

The Acton Free Press

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They're not protesters, they are strictly vandals

As the days and more importantly the evenings become cooler and autumn rains start to fall it must be something of a relief to Acton merchants. It's been a long hot summer for them. Most local businessmen really don't want to be in the news, they just want to operate their stores profitably. As if slumping sales and hefty interest rates for carrying stock weren't enough of a headache, merchants have been swirling in a storm of controversy.

First there was the repeated nights of groups of teenagers and young adults roaming downtown streets at all hours and some breaking windows like it had become a national pastime.

Now they seem to be embroiled in controversy over their bid to not add to the daytime and evening loitering problem with opening up downtown arcades.

The vandalism and arcades issue have produced a number of front page stories this summer. So too have they produced letters to the editor.

Don't get us wrong. We welcome the letters, as long as they are signed and the writers will sit still for editing for libel and slander, as one person who wrote recently did. The paper is and should be a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions on any issue.

We believe Ed McMullen is entitled to his own opinion and respect him for having the courage to express it. The same holds true for those who have come forward in support of his view, as well as those who have spoken out against statements.

But make no mistake, by publishing a letter to the editor on this subject, or any other for that matter, it doesn't mean we support that opinion.

We wouldn't call the police vigorously enforcing loitering laws, as well as traffic infractions, by giving out tickets downtown and in other parts of town such as parks, harassment. We call it simply enforcement, enforcement which because of manpower and budget problems apparently couldn't take place until it was absolutely necessary and the situation downtown threatened to get out of control.

We can't point a finger of blame at the merchants for pushing for police action, nor

do we think they were wrong in speaking out against opening up downtown to arcades.

They weren't reflecting just their views. They were speaking for their customers, other citizens who we have heard repeatedly say they don't want to go to their own shopping area because of some of the language and conduct of teens and young adults loitering downtown.

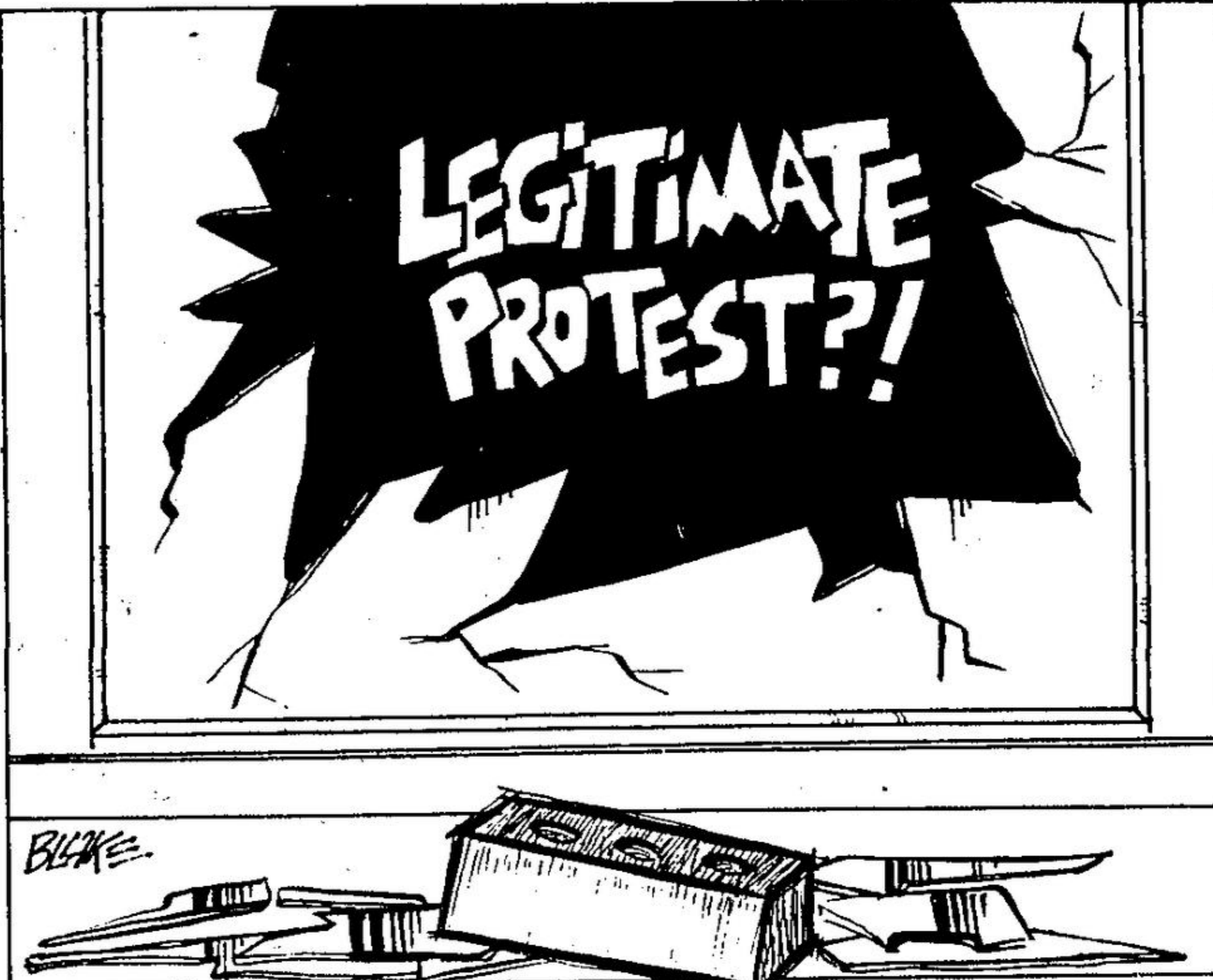
We know, just as the merchants do, that all arcades aren't hangouts for juvenile delinquents, and make no mistake we have some in this town. But some arcades are trouble spots and Acton just doesn't need more fuel for the fire now.

