

BROCK'S BANTER: Where did the decade go?

By Brock Weir

A certain office supply company would have you believe this is the 'most wonderful time of the year' as kids begin their first week back at school.

If you had asked me a few years ago, I probably would have agreed with the sentiment. After all, I was one of those weird kids. Despite outward protestations, I actually looked forward to getting back to the grind. What can I say? There was something exciting about the unknown; wondering about your homeroom teacher and classmates, doing a mental evaluation of all the possibilities both good and bad, and then, after getting the list of what you need, setting out on the bank-breaking expedition to check off each one of those boxes.

Then, of course, it was back to school, proudly laying out new pens, notebooks, and the all-important flashy-yet-tasteful binders. As I write this, I am experiencing a full-bodied cringe, a stark realisation I was one of those obnoxious kids hard to put in a particular box, starting off as a stereotypical 'apple polisher', quickly moving far away from 'brown nose' territory, but not quite enigmatic enough for anyone to care.

Why is it a time to wax sentimental? Maybe it is a hangover, of sorts, but one which comes up around this time every year. It didn't help matters to have a visit last week from one of our freelance writers who came back to the office before embarking on the next leg of his educational journey.

As we're going to press, he's probably settling into his first classes at Carleton University, making his way in dorm life, learning the ropes, eager to discover everything the place has to offer, including the pitfalls.

As he walked out the door, it finally hit me. I'm not sure why it never came up before, but as soon as that door clicked, I realised I was doing the exact same thing, bound for the exact same place, exactly 10 years before.

It is almost beyond comprehension it is a full decade since our car rolled onto campus after the monotonous trip on the 401 to get to Ottawa laden with three passengers and everything I would need for the upcoming school term; a monotonous, but momentous journey in my life.

Despite the excitement of what the next four years held in store, I suffered from a serious bout of pre-emptive homesickness, but helping make the transition easier was travelling with a friend from Australia backpacking her own way around the world intent on exploring the nation's capital. That helped settle some of the internal churning, but not by much.

Passing through the gates left a lasting impression. Rounding the corner, we were stopped at a crosswalk while a herd of 'frosh', clad only in cardboard boxes, hopped across the street in an orderly fashion. There went all doubt of what the phrase 'fish out of water' meant.

With the registration complete and my room number assigned, it was time to unload my life from the car. Clothes? Check. Carried into the building. Books? Check. Moved. Snacks? Check. Unpacked. Sampled. Computer mouse? Check. (It was 2003) Unpacked. Printer and Paper? Check. Check. Scanner? Check ? and unscathed! Monitor? Check. Computer?... Computer?...

The butterflies in my stomach came to a dead halt as my mind's eye performed a Hitchcockian zoom to my computer still sitting in the middle of the shambles that was my home office. It was certainly an inauspicious beginning to my university career, but once that was settled, there were relatively few bumps in the road. Well, aside from a brief week in third year where one assignment brought me perilously close to throwing in the towel.

It was a trip that made lasting impressions, introduced me to some incredible people, and took me to places around the world I probably wouldn't have a chance to visit, at least in a working capacity.

After our writer left, I wondered where the road would take him and whether, like me, he would be sitting down in 10 years' time wondering where the time went as well.

That phrase makes it sound like a bad thing, but it is far from that. Yet, as the day and evening wore on, the fact it was a full 10 years ago became no less unfathomable. Everything added up. I jotted down the math for peace of mind, but bare numbers staring back in black and white did nothing to bring the concept into reality.

I suppose that hackneyed old phrase 'time flies when you're having fun' does have a ring of truth to it. The fact the last 10 years has indeed flown must be a sign I was on the right track when I set my sights on journalism and still enjoy what I do.

For our latest Carleton student, I hope he feels the same way, and I hope each member of the class of 2013 does as well.

This line of work affords a wonderful opportunity to meet and interview our best and brightest students. Over the course of the last school year, many of these students have shared with me their drive to make a positive impact on their world and the world around

them, and achieve long-held dreams and aspirations.

I look forward to hearing the stories they'll come home with in the spring, their bucket lists duly revised, personally and professionally, and intently following their own contributions in the years to come.