

We'll call him Dave. Standing a full 6'3" and weighing some 210 pounds, Dave was much bigger than all the other adolescent boys in our Bantam hockey rep division in the lower mainland. He took after his giant of a father, who dwarfed my leprechaun dad in the stands. My dad liked to keep a bag of peanuts in his pocket for game time snacks. Dave's dad kept a bag of hams.

Dave liked to throw his substantial weight around. Big hits, big hair, and big attitudes won the Philadelphia Flyers the Stanley cup around then, and we all figured that was the only way to get to the NHL. Concussions were not so much monitored for health reasons, but to ensure we remembered to carve another notch on the end of the Sherwood.

We played against Dave the year before, when he was on the Burnaby Winter Club team. The only way to take him down was to duck just before the collision and knock him out at the knees in full flight. That was really fun, unless you timed it wrong, in which case you became a smudge on his visor.

We were happy to be playing alongside him in 1977. Instead of fear, amusement -- watching him steam over the opposition. But in a game we really needed to win against the much-hated Hollyburn Winter Club (rich kids), Dave decided he was going crank up the pain-o-meter. Intending to take down their shifty first line centre, a fast-skating, goal-scoring machinegun of a player, Dave got a piece of him in the first period, but his opponent was too shifty, and it was only a scratch -- which fact only encouraged Dave.

Around the middle of the second frame, Dave saw his chance. Lining him up as he broke out of their end, Dave accelerated toward the boards, intending to paint them Hollyburn blue. Unfortunately Dave stumbled to his knees in full flight a few feet before the intended collision point. At that instant the forward looked up, stepped away deftly, and watched Dave crash face first into the boards and crumble to the ice in Gulliveresque humiliation.

I think I saw their wily centre looking satisfied, carving another nick in his stick after the game.

(Something, something... Trump).

Might Might Seem Right, but Right Might be Blight

From time to time as a commercial banker I would entertain applications from American investors looking for commercial loans from Canadian Banks for Canadian Assets, usually real estate. Their regular banks at home couldn't easily secure Canadian loans using Canadian assets. But as Canadian banks, we couldn't use their US assets as collateral either. This meant that despite their success back at home, they were subject to our more rigid lending conditions here in Canada -- which usually made their eyes pop out and their heads spin with projectile vomiting.

More than once I was scoffed at, lectured, and belittled for our Canadian conservative lending policies. In the back of my head I recalled the 1980's Savings & Loan crisis (a precursor for the 2008 crisis which was really just a blockbuster sequel, and by no means the first one). "You Canadians just don't get it!"

Well if it's the financial flu we just don't get then, good! Between 2008 and 2012 the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation closed 465 banks state-side. During that same period, in our land so deeply dependant on trade with the US, the Canadian Deposit Insurance Corporation oversaw not one bank closure, and in fact has not closed down a single bank since 1996, and it was an obscure bank at that.

Shoegate

The current US trade policy seems more driven by Trump's insatiable desire for attention than any sort of comprehensive strategy. The president has said: "One thing I've learned about the press is that they're always hungry for a good story, and the more sensational the better...The point is that if you are a little different, a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold or controversial, the press is going to write about you."

Well okay, so I'll write.

This week Trump rallied his troops on the trade file by declaring Canadians a bunch of shoe smugglers. He complained that our cross-border shoppers buy shoes in the states, scuff them up, then "smuggling things (shoes) back in to Canada because the tariffs are so massive."

This cuts me to the soul. Really Canada?! This is our worst comeback? Mexico smuggles their supposed "bad hombres" (aka cute little kids) to the US, and the worst we can inflict is to buy American footwear (made in China), scratch them up with a hockey stick and then rush back to the nearest Timmy's in Canadianica and buy a double-double with the savings?

Not to confuse bombast with facts, but Trump is wrongo bongo again. Buying shoes at a US store actually helps his county. Duh. The Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America actually tweeted as much directly to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau Tuesday, in a sideways rebuke to their own President, saying Canadians are welcome to keep buying shoes across the border. "Buy as many as you want – and scuff them up if you want, we can sell you more!"

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