

# COMMENT

## BREXIT



GWYNNE DYER

## Worthy of Shakespeare

### Theresa May the last politician standing

It's a bit like a Shakespeare play — specifically the final scene of Hamlet, when almost all the play's major characters die violently. And now we're down to one. Her name is Theresa May.

It has been barely three weeks since the United Kingdom (or at least, 52 per cent of those who voted) chose to leave the European Union, but all the main Brexit leaders have already left the stage. The Conservative Party has always been notable for its ruthlessness, and leaders who threaten to split the party get short shrift.

The first to go was Prime Minister David Cameron, who called the referendum expecting that a pro-EU outcome would finally make the anti-EU obsessives on the right of his own Conservative Party shut up. It was a needless, fatal blunder.

Cameron allowed some of his own cabinet members to campaign for "Brexit," in the belief that they would return to the fold, chastened by defeat, when the country voted for "Remain." Instead, the "Leave" campaign won, and Cameron announced his resignation the morning after the referendum.

However, he said that he would stay in office until October, to give the party time to choose a new leader. This would have involved three months of political paralysis, but it also gave Cameron time to settle his own future (he seems to be angling for a senior job with NATO). And then the slaughter started.

It was generally assumed that one of the pro-Brexit Conservative leaders would replace Cameron, most likely Boris Johnson. His presence at the head of the Brexit campaign probably gave it the million extra votes it needed for victory — but he was clearly shocked by the prospect of actually having to lead the country into the post-Brexit wilderness.

Johnson disappeared from sight for four days after the referendum, which gave the co-leader of the Brexit campaign, Justice Minister Michael Gove, time to plan a coup against him. Gove was supposed to be running Johnson's campaign, but instead he announced that Johnson was not up to the job and declared that he was running for the leadership himself.

Johnson withdrew (probably glad to be out), and Gove's treachery was so blatant that even his fellow Conservatives turned against him. For comic relief, Nigel Farage, leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party, also quit.

Leadsom was a hard-right pro-Brexiter who only entered Parliament in 2010. She was a lightweight who would never normally be seen as a potential prime minister. But Conservative members of Parliament worried that she might win the leadership race anyway, because the people who decide that are the 150,000 paid-up Conservative Party members, a socially conservative, middle-class group with an average age of 60. So the pressure on Leadsom to step aside grew.

On Monday morning Leadsom caved in, ensuring that the last woman standing, Home Secretary Theresa May, will be the new Conservative leader and British prime minister.

She will have a free run in Parliament, because the opposition Labour Party has a radical new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, elected a year ago by the rank and file of the Labour Party, who has never had the support of even one-fifth of the party's members of Parliament. Corbyn had always been hostile to the EU, and his lacklustre campaigning for "Remain" contributed to the fact that fully one-third of Labour voters backed Brexit.

The Guardian newspaper summed up the situation in an editorial last week: "It is now brutally clear that there is not a plan — no plan for how and when Britain leaves, no plan for future relations with Europe, and no plan at all for how political assent might be secured for any of the imperfect political options on offer." That is as true for May as it was for the defunct pro-Brexit leadership.

But cheer up. Assuming that Angela Merkel remains Chancellor of Germany and that Hillary Clinton wins the U.S. presidential election in November, by year's end the three biggest Western countries will all be run by women. Maybe they can sort it all out.

Gwynne Dyer is an independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

## THE CIVIC HOLIDAY

# George Hamilton meets Stan Rogers

### One founded our city, the other crafted stirring songs



ANDREW DRESCHEL

The Hamilton Spectator

I feel kind of bad about this but I've got a hunch I'm not alone.

Hands up everyone who, like me, didn't know that locally the August Civic Holiday is officially called George Hamilton Day.

No, it's not named after the Hollywood actor with the permanent mahogany tan.

It's in honour of the almost certainly mutton-chopped soldier/developer who founded this city in 1833.

Apparently, municipalities in Ontario are free to rename the blandly designated Civic Holiday, which falls on the first Monday in August, after local historic figures of their choice.

Thus Burlington has Joseph Brant Day. Toronto has Simcoe Day. And Hamilton has George Hamilton Day.

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## SHARED TRADITIONS

# Playing hockey with Gordie and Mario — sort of

### The game we all love so much is building communities and memories the world over



THOMAS FROESE

SEWICKLEY, PA. — Gordie Howe died on the day we played hockey in front of Mario Lemieux's house. It was one of those things.

We were in this Pittsburgh suburb for both business and the pleasure of visiting friends we'd known when they'd lived in Africa. Their boy and our boy were among the gaggle of expatriate kids who'd run through the banana patches.

You can walk from our friends' American home to Lemieux's house. So, why not? We — my 10-year-old, his American chum and me — grabbed a net and sticks, some baseball catcher's gear, and went off.

It was a memory, especially for the Old Man, during a time when, as you know, no Canadian team had made the NHL playoffs.

We'd all heard why, the laments, none of which came into our game. Nobody cared about media pressure (even when my 13-year-old girl screamed the play-by-play); or salary caps (the boys played for Doritos) or the low dollar or high taxes or anything else.

Our uniforms included a Team Canada cap that's travelled the world, a Team Uganda soccer jersey with the black and gold of the Penguins, and a yellow T-shirt with a matoko tree, a type of Ugandan banana.

