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

Monday, November 19, 2012 (2012 Letter # 20)

**December Letter**.

Song of the month *:”Come Away with me Lucille”*

Epithet of the month: *“Curse you Red Baron*”.

Thought of the month: *“Merry Christmas”*

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**Trikes – Bikes – Cars - …. Back to Bikes?**

As we prepared for an eight hour drive to Glastonbury, Connecticut for a Thanksgiving visit at Sister-in-law Nancy’s, a disconcerting question kept wandering in and out of the mind. Would this be our last drive of any significant distance? Who knows, … but sooner or later for us, the title words above will start to be executed in reverse. (Cars, Bikes, Walkers.)

Boy, … in our youth bikes were everything. Graduating to a two- wheeler was like a coming of age rite. Kids in the thirty’s pretty much made their own amusements, but almost all managed to have a BIKE of some sort! And bikes were just about lived on. As I remember most had nicknames ala: War Admiral, Whirlaway, Gallant Fox.

Long Island, NY was a pretty lively Polo area at the time. We’d go watch a match and think, *“Hmmmn, no way we can have a horse, but, … we got BIKES!”*  And boy, did the bikes ever take a beating. A backhand shot with croquet mallet at full pedalcaused a high incidence of spoke damage. Plus, collisions were not rare.

Boys at the time were into WW1 aerial warfare, i.e.: Fokkers, Spads & Camels. Model making of same was a very popular hobby, and incidentally one which has endured. The writers have a Red Fokker Triplane on the mantel. They also entertained themselves with homemade ‘Rubber Guns’. The later required: a scrap of 1x2 about 12 inches long, a handful of bands cut from an old inner tube, half a clothes pin, and one nail. Chalk dust also came in handy. The clothespin was secured to the 1x2 with 2 or 3 inner tube bands. Nail was positioned to form a trigger and pounded in the bottom. The rest of ones bands were ammunition. They were crimped by the pin and stretched out to the other end. Ready to go, … and boy, did they. Wow, … the hours we ran around the neighborhood hunting each other down! Oh yes, the chalk dust. Very handy to cut down the *“Gotcha – No You Didn’t”* discussions.

Ala WW1, … wasn’t too long before guys started mounting twin ‘Rubber Guns’ on their handlebars for bicycle duels. More collisions, poor bikes and boy was it hard to reload while underway..

Taking a damaged bike to a shop for repairs just wasn’t viable ($). Neighborhood “Bike” sessions were held on Saturday mornings. Everybody pitched in and help fix anyone’s bike . Spoke work was big, closely followed by brakes & leaky tires. The latter usually resulted in a *“Neva-Leak”* cure (sp).. This stuff came in a toothpaste like tube, thick gooey gook. One removed the valve from the tire, inserted the opened Neva-Leak container and squeezed. The valve was replaced and the bike tube re-inflated.

We’ve been watching cyclists and looking at bikes. Think it is just about the time for one. They say that one never forgets how to ride a bike. Think we will find that out for ourselves in 2013. No bicycle Polo nor twin ‘Rubber Guns’ though. Hey, … gladly accept any advice from any bikesters out there. A bicycle for two? Come away with me Lucille, on my brand new bicycille.

From Ottawa, Lucille & Ken

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