

Travel agent enjoys working

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer

According to the Canadian government it's time to retire when you reach the ripe old age of 65. One Georgetown businessman doesn't agree with that, however, and John K. Barber still arrives at his office every morning ready to do a day's work even though he is 75.

Mr. Barber bought his travel agency and general insurance business from Elmer Thompson in 1950 and operated it for 10 years on his own. In 1960 he acquired a partner, Murray Henley, who had experience in the insurance business in Toronto and Mr. Henley now acts as general manager of the firm.

ORIENT TOUR
Contrary to the modern way of learning to be a travel agent, through community college courses, Mr. Barber got his experience by doing the travelling himself. His first trip was a tour of Europe in 1932 and his most recent was a tour of the Orient in 1977.

Mr. Barber is the son of James Barber, the original owner of the Barber paper mill on River Road now owned by Deltacraft. He was the only child of his father's second marriage and says his mother had step-sons as old as she was herself. He already had a niece and four nephews by the time he was born. His mother died of a strep infection when he was two.

When his father died in 1916 Mr. Barber left Berwick Hall on Main Street South and went to live with his aunt and grandmother Bessey in the house at the corner of Market and Park Streets where he still lives.

He attended Georgetown high school and then went on to the University of Toronto from which he graduated in 1927. During his last year at the university he became part of the stage crew at Hart House Theatre and discovered he loved theatre work. The chance came for him to become stage manager of the theatre on a permanent basis and he took it. He liked university life and the campus atmosphere so instead of leaving as he had originally intended to do when he earned his B.A. he stayed on and took his master's degree in philosophy and worked at the theatre. He earned his M.A. in 1929.

FINEST MUSICIANS
Some of the world's finest musicians came to perform as soloists with the Hart House

String Quartet he recalls. He also has fond memories of a travelling company from Hart House that performed Shakespeare's Midsummer's Night Dream at high schools one year.

"We built our own stage sets, with curtains and lights and all we required to put on the production," he says. "All we needed was a floor to set it up on. We toured the high schools in Toronto and then after the season ended we visited Galt, Sarnia and St. Catharines. We had a hard time keeping a cast because we were performing so often people couldn't turn out for all the performances, but it was a marvelous experience."

Every high school in the province studied the same Shakespearean play in grade 13 in those days of departmental examinations. Mr. Barber says the Georgetown high school English teacher used to take the upper school class to Toronto on the 6:30 p.m. train to see whatever play they were studying that year when a travelling troupe of actors from England arrived at the Royal Alexander Theatre to do Shakespearean plays for a two or three week run.

TRY STOCK SELLING
While he was working in the theatre he bought a seat on the Toronto Stock Exchange "while the prices were relatively low" during the beginning of the Depression and decided he was going to try his hand at becoming a stock broker.

The Toronto Exchange and the Standard Stock Exchange amalgamated in 1934 but the Toronto company decided not to vest all its money in the new venture and instead gave all its members a sizeable windfall. It was this unexpected money which financed his first trip around the world.

"My girl friend at that time had developed tuberculosis and was practically hospitalized so I figured this was my time to travel while I was free."

He took a train to Los Angeles then travelled by boat. His tour included Hawaii, Japan, Shanghai, Manila, Singapore, Ceylon, Aden through the Suez Canal, to Egypt, Gibraltar, Marseilles, and England. He even got a tour along the north coast of Norway and the Spitzbergen Islands to see the coal mines. During that trip he saw the ice barrier in the Arctic before returning to England. There he learned a partner had been found for his

proposed brokerage business and he returned to Toronto.

One of the highlights of his trip around Europe in 1932 involves a baby Austin car which he purchased for \$600 in England, shipped across the channel and then used to tour the continent with a couple of friends. They split the cost three ways at the end and Mr. Barber says it amounted to \$57 total for gas, oil, grease jobs and so on for 2,400 miles. Then he sold it for \$400.

