Opinion

The year it all changed

Everything changed in 1967.

Fifty years ago, Canada celebrated its 100th birthday, hosting an Expo in Montreal and, at least in the narrative we like to tell ourselves, came into our own as a country. We became a country in 1867, “came of age,” historians tell us, at Vimy Ridge, in 1917, gained full autonomy from Britain’s Parliament in 1931, and adopted our very own constitution in 1982. But 1967 is when we stopped being a baby-country and became a confident, adult-like state on the world stage.

It’s possible that few Canadians pinpoint 1967 as a particular turning point. The various measures of “Canadian pride” — the U.S. exchange rate, hockey titles, military engagements, pop-cultural contributions — have ebbed and flowed in the successive decades. National unity is a fragile, unstable beast that petered out after 1980 and 1995, the latter of which almost ended the nation. Free trade and globalization altered us once again.

“Canadianness” itself changed dramatically in this half-century, from a concept rooted in British heritage to a recognition of “two founding nations” to celebrating multiculturalism and a belated recognition of the rights and tragic history of indigenous peoples resulting directly from our national project. In this time, too, Canada has gone from a static, comparatively conservative place to one of the most liberal countries in the world. Institutionalized antisemitism and a culture of second-class status for Jews in Canada of 1967, has become almost entirely absent (although incidents and acts of antisemitism, like much else, continue to occur). While nothing really substantively changed overnight, 1967 is a symbolic moment in Canadian history.

For Israel, 1967 had symbolism but, in very real, tangible and irreversible ways, it marked 1967 as the year when everything changed. While it didn’t happen overnight, it did take a few days. The Six Day War, which began June 5, 1967, literally and figuratively reshaped Israel.”

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The Arts

The art of creative criticism

CYNTHIA RAMASY

In the program of the inaugural Max Wyman Award for Cultural Commentary, Dr. Rabbi Yosef Wosk describes Max Wyman as “a cultural paragon whose clear vision, incisive writing and fearless voice have both grounded and encouraged us. In his proposals to the community, he has been an unparalleled personality, a cultural commentator whose influence is sure to be modeled by future generations.”

In establishing the biennial, province-wide award — which will include a $5,000 honorarium and allow the recipient to choose an emerging commentator, who will re

“Criticism, I learned, could be a gift. It involved courage, clear sight and expression. Saying ‘no’ to one thing also means saying ‘yes’ to something else. I rejected mean-spirited criticism but embraced creative criticism.”

Wosk first heard of Wyman when Wyman was at the Sun. “I admired his work,” said Wosk. “From the sound of his name, I thought he would probably be Jewish.” Later, I found out that he wasn’t but, as I got to know him, I realized that he certainly had a ‘Jewish soul’: he was kind, smart, sensitive, humble and active in helping the world be a better place. I got to know him better when we were both involved in the Canadian Academy of Independent Scholars at Simon Fraser University. When I was appointed Shadbolt Fellow at SFU in 2015, I invited Max and his wife, Susan Metens — also a critic and a brilliant scholar of esthetics with a doctorate from Cambridge — to be in the first cohort of Shadbolt Community Scholars, with a mandate to knit together the academy, the arts and the community.”

Wosk sought the advice of the centre’s executive director, Mirra Jayewry and global diplomacy.

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