

## Wellington Ramble

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“Thank God it's Saturday” was my first thought as I opened my eyes. “Is that the doorbell?”

Judy, Karen and Mike, all high school friends, were waiting on the doorstep. “Come on, it's 11 o'clock. Let's go out. You were supposed to be ready.” They all talked at once.

“But I'm starved! Let's make breakfast first.” said my best whiny voice. Of course they were starved too, and soon the kitchen was filled with the aroma of toast, and frying bacon and eggs. “My mom's at Dominion getting groceries. Let's get the kitchen cleaned up and get out of here before she gets back and thinks of some chores for me to do.”

First important thing was to check out Jimmy's Restaurant on Wellington at Clarendon, to see who was there and what was going on. Jimmy's Restaurant, previously the Top Hat Grill, is now the 3 Tarts Bakery, and a considerably more sophisticated establishment.

Jimmy's was dead though. Our favourite cop, Sandy, sat near the window enjoying a quick coffee and a smoke before heading back out to walk his beat. We took to the door looking for action.

We set off down Wellington Street past Carver's Drug Store (now Parma Ravioli) on one corner and Clouthier's Stationery (the Ottawa Bagelshop) on the other. The day was unseasonably chilly so we walked and ran down the sidewalk to keep warm.

A convertible sped by with the top down as the strains of the Young Rascals' “Good Lovin'” followed it down the street. The driver looked like a frozen mullet with windblown hair, and didn't seem to be enjoying the music. Sullen and morose, he was probably a fink.

After passing Joynt's Drug Store at Holland, and the gas station where the GCTC now stands, Mike suggested that we check out the movie at the Elmdale Theatre, (today's Cornerstone House of Refuge Apostolic Church) and was excited that “The Blue Max” was playing. Across the street, Westpark Lanes offered bowling for all then, as it does to this very day.

We made it clear that World War 1 movies were not our cup of tea and didn't even slow down until we reached Malham's smoke shop at Parkdale. Karen ducked in quickly for a pack of Wrigley's Doublemint, and we were off again. “Double your pleasure. Double your fun!”

As we approached the Manhattan Restaurant (now, the 10 Fourteen) Mike

complained that he was tired after our long walk and suggested that we stop in for coffee. We knew the real reason. Mike had a mad crush on Sharon, the owner's daughter, and she was working that day.

When we stepped through the door, we saw Mrs. Proulx, the crankiest math teacher in the world, sitting in a booth, regarding us with her predictable glare. We decided with a glance that the coffee was to go.

The Palermo Bakery (where the Hintonburg Community Centre is today) was another option, but we resisted the temptation to backtrack because our ultimate destination was now in sight - Ottawa Neighbourhood Services.

Begun in 1932, ONS provided opportunities, jobs, and skills training for underprivileged people before it was fashionable. Charlotte Whitton, who would be the first woman to become Ottawa's mayor, had played a role in its establishment.

Located on the northwest corner where Wellington St meets Somerset Square, in a building that today houses the LCBO, the thrift shop was a treasure trove to fit our skinny budgets.

Judy and I headed for the clothes, particularly jeans. We both wore uniforms at school so normal clothes were a novelty. Karen got lost in the book department, and Mike disappeared in the record section. At last, loaded with our purchases, we made our way to the door, when I spotted the toys. There were plastic bags full of random toys for one dollar. We all had younger brothers or sisters, so we each scooped up a bag before leaving.

Now we were out of both money and time, so our Saturday Wellington St excursion ended for another week. Such ventures would recur many times until the changing face of the city pulled the neighbourhoods we travelled into a much different future.