There was the obligatory moving for any "CARRRRRRR!!" This was followed by the looks and smiles and waves. One local pulled over for a good word.

The Penguins would win it all two days later; the driver had suggested that my son, in the Uganda jersey, could help with that last game.

Once, I got on all fours to look for the ball while a dog on the other side of Mario's fence (nice doggie) roamed close. Ball retrieved, we continued in front of that slate-roofed mansion, a 1910 brick construction of 10,000

When, like our American friends, my family inevitably returns home for good, I'll miss that pure African joy more than anything.

Urged on by the now defunct Hamilton Historical Board, city council unanimously voted for the change in 2010.

Unbeknownst to me, it seems council also directed staff to develop a George Hamilton Day event program that each year chooses a different famous Hamiltonian to celebrate.

According to city spokesperson Ann Lamane, staff work with local heritage groups to develop a theme and then seek public input to select someone who best represents that theme.

I feel a little bad about that, too. I should have known that in the past the city has used the holiday to honour the likes of Olympian Ray Lewis, political pioneer Nora Francis Henderson and provincial highway honcho Thomas McQuesten.

I'm not sure how I missed all this. Maybe I was out of town or just out to lunch. Regardless, it finally penetrated my consciousness this week.

While looking for a staff report on the city's website, I saw a promotional slide show announcing that this year's George Hamilton Day celebration is focused on legendary folksinger Stan Rogers.

To kick it off, the city and The Spectator are teaming up to present a concert featuring the music of the late Rogers at the Spec auditorium on Aug. 1. (The concert is free but tickets are limited to four per person. Call 546-2424 ext. 5771 for information.)

The performers are Stan's widow Ariel Rogers, Paul Mills, Jude Johnson, Paul Langille, Poor Angus, and the Spec's own Mark McNeil.

It's great to see Hamilton once again laud-

ing Rogers, especially since the Canadian music establishment has been shamefully delinquent in not recognizing his indelible stamp on Canadian music.

Born in Hamilton, a resident of Dundas and immersed in Maritime music traditions, the singer-songwriter crafted stirring story songs that epitomize the cultural psyche of Canada and capture its sea-to-sea experience like few others.

Rogers died in a tarmac airplane fire in 1983 while returning from a concert in the United States. He was only 33 years old.

Yet during his short lifetime he penned a body of imperishable work that includes love songs, sea shanties and anthems that uplift the heart and extend the reach of the human spirit. I venture to say that songs like "Barrett's Privateers," "Northwest Passage" and "The Mary Ellen Carter" will endure as long as this country does.

It remains a national disgrace that Rogers hasn't been posthumously inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame and the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame. When I asked about the glaring omission a few years ago, officials with both organizations pleaded an embarrassment of riches and suggested it was just a matter of time.

Well, we're still waiting.

Meanwhile, it's good to see that Hamilton isn't. Rogers was inducted into the Hamilton Gallery of Distinction in 2003.

George Hamilton — the War of 1812 vet, not the bronzed actor — made the cut in 1985.

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PHOTO BY THOMAS FROESE

The Team Canada hockey hat of columnist Thomas Froese has been around much of the world, including here, in front of the Sewickley, Pa., home of Mario Lemieux, Hockey Hall of Fame member and owner of the 2016 Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins.

square-feet, sitting on a patch of earth five times as big, complete with a backyard pool that had already seen Lord Stanley's Cup dunked several times.

But the strangest moment came when we heard someone yell as clear as a cathedral bell, "Hey boys!" I looked at the boys and they looked at me. Was it Mario? Was it an angry "Hey boys!" like when you put a baseball through a window? An excited "Hey boys!" like when a party starts? Or was it more of a ghostlike "Hey boys!" like when you march off to war?

I'd like to imagine it was from Gordie himself, an echo from a time when you'd hold a door for a lady one minute and crush an opponent with your elbow the next; when business meant having a good time; when men were boys and boys were men; when a father played hockey with his sons, remarkably, professionally, because he loved them that deeply.

In Uganda, where I've taught Canada's game — maybe too well — I feel something of this. There, the players of summer hockey are Paul (a gardener who likes to use his head, soccer-style) and Joseph (another university groundskeeper, very fast) and Jeff (a goaltender preferring zero padding or even a glove), plus all the others.

They're strapping young men half my age and twice as strong. Once, they beat me and a couple of Albertans I'd met on a flight into Uganda. Another time an Ontario friend flew home with a couple of broken ribs.

We've played hundreds of hours. Bonds have been made. Community has been built. The big smiles, with the sweat, are endless. When, like our American friends, my family inevitably returns home for good, I'll miss that pure African joy more than anything.

They say American business now owns Canada's game and maybe it does and maybe it always has. But, looking around at the world, there are worse problems to have.

What's bigger and more helpful is the spirit of this game, a spirit for the boys (and girls) of anywhere, the boys (and girls) who just want to play, be it on the streets of Pittsburgh or in nowhere, Africa, or in the alleys and on the rooftops of some other world.

This is what the boys of those never-ending summers do. Then they hang their hockey hat on the lamp post of some hockey shrine, take a photo, and sure, remember it forever.

Thomas Froese writes about news, travel and life. Find him at [www.thomasfroese.com](http://www.thomasfroese.com) and [www.dailydad.net](http://www.dailydad.net)

## COMMENT ARTICLE GUIDELINES

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