We also know, and are sure the merchants and police are aware of this, that not all teens and youths who hang out downtown throw bricks at windows and cause other damage to private as well as property. Our parks are almost as big a target of vandals as our shops. A minority of young people are giving a majority a bad name.

However, we doubt the people McMullen referred to in his letter as having hung around downtown Acton in their youth and grew up to be fine, upstanding community leaders; threw very many bricks. And unfortunately it appears in today's society that the minority of really bad young apples is growing.

We simply can't see how the policeman is going to distinguish between the potential vandal and the youth who simply wants to hang out downtown without damaging anything, when he meets up with a group late at night on the street or in a park.

And we certainly don't think we need a park downtown or to have our parks open later simply to accommodate those who wish to hang out. Taxpayers today simply can't afford to pay for something which will appeal to such a small group of our young people. It would be too costly at just about any price to supply such an unproductive form of recreation for so few. If we have excess bucks to throw around than throw it at more minor sports facilities for the majority. —G.M.



From the editor's desk

By Gord Murray
It's not easy finding a way to get a little humor into the paper.

Yet, out on the news beats around Acton there are a few laughs. A lot of the funniest things we hear said about people happen at the many retirement dinners, awards banquets, etc., we attend.

I've been to dozens over the years and often our politicians are on hand and the target of speakers' jibes. Unfortunately they don't fit into a serious story say about Doug Mason's retirement, Rev. Chuck Beaton's night for being Citizen of the Year, etc.

But, with column I hope to quit leaving these little gems in my notebook and share them with all who weren't at the function.

I wish I could recall some of the beauties Chuck Beaton told back in April. Some, with a slight off color tinge but still suitable for a family newspaper, were priceless. I also remember when Ron McKnight was honored all the politicians took some shots at MP Otto Jelinek which readers might have enjoyed.

Anyway, our affable mayor Peter Pomeroy was the target of some cutesies from Halton Hills Hydro's Graham Farnell at Doug's retirement do at the Legion.

One was that Pete shakes your hand before an election, and your confidence after. Another was that when Pete asks you to vote for him for mayor and good government, he's really asking you to vote twice.

Now I'm not sure if these come across as funny in print as they did when Farnell dropped them, maybe his timing in delivering the lines was a factor. You'll have to let me know how they came across before I decide if I'll print any others I hear in the future.

