

Aurora 150 Tattoo to be held Sunday



By Brock Weir

Having grown up in Scotland before coming to Canada at the age of 10, Aurora's David Veitch always had a fascination with bagpipes and bands.

While he never had the opportunity to try the instrument out himself in his native land, once his kids left for university there was no stopping him. Since then, a passion was born and now Mr. Veitch is preparing to take the musical lead in Aurora's first ever military tattoo this Sunday.

The Aurora 150 Tattoo will take place May 5 at the Aurora Community Centre to mark the Town's Sesquicentennial ? 150th anniversary. Featuring performances from the Aurora Community Band, the Aurora High School Band, the Governor General's Horse Guards, the Royal Canadian Legion Mass Colours, the Rob Roy Pipe Band and Highland Dancers, Spectrum Baton Club, the Ulster Accordion Band, and Mr. Veitch's White Heather Pipes and Drums, it weaves together the military, cultural and musical traditions not just of Aurora but of the entire province.

The Aurora 150 Tattoo itself will run from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. It will be preceded in Machell Park from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., by a lunch with the Queen's York Rangers (QYR). There, kids and the young at heart will have the chance to be put through their paces by the local regiment with the kid-friendly ?mudder? relying on teamwork and camaraderie.

Working with tattoo director Norm Mackenzie, Mr. Veitch is working to get the bands coordinated and everything in order --- and coordinating 10 bands in a two hour time slot, along with drums and other displays is no mean feat.

?Time is a key consideration,? says Mr. Veitch. ?We're challenged for time, so we will be rehearsing all Sunday morning to get ready for the afternoon performance. The Aurora 150 Committee is a pretty good group to work with and it is an exciting day for Aurora. It is going to be something people remember. It is the only tattoo I have been to where it doesn't cost the taxpayers any money to go!

?It's a show, and there's no question it is a fast-paced show, but we will have singers, dancers, baton swingers, vocalists, pipe bands and it will be very exciting and something residents will always remember.?

As what some could consider the ?opening act? to the Tattoo (the Aurora Tattoo date was selected to coincide with the already scheduled QYR event) Lieutenant Chris Wattie said the lunch will serve not only as a way to raise funds and awareness of the

Queen's York Rangers' Regimental Assistance Fund, but also build awareness of the people serving with the QYR and what they do within the community.

When you see these guys in green uniform or in jeeps driving around your streets, you will then have an idea of exactly who we are, what we do, and, to me, the important thing is letting people in Aurora know that we're Aurora's regiment. We're your guys!?

Lt. Wattie says tattoos such as what is planned for Sunday are always great shows and he's looking forward to the opportunity for sneaking out just a little bit early to take it all in.

Helping Mr. McKenzie and Mr. Veitch coordinate the event is Ken White of the Royal Canadian Legion's Ontario Command. Mr. White will be leading the Legion's colour party, which is playing an active role in the festivities. When he was first asked to participate, Mr. White said he wasn't quite sure at the time what a Sesquicentennial was, after becoming immersed in all the details, he's firmly on board.

I thought it was a tremendous opportunity for the Town to say how proud they are, says Mr. White. For the military side of it, it is an honour for the colour party to join with the massed pipes to celebrate our 150th anniversary.?

Bringing in members from as far away as Collingwood, Mr. White says members under his direction feel equally honoured to take part in the once-in-a-lifetime event, but once everything is coordinated he says he would like to see how everything unfolds.

I'm looking forward to making sure it goes off properly without a hitch and be able to see the replay of it, says Mr. White. When you're in it, you never really get to see how it was performed. So I'm looking forward to sitting back, see how everyone did, and be proud to have been a part of the whole experience.?

For Mr. Veitch, the camaraderie that is seen on the arena floor during the ceremonies is reflective of the same camaraderie that keeps him coming back to the White Heather Pipes and Drums. It's fun, the bagpipes are not an instrument that everyone plays, and his journey on the pipes have taken him to some interesting places.



Ken White of the Royal Canadian Legion's Ontario Command, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, Lt. Chris Wattie of the Queen's York Rangers, and David Veitch of the White Heather Pipes and Drums will take active roles in Sunday's Tattoo. (Auroran photos by Brock Weir)

When asked to single one out, he cites the invitation the band had to play at the 50th birthday celebrations for Prince Albert II of Monaco. Playing in the forecourt of the palace in front of the princely family was something he says he will never forget.

The band, he adds, is an ambassador around the world for the Aurora Legion and they are more than happy to lend their talents where they are needed. It is a good mix of people and newcomers to the instrument are always coming in to keep things fresh, he says.

Many of the younger ones are in cadets, marching bands or in musicals, he says. When we go to schools and play they often realise what it is all about and they have a passion for it even at that age.?

For information on this weekend's tattoo, visit www.aurora150.ca.