

Duke of York at Queen's Park in May

Preparations For The Lieutenant Governor's Luncheon

by Geoffrey Little

[Ed: Geoff was the League's second Intern to the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario in the summer of 1998. He joined His Honour's permanent staff in Golden Jubilee Year after he graduated from Trinity College, University of Toronto.]

As many readers will know, The Duke of York has a long and special relationship with Ontario, having attended Lakefield College during the late 1970s. He still has many friends in the province and is Colonel-in-Chief of the Queen's York Rangers based in Toronto. When the Duke of York's May visit to Toronto was confirmed, the Lieutenant Governor was

very excited to learn about the visit and immediately made all their resources available to the Lieutenant Governor's Office. This included providing two security officers in dress uniform to salute HRH, as well as flying HRH's personal standard at Queen's Park on his arrival.

Although Monday, 12 May was slightly overcast, the energy inside the Lieutenant Governor's Suite was running high. The beautiful oak table in the Dining Room had been laid with Irish linen place mats set with the Suite's simple but elegant Wedgwood china, the provincial Coat of Arms in gold leaf centred at the

principal of the Duke of York School was accompanied by two students who had won a short story contest to determine who would attend the luncheon with HRH. The winners were two young children, both recent immigrants to Canada. One story, written by a boy, described how he, his principal and The Duke went to McDonald's for hamburgers; somehow, HRH got a stain on his suit and had to buy a new one! Both stories were very funny, and HRH had the chance to read them during the pre-luncheon reception. It was obvious that HRH enjoyed meeting these two young people as he spent a good deal of time talking to them, asking them questions and, in return, answering their questions. The boy was eager to know what it was like to be a pilot, knowing that HRH had served in the Royal Navy. HRH described how it felt to fly a plane and told the young boy to work hard and stay in school.

Moving into the Dining Room, HRH and guests enjoyed a warm green and white asparagus salad with pear and vinaigrette dressing following by a tangerine sorbet. The main course consisted of roasted salmon wrapped in rice paper, served with vegetables and mashed potatoes, and followed by fresh Ontario berries. The two young students were served chicken fingers instead of salmon; both cleaned their plates! During the course of the meal, His Honour facilitated a group conversation, asking various guests to speak about a specific issue. SARS, education, Native affairs, Canada's north, mental health issues and Ontario's diversity were all raised. The unique luncheon was characterized by dynamic, engaging and thought-provoking discussions.

After returning to the Drawing Room for coffee and tea, HRH spent fifteen minutes mingling with guests before he had to leave for another engagement. Just before his departure, the Lieutenant Governor's staff was presented to HRH who spent several minutes with us joking about the weather and our particular responsibilities. As HRH departed, His Honour, his guests and assembled staff stood in the foyer together bidding farewell to an obviously enthusiastic and energetic member of Canada's Royal Family.



Amidst misunderstanding and misreporting about the SARS crisis, The Lieutenant Governor made sure that The Duke of York was fully briefed on the facts of the situation and the story's impact on Toronto's Chinese community by Ralph Hui, President and Sharifa Khan, a Director, from the Toronto Chinese Business Association.

keen to invite HRH to attend a luncheon at his Queen's Park Suite. His Honour wanted The Duke to have the chance to speak with a variety of men and women who represented the diverse community and ethnic groups in Ontario, and who could speak to The Duke about important issues. The job fell to me, under the leadership of the Private Secretary, to identify a guest list that reflected His Honour's wishes. Names were to be submitted to His Honour and, after much discussion, the luncheon included the Chief of an Ojibway First Nation near Barrie, a former Senator and Moderator of the United Church of Canada, a representative from the Royal Canadian Legion and the Monarchist League's Dominion Chairman. Also invited were an award-winning teacher from an inner-city elementary school, the Executive Director of the St. George's Society of Toronto, representatives from the press and publishing industry as well as the principal and two students from Duke of York/Regent Park School in Toronto. After I put together a guest list, I contacted the guests, dispatched the invitations containing a formal invitation card, map and protocol notes which included information on how to address HRH and suggested protocol. A menu was confirmed and arrangement were made with caterers, florists and wait staff.