Had a fella in my office Thursday

morning (when you read on you'll know why he didn't want his name mentioned) and he said he recognized himself in my comments last week about people parking close to intersections on Mill St. making it extremely difficult and dangerous to turn left from a side street.

To my surprise he agreed with me that it's a real problem in downtown Acton.

But he had an explanation. Seems this chap stops downtown each morning to buy smokes. He'd like to park near Village Variety and just dart in.

But what he often finds is that there are a couple of police cruisers parked there. He wonders why with three reserved spots on Mill across the road and two around the corner on John South why the cops need to use other parking too. Why are they parked on the north side of Mill, he asked.

Well, I've never seen this situation, but I'm sure it's happened. However, it's hard for us to get an answer from the police when we don't have specific dates and times of when they were parked there.

Anyway, with parking spots used he winds up parking his truck between the intersection and where parking does start.

Maybe lots of people have good reasons for parking close to the intersections, but it still doesn't make it any easier to turn onto Mill from a side street.

And speaking about parking, I've a little tid-bit to pass on about the overnight parking issue (I'm sure some of you are groaning "not again" about now, but read on).

As I've made abundantly clear, this one bugs me. It obviously bugs councillor Dave Whiting too. Just as obviously it bugs at least one resident of 17 of Acton's streets as well.

Well, Dave got another complaint about the overnight parking ban, but this one was from Lindsay.

Like a number of councillors, he was in Toronto last week for the Association of Ontario Municipalities Convention.

He saw a woman at the convention approach his colleagues Terry Grubbe and Russ Miller who were standing a little ways away. He noticed they turned and pointed him out to the woman.

She strode over and without introducing herself said "you're from Halton Hills. About not being able to park overnight on the streets, I was up visiting my two daughters in Acton and got a ticket."

Dave never got the names of the two daughters who live here, but thinks they reside on Greenore Cres. and either Elizabeth Dr. or Elmore Dr.

The woman, whom he found out from other convention delegates was a councillor in Lindsay, informed him she sent the ticket to the police with a note that she was visiting and it was cancelled.

Guess she didn't see those signs at the entrance to town saying there's a three hour overnight parking limit.

Dave didn't get a chance to find out how they handle the problem in Lindsay before she walked off.

One last item. A little girl recently died after a lengthy illness. We didn't have an obituary and there were a few queries as to why.

Obituary forms are available from the funeral home, but it is strictly optional if it's filled out. If we don't receive an obituary form we don't contact the family seeking a report.

I firmly believe this is the proper procedure to follow, despite the fact it means readers do occasionally miss reading a final tribute to the life of a friend or acquaintance.

Back issues

10 years ago

August 30, 1972

A charge was made by professional engineer Alfred Chan that the Acton arena is structurally unsafe during period of high winds. Mr. Chan estimated it would cost in the neighborhood of \$20,000 to stabilize the building.

New Corporal for Acton detachment of the OPP is Bob Arbour. He replaced the late Corp. Ray Mason. Mr. Arbour is a native of Tecumseh.

All is set for the three day Acton sportsmen's show that starts on Friday night with the Octoberfest celebration at the arena.

Specials this week at the IGA are: four qt. bsk. of peaches, \$1.39; tin of pink salmon, 39 cents; bread 23 cents a loaf; wiener or hamburger buns, 29 cents; beef patties, 2 lb. ctn. \$1.59; young turkeys 55 cents lb.; and a case of 24 tins of Coca-Cola for \$2.59.

Five scouts and three leaders of the first Acton scout troop travelled to Jamestown, New York, last Saturday.

Fire completely destroyed the large barn and contents at Hitching Post Ranch on the Seventh Line, north of Ballinacree, Monday night.

20 years ago

August 30, 1962

Acton's newest industry, a division of Bridgeland Agencies Limited of Toronto, is expected to start in the Wool Combing building in two weeks. They will produce plastic surfaces for cabinet work and vertical wall paneling.

