

Photographer/columnist has mixed emotions about leaving a '32-year habit'

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

The entry in Ted Brown's diary in 1982 after he met with *Georgetown Independent* editor Hartley Coles about freelance writing and photography opportunities reads, "Time will tell if it's going to pan out."

It seems that meeting panned out in a big way for Brown, leading to a long, rewarding career at *The Independent & Free Press* as a photographer, columnist and reporter.

Tomorrow (Friday) marks Brown's last day at the paper as he's retiring after 32 years— looking forward to devoting more time to things he wants to do like tending to his sheep farm and checking off items on his bucket list.

He has mixed emotions about leaving what he refers to as a "32-year habit."

"I'm going to miss the camaraderie of my colleagues," says Brown. "I will also miss the social interaction with the general public, the readers."

"Being in the know is kind of exciting," he added.

But he says he's also eager to experience life without deadlines, and won't miss the repetitive aspects of the job or

"having to go out and shoot major accidents in dangerous conditions."

Brown's interest in photography was sparked back in 1978 when his first daughter Lindsay was born.

"I wanted to get a good 35 mm camera to document the kids growing up."

Soon Brown had set up a darkroom in his Limehouse home and he was shooting, developing and printing photos. Freelance work for *The Independent* led to a temporary assignment filling in for the newspaper's vacationing darkroom technician. That led to a part-time job, and in 1984, Brown was hired on as the newspaper's full-time photographer.

At the time, he was also continuing to work as a dairy farmer alongside his father, but was experiencing breathing problems from an allergic reaction to something in the barn. His father had already suffered four heart attacks and Brown says they both decided, "it was time to stop killing ourselves and do what we wanted to do."

For Brown, that was photography. Back then he was very keen on spot news, monitoring the scanner for fire and police calls 24/7.

"I got to learn to read the scanner. You could hear it in the dispatcher's voice if it was a bad call," he says.

Photo assignments that made a lasting impression on him include the spectacular March 1986 James Snow Parkway bridge/truck fire. He rushed to the scene, but couldn't get close because police wouldn't allow it.

While looking for another way in, Brown met a Region employee he knew who offered to drive him into the scene in the Region truck, which allowed Brown to get the shot he needed.

That photo ran in numerous newspapers and earned Brown Metroland, Halton Regional Police and OCNA awards, boosting his confidence.

"I was a relative newcomer, all of a sudden I had credentials, and I'm realizing I am a professional news photographer."

The June 1995 bus/gravel truck collision on Hwy. 7 that claimed the lives of five people is another assignment that Brown won't ever forget.

"It was one of the most horrific accidents I ever covered," he says. "It was like a war zone." That scene haunted him for some time.

Fortunately not every assignment was tragic.

Brown loved shooting events like the Georgetown Highland Games, fall fairs and he says he would "really get pumped" covering elections.

He also enjoyed writing local theatre reviews and shooting and laying out photo features for his Ted Bits page that ran in the 1980s.

The highlights of his career were two Keeping the Memory Alive tours of First and Second World War Canadian battlefields in Europe—the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands in 2005 and the 90th Anniversary of Vimy Ridge in 2007.

Photos and stories he filed on location from Europe ran in *The Independent* and other community papers.

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TED BROWN

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