Given that a Royal Visit, however informal, involves a great deal of security, the RCMP, Scotland Yard and the OPP worked together to ensure The Duke's safety during his short visit to Queen's Park. The Legislature's security service, headed by the Sergeant-at-Arms, was

top of each place. Place cards were positioned at each setting and menu cards, describing each course, as well as the Ontario wines to be served, were laid on the bread and butter plates. Complementing the setting were arrangements of rose and greenery, along with four beautiful silver cockerel statuettes from Her Honour Madam Bartleman's personal silver collection. The Royal Canadian Academy of Arts' exhibition of Aboriginal art was displayed on the walls of the Lieutenant Governor's Suite and provided a dramatic and stimulating environment.

Guests had been asked to arrive at the Suite an hour before HRH's arrival, and so had an opportunity to become better acquainted with their fellow guests. Staff concluded last minute walk-throughs, responded to a bevy of phone calls and practised their curtsies and bows. Finally, word came from the RCMP advance party that HRH's arrival was imminent. Everyone in position, HRH was greeted out the West Portico of the Legislative Building by His Honour and two individuals from the Toronto Chinese Business Association, representing a community that had experienced economic hardship during the initial SARS outbreak in the city. His Honour was keen to ensure that HRH's visit was viewed as a sign of confidence in Toronto as a safe and healthy city.

His Honour and HRH then had a chance to speak privately in His Honour's office before greeting the assembled guests. Mr. Bartleman introduced each guest to HRH, and everyone had a chance to speak informally to him. The



HRH meets Geoffrey Little after His Honour's May Luncheon as other members of the vice-regal staff look on



archists, and them in turn to HRH. Accordingly, the Prince first met for over 20 minutes with about 40 youth members from Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario, who ranged in age from 15 to 25, in the Suite of The Lieutenant Governor; His Honour, who had entertained the Duke to Luncheon during his May visit, was out of town, but kindly made the facilities and assistance of the Suite available to the League.

Assembled in small groups of four to six, the young Monarchists enjoyed their conversations with the Duke, who engaged them in both lively repartee and penetrating questioning. The atmosphere was very casual, a tone reciprocated by the young Monarchists who for the most part felt relaxed, and were able to enjoy the rare opportunity for them to converse with a senior member of the Royal Family. At the end of the meeting, Christopher Mahon thanked HRH on behalf of the group, informed him of their gift of 235 hours of community service to the inner city Toronto school named in his honour (a first for HRH, he said) and presented him with a League tie.

HRH then greeted his old friend Florence McEachern, with whom he enjoyed a relaxed conversation in His



A young monarchist meets her Prince

The Dominion Chairman then escorted Prince Andrew into the Legislative rotunda where a dais had been erected on the Grand Staircase, and some 450 League members had gathered, thanks to the permission of Mr Speaker Carr. Mr Aimers' words of welcome were followed by remarks from the Duke, who promised to convey our the loyal good wishes of the League to The Queen, going on to speak of his frequent returns to Canada and his affection for the country. Kent Jackson closed the formal proceedings with a speech of thanks, after which the



Nanda Casucci-Byrne, LG's Private Secretary, and Speaker's representative David Christopherson, MPP, take leave

Honour's Salon. She and the late Col Frank McEachern had acted as HRH's Guardians during his student days in Canada. At this point, too, the Prince had the opportunity to meet MPP's David Christopherson, representing the Speaker, and Marilyn Mushinski, representing the Government of Ontario.

Accompanied by Kent Jackson, Toronto Chairman, the Prince next proceed outside, light drizzle continuing, to inaugurate the Branch's Golden Jubilee Rose Garden immediately adjacent to the Legislative Assembly. Here HRH unveiled a temporary plaque to mark the occasion, and spoke briefly to the assembled crowd.



A Royal farewell for MPP Marilyn Mushinski

members present sang the Royal Anthem to the accompaniment of the Cardinal Carter School Jazz Band which had entertained guests as the gathering assembled.

His Royal Highness then enjoyed a walkabout down the central aisle of the Legislative foyer, where he stopped and conversed with many members and their guests, as well as with the band drawn up outside on the steps. Official guests then bade farewell, after which John Aimers took leave outside the Royal automobile. The time His Royal Highness – smiling, trim and focused intently on everyone whom he met – spent with the League was a most happy and memorable one, an occasion that will live long in the recollection of all who were present.



A final word...



...and farewell

