

Friday, September 5

Wow! What a day!! I made my announcement yesterday and I must say it was one of the most incredible experiences I've ever had.

So much of it is a blur, but by watching Cogeco and MCTV, listening to the radio, and reading the Nugget, pieces of it are falling into place.

The day started about 7:00 a.m. when I gathered my notes from the last few months. These were little scraps of paper with my thoughts and feelings scribbled on them. The night before, Miss P (my wife Patty) and a couple of friends helped me plot out the order of the things I wanted to say, so I slotted the scraps of paper into this order. I sat down and typed the announcement speech over the next hour. I practiced it in the shower, and while Miss P and I drove up to Nip U. (Nipissing University). I had decided to make my announcement in the Vittorio Fedeli Business Centre, a room named after my grandfather. It just seemed to be the right thing to do. I waited in the back room while people filled the seats. Every once in a while I would take a stretch up the corridor, and could see people going into the room. An old friend, Kitty, (remember Momma Poons?) was standing there looking for me. A few days earlier she said she couldn't make it up from Toronto, but drove up any way. She came over to talk to me and said she just couldn't miss this big day. Kitty is very emotional and I gotta say, I almost cried along with her.

Soon I could hear the room quieting down, and my friend Ben Farrella speaking. A big applause brought Mr. Jack Leckie to the podium to introduce me. You can't hear anything from the back room, so I missed his speech, but I understand it was sensational. I had asked Mr. Leckie to introduce me, because I always admired and respected him as one of North Bay's great supporters. I knew my friends would appreciate hearing from someone like him. The door opened and Ben ushered me in. Holy crap!! The room was packed. Every seat was taken, and every square inch was filled with friends. I was later told the count was 322 people. That sounded about right, as 219 "I Want To Help" forms were handed in, and most were from couples who were there.

I can only say that I felt a lot of love in that room. I didn't want to let anyone down, so I gave what I felt was the best speech I have ever delivered in my life.

The rest of the day was spent with Miss P, which made for a perfect day.