Already a champion at age seven, Margaret Slaven danced her way to fame at the Canadian National Exhibition, Thursday August 23 when she won the Canadian championship for Scottish dancers eight and under.

Specials this week at the A-B Supermarket are: all steaks 79 cents a lb.; wieners 43 cents a lb.; roasts 89 cents a lb.; toilet tissue, two packs for 23 cents; and tomato juice, 20 oz. tin, two for 25 cents.

Five elm trees at Robert Little School grounds were topped this week. The culprit was Dutch elm disease for which no cure has been found.

Playing at the "Gem Drive-In Theatre, this Thursday, Friday and Saturday, "Young at Heart" starring Frank Sinatra and Doris Day, with "Trapp Family" starring Hans Holt and Ruth Leuwerik.

50 years ago

August 25, 1932

Acton Egg Grading Station opened for business last Saturday and a number of farmers of the district are taking advantage of this method of marketing their eggs.

Specials this week at your Red and White Store are: 5 lbs. of sweet potatoes for 25 cents; two tins of Heinz Pork and Beans for 25 cents; eggs 18 cents a doz.; 5 lbs. of pure Clover Honey for 40 cents; and oranges 39 cents a doz.

Mr. and Mrs. Toshi Swain and Mrs. M. Middleton of Toronto, spent Sunday at Mrs. E.F. Collier's, Brock Avenue.

Playing this week at the Gregory Theatre on Friday, "Arrowsmith" starring Ronald Coleman, Saturday, "Polly of the Circus" starring Marion Davies and Clark Gable, and on Monday "Big Timer" starring Ben Lyon and Thelma Todd.

75 years ago

August 29, 1907

Acton schools will re-open next Tuesday under most satisfactory conditions. Notwithstanding the changes in the teaching staff, caused by the resignations of Miss McKinnon and Miss King, the board and the pupils are to be congratulated upon the fact that two of the most successful teachers of the province have been secured to fill these vacancies.

The second week is just closing since T.T. Moore, Municipal Clerk, underwent the operation for appendicitis. As many friends will be pleased to know he is making rapid progress toward recovery.

100 years ago

August 31, 1882

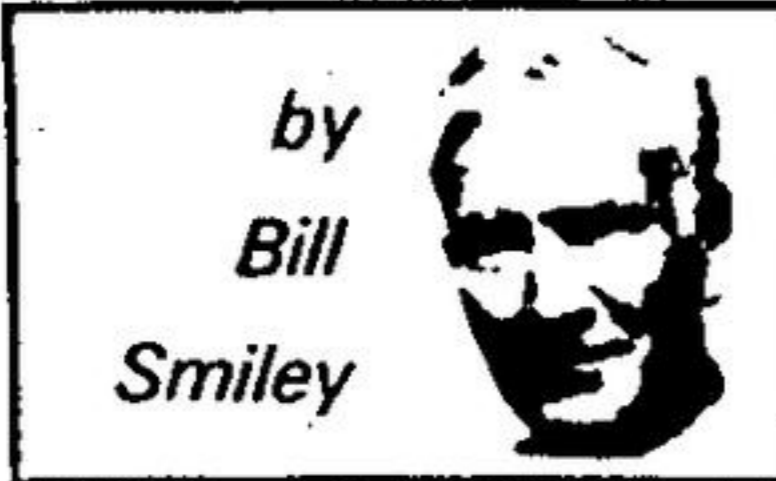
At present Acton is a busy little town as any of its size in the country. New buildings are in progress rapidly. The frames of six of the houses (three double buildings) are up and ready for the brick and the other four will be as far advanced in a few days.

It is said that the rumor circulated last week to the effect that a secret wedding had taken place in Rockwood, with a young Acton lady as bride, is incorrect. Gossipers should be more careful how they circulate stories of this nature, as, if untrue some person's feelings are generally wounded.

A more pleasant day for civic holiday than last Friday could not have been desired and the general way in which the holiday was observed by our citizens was a proof of its acceptability.

