



HENRY
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Bill Thompson has flown water bombers while fighting major forest fires and navigated through major storms and hurricanes on the Atlantic Ocean.

So handing out parking tickets is "a piece of cake," he quipped.

Thompson works for Frontier Security Services and is the parking bylaw enforcement officer for downtown Belleville.

He loves his job and brushes aside suggestions that angry motorists get to him even after they get his slip of paper on their windshields..

"I have survived worse scenarios, like going through storms and hurricanes on my converted fishing trawler and spending two seasons flying a water bomber in Northern Ontario when most pilots quit after the first year because it's so nerve wracking," said the 52-year-old Thompson.

"I have my feet on the ground and I can take myself out of any situation when dealing with irate motorists."

The Sandy Hook Road resident is the familiar figure who has been patrolling downtown Belleville for different security firms since 1996.

"I only write the tickets that need to be written," he said.

And yes, he will give people a break on their ticket.

"If they come up with a legitimate excuse, I'm not that cruel of a person. I will cancel the ticket but only if the excuse is valid."

Enforcing parking regulations is a far cry from what he has done in his life.

The Little Britain native and Lindsay High School graduate joined Lindsay Airwaves as an apprentice mechanic. He also learned to fly and earned his commercial pilot's licence two years later.

Thompson went to work for Austin Airwaves in Timmins where he flew various aircraft, including Beavers and the old DC-3s.

He spent three winters flying in supplies to isolated villages in Churchill, Man., and the Northwest Territories.

He also flew Catalina water bombers for two summers in an era when the life expectancy of a water bomber pilot was one or two seasons.

"If you succeed the first season, you generally quit because it's nerve wracking. You're flying into a fire and dropping your payload and then scrambling to fly out of the fire... but you're past the point of being afraid because you have a job to do and you just do it."

Thompson left Northern Ontario and went to Centennial College in Toronto. Two years later, he graduated with his avionics