

Written by Allan Besselink
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<p><a title="Reunion 2013"

href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/23270024@N03/10139281376/">It is a phrase that will put a smile on your face and warmth in your heart no matter what the context:</p> <p>"Welcome home".</p> <p>It is a phrase that I heard repeatedly over the past 5 days. Why? As time would have it, 2013 is the 25th anniversary of my graduation from Queen's University. That being the case, it was time for a homecoming reunion.</p> <p>I can tell you with great certainty from my experiences while on campus that they take reunions seriously at Queen's. This year was no different.</p> <p>Queen's University is a proud university. The pride in attending one of the premiere academic institutions in Canada is instilled in you the moment you receive acknowledgment of your acceptance into the school. It builds throughout Frosh Week, and continues until the moment you graduate - and far beyond. I think it is safe to say that it is like no other in Canada.</p> <p>A reunion at Queen's isn't just the opportunity to get together with classmates that you haven't seen in ages. It is not just a time to reminisce. At Queen's it is truly a special occasion, especially if you are a member of the 25 or 50 year reunion groups. It is chock full of tradition, of pomp and circumstance, and of great mutual respect and admiration amongst current students, alumni, and faculty. Sure, the memories of life on campus come flooding back with great ease. But it is so much more than that.</p> <p>It all starts the moment you walk into Grant Hall for registration on Friday afternoon. Everywhere I turned, current students and staff proclaimed, with smiling faces, "welcome home". </p> <p>Welcome home.</p> <p>When you return to campus for your reunion, you experience that pride ten-fold. Traditions run deep here. Case in point: the homecoming football game. As I walked into Richardson Stadium wearing my navy blue PT Class of '88 leather jacket (another tradition), my ticket was taken by a student volunteer who smiled and said "welcome back". Simple and sincere.</p> <p>Alumni have the tradition of going on parade at half time. This year was no different. But it was preceded by a great number of students from the student section storming the field. Yes, at half time. Why? It's homecoming weekend! Alumni were then faced with utter craziness as they walked through the virtual tunnel of students, all exclaiming "welcome home" and "respect the alumni"! Add to that countless "high fives" and it turned into 15 minutes of fame, a rock star moment of sorts at a place that was truly home for 4 years.</p> <p>Fortunately, the Gaels came away with a come-from-behind victory in overtime, 40 - 34. Yes, I went to a reunion and a football game broke out. My Gaels got a homecoming weekend win for us.</p> <p>Welcome home.</p> <p>I have only called three locales home over my 48 years - Brockville, Kingston (Queen's University), and Austin. "Home" looks like many different things over the course of our lives, and all of these places have a special spot in my heart. Queen's University was - and will always be - home. It was a place where I discovered myself. It was a place where I learned about life and love and experienced the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. It was a place where I challenged my thinking and made friendships that would last a lifetime. It was a catalyst for not just learning and career endeavors, but for personal growth. It helped make me who I am.</p> <p>The memories of the smiling faces of the students this weekend will serve as a constant reminder to me. This is home - and I am proud to call it such.</p> <p>Cha Gheill!</p> <p>Photo credits: abesselink</p> <h6>Related Articles By Allan Besselink</h6> <a

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