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A Ted Bit Right down to the wire— with one day to go

So this is it.

Tomorrow, as the clock strikes 5 p.m., I will officially be retired. In essence I will become an 'old fart'. I'm smiling as I type that one— I can get away with it now.

After all, what they gonna do? Fire me?

It's gonna be a bit strange— I'll be the first to admit that. My first column for *The Independent & Free Press* was published December of 1990. At first they were random, filling in when there was extra space in the newspaper. But when Managing Editor Hartley Coles retired in March, 1991, I was offered his space and I've been writing my column every week since that time. Last count, I have about 1,100 columns on file.

So what does one say when it comes down to the final day?

I've enjoyed working with many great colleagues over the years. Clearly Hartley Coles and news editor Anne Currie had huge influences on me.

Hartley had class. He favoured the 'little guy' and wrote for the common person, with a humility few could match.

Anne had a simple attitude about newspapers. "If you're not having fun in the office, then you shouldn't be here." It was her credo, one she took seriously.

There have been numerous reporters go through the system here during the past 30-plus years— some still remain.

Cynthia Gamble has been here almost as long as me, starting as a reporter, advancing to being our news editor. Cynthia and I fondly go back a long way, watching a steady progression of budding reporters make their way through the ranks here.

And we're both graduates of the 'Coles/ Currie' school of journalism.

Another longtimer is Lisa Tallyn, who I've shared a great relationship with over the years. I'll never forget the first time we met. In the 1980s, Lisa was a reporter at *The Milton Canadian Champion*. One day, (on my day off), I heard a page for a barn fire on my scanner. The barn was located on Steeles Avenue, making it both a Milton and a Halton Hills news story.

As I shot the fire, I saw her walk into the fire scene and take a few photos. We'd never met before so we chatted. I said it was my day off— she was quick to comment.

"Your day off? And you're out covering a barn fire? Are you freakin' nuts???"

Some things just never change.

I had a good working relationship with former Managing Editor John McGhie.

It's a given that a columnist and an edi-

tor will cross swords at least once a week, usually deadline day, when the editor has an urge to chop key parts from the column. Honestly though, John and I were a great team. I'm a firm believer that difference of opinion is a sign of healthy creativity.

Sports reporter Eamonn Maher has been another of my colleagues who quietly works in the background, rising to the occasion to pitch in when the time comes.

A few non-editorial people in my newspaper life are still here from the 1980s.

Circulation wonder boss Nancy Geissler and I go *waaay* back to when she was a mere child working in the Main Street office. Shelli Harrison was a teenager back then and General Manager Steve Foreman had his start at the Main Street location as well. We've all been great friends over the years. (I love to remind Steve that I've seen him fired at least twice during that time.)

During my 32 years, this job has granted me some great experiences. With the exception of Pierre Trudeau, I've personally

met every Canadian Prime Minister since 1984. I've chatted with every Ontario Premier since Bill Davis, and countless sports and entertainment celebrities.

It's been a great gig, to say the least.

So thank you to all who have touched my life through this office. The countless sales reps, co-op students and most of all, those thousands of people who have been in front of my lens, out there in this wonderful community we call Halton Hills.

Most of all, thanks to my four daughters, their mother Cathy, and The Sidekick, for 'sharing' me with you, the readers, for all these years, sometimes at the cost of cutting into their personal time with me.

In two weeks, I expect to be facing a bunch of new-born lambs. The last thing on my mind will be newspaper work.

But if time permits, I hope to keep my farm website up to date, keeping you posted on the antics of Hamish, Hemi and Angus, and naturally The Sidekick.

You can access it at <http://meandthesidekick.blogspot.ca/>. I know I'll miss all of you profoundly. Drop me a line— my personal email is at the bottom of this column. As I said last week, you haven't seen the last of Ted Brown. Be it a guest columnist or a Sideroads story— I'll still be around.

You can count on that.

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*Ted Brown can be reached
at tedbit@hotmail.com*



**TED
BROWN**