

Dark cloud has a silver lining: Bill Maynard's struggle is over

By CATHY BLACK
Staff writer

Scientist Bill Maynard's thirty-five-year struggle is over.

He finally got word yesterday that he will receive substantial compensation for an accident in 1943 that left him nearly blind and crippled in a wheelchair.

"After all this time it's hard to believe," he says.

For 35 years the Sydenham couple have struggled to live decently, denied compensation for the chemical explosion in a federal laboratory by the Quebec government. But they feel no bitterness.

"It would have been a lot nicer to have had the money 35 years ago, but it's still the best news I've heard in a long time," says Evelyn Maynard.

It will be another few weeks before the Maynards hear exactly what the payments will amount to, but it looks as if they'll be receiving a lump-sum payment, retroactive to 1943, including cost-of-living adjustments. A member of the Quebec compensation board has said it will amount to "a pile of money."

The Maynards hadn't been expecting the money and were so taken by surprise that they really haven't planned yet what to do with the money.

But Bill knows yesterday was a lucky day.

"Good things always happen on Jan. 18. It's my wife's birthday and my grandson was born a year ago on Jan. 18," he says.

The accident occurred less than a year after the Maynards were married — meeting at Queen's University where Bill was on a scholarship and working on his master of science degree.

After they were married Bill went to work for a federal government research centre at Val Cartier in Quebec, where shells were being tested before sending them to troops overseas.

There was a chemical explosion and Bill has difficulty remembering much of what happened in the following year. He lost the use of his legs, much of his eyesight and he has trouble talking. So Evelyn has to tell most of their story.

"He was in the hospital from Oct. 18 to Feb. 2. Finally we went to his parents place in Orillia and then we bounced back and forth, for a while, between Orillia and my parents here.

"He was in bed for a quite a while. I often think things could have been much better if we'd had therapists in those days. But I worked with him every day, massaging his fingers and I still remember how wonderful it was that day he could finally put his hands over his head."

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