jealous of flower-girl Sara and Susan Jefferson ended up baby-sitting in North Hero in future summers. Good Grief, … enough nostalgia. As a 30’s-40’s newsreel would say, … *“Time Marches On”.*

Back to soup, … which we don’t buy anymore. (Where have you gone Crosse & Blackwell?) We’ve have gravitated from Campbells to Progresso to homemade. Not much beats homemade soup. Takes a couple hours but we make enough for a whole week. Two hours? Right, … just try getting 50 mini-meatballs in the oven in less than 45 minutes. We’ve a regular soup rotation:

Nancy’s: Italian Wedding Soup

Sara Peck’s: Potato Soup

Wilde family Split Pea with Ham

Ken’s: Chicken/Turkey Noodle.

Once and a while a ringer, Marc Bennett’s Cream of Broccoli, Nancy’s Portuguese Soup. This last is a bit too fiery for us. Only a Norman McDevitt could love it. Unfortunately, he was out of town the last time we made it. Ah Norm, … a real ‘Trencherman’ and a credit to his father Frank who never met a soup he didn’t like.

One soup that tops them all is not canned and is not homemade: A sleeve of Clam Chowder from Martha’s Vineyard!!!! Is ***“To Die For”***still a contemporary descriptive phrase? Well, this soup is! We’ve multiple soups, but many of the same ingredients are in each. Garlic, …can’t use too much of this. Rutabaga is a wonderful soup vegetable. And boy, … do we love Kale! The man at the south end of Atlantis Ave grows his own Kale, and right by the road no less. Bailey & Ken pass by at least once a day. What a temptation to whip out the trusty Swiss Army knife and swipe a leaf or two. Unfortunately he also has a huge statue of Buddha on his front porch. Buddha seems to sense one’s thoughts and his eyes follow the would be culprit like the finger in the old U. S. WWII recruiting poster**. “Uncle Sam wants you.”** Hey, … almost two pages! It’s, … close it down or change the font.

Most probably know, but a wrap-up seems in order. Pete, George, Jean, Betty, Velma, Yvette, Rene, John, Dave, Frank and Charlie have passed away. Your writers have been together since 1977, are soup sustained and going strong. Also Honorable Mention to Lucille’s Nanny, aka Nanou , … a ‘ Souper’, alive and kicking at 100!

From Ottawa,

Lucille, Bailey & Ken

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