Smiley's 90 year old uncle has charm, wit and vitality

Summer is the time for family reunions. Other people—fighter pilots, newspapermen, Legionnaires, Women's Institutes, Librarians—have them any old time. But in almost every weekly newspaper across the land, every week of our two-month summer, you can read that the Jones family, or the McIntosh family, or whatever, had a reunion, followed by a list of who was there, who came the farthest, who was the oldest, who was the youngest, who hosted the reunion, and everything down to what was on the menu.



by Bill Smiley

Not too exciting to the average reader, but important to the family, so dutifully reported.

After the reunion, on the way home, there's the usual obituary. "My God, wouldn't you think that Esther would stop after having seven in 10 years." And, "Tina's got turrible fat. She's due for the big slab if she don't stop eating. Seven pieces a pie after a feed a shanty man couldn't handle." Or, "Too bad Wilbur's got so fonda the stuff. They found him out behind the barn at 11 a.m., and had to use a block 'n' tackle." And so on.

attending one. My reasons were threefold: a sense of responsibility, love, and a chance to spend some time with my only and beloved daughter.

The occasion was the 90th birthday of my uncle, Ivan Thompson, patriarch of the clan, last of a family of eight, and a remarkable man.

When you think of a 90-year-old, you think of an old man, huddled in a shawl, toothless, senile or almost, sitting in a rocking chair, eating gruel.

You don't think of a bright-eyed, lively, keenminded fellow who could walk people like me up a mountain and leave them, gasping, about halfway up, as he reached the summit.

days, he graduated from the school of hard knocks. His father was sluicemaster at the Roche Fondue, a rapids in the river, where the logs were diverted down a wooden sluice so they would not be smashed to splinters in the rapids. Young Ivan had to work on the family farm abutting the river.

In his youth he was an athlete, playing hockey for Shawville, which produced NHL star Frank Finnigan. With little formal education, he went into business, did well during many years in Montreal, retired, and bought some land along his beloved Ottawa River, where he built, mostly by hand, a beautiful log cabin which he still visits every summer.

In every respect, he is a self-made, self-educated and widely read man. He's my idea of what somebody with guts and initiative could, and still can do, in this great country.

But, beside those virtues, he has charm, wit, and great vitality. And these are why I've loved him since I was a kid, not because he "made good."

On my way overseas, I visited him in Montreal, was treated like a son, and slipped a small cash donation. When I got back from overseas, same thing.

His life has not been all roses. He lost a brilliant young son who was in his 20s. His wife died in an automobile accident. But his spirit, though deeply hurt, bounced back. At 80, he seemed 60. At 90, he seems about a year older than I. And we look alike. When I was a kid, about half the time my mother called me Ivan before she remembered I was Billy.

After serving in World War I, he worked hard in forming the Canadian Legion to make sure "you boys" of the second war got a better deal from government than his generation did. He was also active in politics, and is a great environmentalist. He is beloved by his huge collection of nieces and nephews, daughter and grandchildren, and hundreds of cousins.

Dear Uncle Ivan, I salute you as a great Canadian and will be there for your 100th, even if I have to take an ambulance.

I had two bonuses in going to Ottawa for my uncle's birthday. I got away from my grandchildren for a couple of days, just about the time I was going to crack up, and I had a good visit with my daughter.

We ate at an outdoor cafe. We went to a

horror movie. We ate a gigantic pizza in Ottawa's burgeoning city centre. We went to hear a rock group in which an old friend of hers, and a former student of mine was playing. My ears are still ringing, but I must admit I enjoyed it. We ate and drank in a swanky cocktail lounge at the Chateau Laurier and heard some excellent jazz. And we talked and talked, without her kids or her mother interrupting. That was a treat.

She was in great spirits, doing well in her university courses, and has found a place to live in a good section (but in a crummy basement apartment).

She told me Ottawa was a beautiful city, as she drove me around, but you couldn't prove it by me. My eyes were shut tight and my fists clenched in my lap. She drives a beat-up old Datsun as though she were in the Grand Prix. Most of us slow down when we see an orange light. She speeds up to beat the red one. And everyone else in the city drives like that.

Anyway, that was my big summer adventure. I'm still shaky from that driving, but have recovered enough to start making peanut butter and honey sandwiches again.