"We could only do about 120 miles a day," he laughs, "because the two boys were so cramped in the back seat and we put the luggage in the front with me. If we went more than that they'd have been done." "We had some fun getting over the Simplon Pass into Italy. The car couldn't make it so we had to push it the last couple of miles. Then we almost had to drag our feet going down the other side because the brakes were practically burning up. The funny part was discovering later on that all we needed was new spark plugs and it went fine."

FLAT TIRE
At another point when the group had a flat tire, his two companions simply picked up the body of the car while he changed the tire and then set it back down. He wasn't joking about it being a baby Austin! "We never even had the jack out of the back at all," he chuckles.

He also jokes about his first airplane ride. They left their car in Frankfurt and decided to go to Berlin by rail. Then they decided to fly back. Of course, they didn't know until they got into it that their transport would be an eight passenger plane with a single pilot. They couldn't go over 2,000 feet, he chuckles, and you could open the window and wave to the farmers working down below.

"I got so I knew to brace myself when I saw trees coming because we had to go up and over them and you had that sinking feeling you sometimes get in an elevator. The trip was supposed to take about 3 1/2 hours but we made it in three because of the tailwind. That saved me. If it had lasted another 20 minutes I'd have been sick like the other five passengers."

He cured himself in 1936 by flying to Paris in a converted World War I bomber that had two pilots and passenger space for 35 to 40 people.

He took a second cruise around the world in 1936 which

lasted 4 1/2 months. That time he left from New York City, and stopped in the Caribbean, Brazil, St. Helena Islands, South Africa, Madagascar, India, the South Pacific, China, Japan, Korea, Hawaii, San Francisco, Los Angeles, through the Panama Canal and back to New York.

LEFT IN BUSINESS
He left the brokerage business in 1938 because he didn't like it.

"Other people expect you to know which stocks are going to rise and my crystal ball never outgrew it," he jokes, "so I got out of it. You could see what was happening in Europe so I didn't look for a different job. I just waited. Like everyone else I figured it would another false alarm. I didn't really believe there'd be a war. But I thought I'd wait in case."

Mr. Barber joined the Lorne Scots, the Halton-Peel militia unit, in 1925 and remembers well how all militia units were tripled and quadrupled in size almost overnight during the early days of the Second World War.

The Lorne Scots were to be asked to send a small group of men as part of the first division which Canada sent overseas. Troops were called from six militia regiments to represent various parts of the nation as well as men from three of the permanent forces, he says, so it was quite a distinction to be included in that first Canadian army.

Mr. Barber himself never got out of England. He wound up as second in command of a repair depot and stayed there.

He decided he was through with the army when he got home but that only lasted for six months. In Feb. 1949 he became commander of the regiment and stayed with it until Dec. 1954.

Mr. Barber says he fulfilled his father's ambition. James Barber had to take over the paper mill at the age of 21 but what he had really wanted to do was to become a full-time soldier. He joined the Halton Regiment in 1921 before it was

even constituted as a regiment and worked up to the rank of major, the same one Mr. Barber held when he took the regiment overseas in 1941.

Mr. Barber says he feels his military career and travelling are his hobbies. He likes to go to his cottage at Muskoka to do some boating in the summer but he has no big plans to travel anymore. He has the Prairies to see yet, and some of the Maritimes. He has never seen Russia or much of Central Africa but he isn't expecting to see them now.

"But I might see some more of Canada or a bit of South America if I ever get loose again," he quips.

Mr. Barber met his wife, Sybil, in England during the war and they married in 1949 after she came to Canada.

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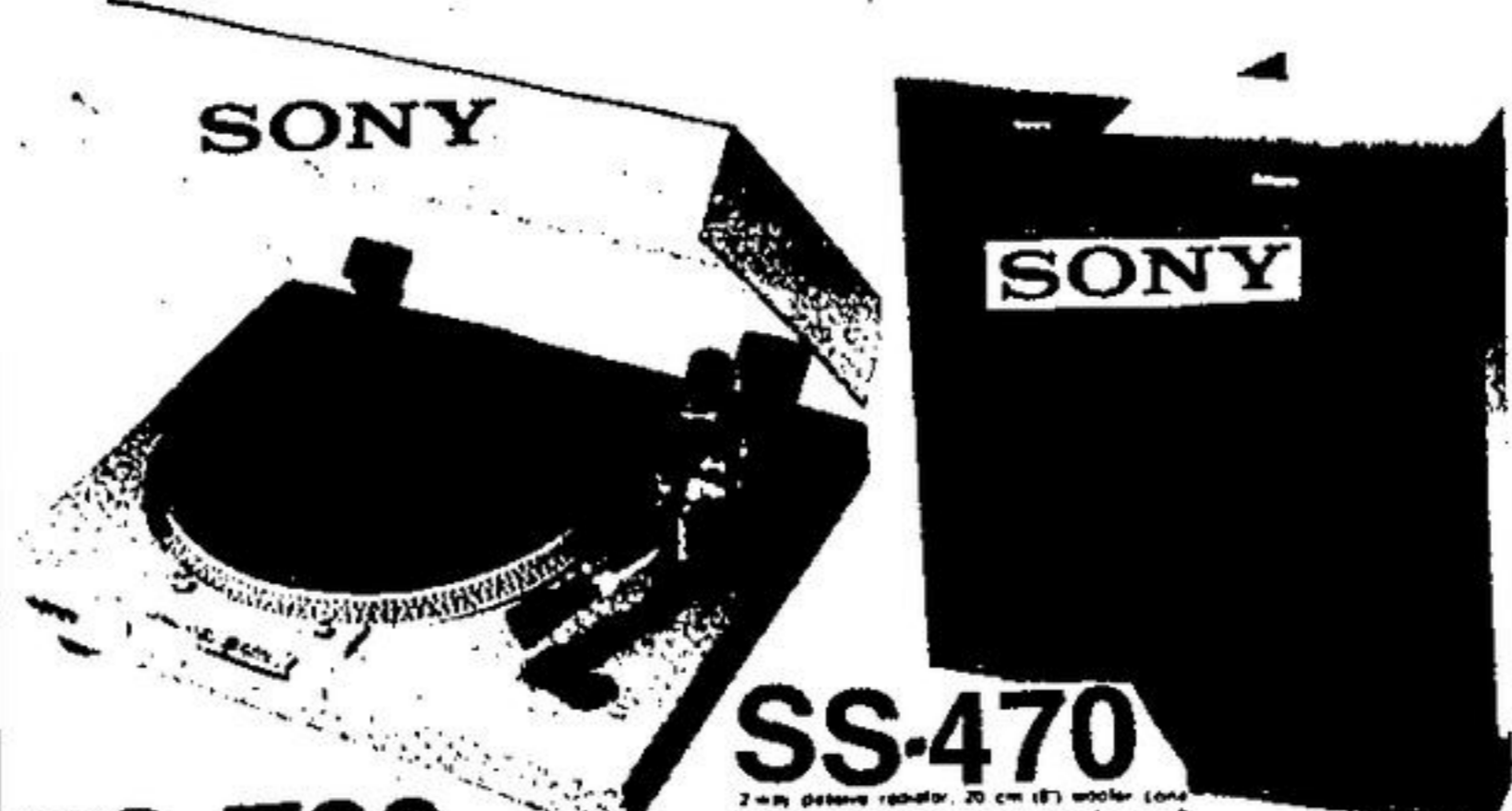
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Officer warns of crossing problems

There is a serious problem with some of the school crossings in Halton Hills because motorists are disregarding adult crossing guards and children are not crossing at intersections where there are crossing guards according to police safety officer Raj Swaminathan.

Constable Swaminathan said there are problems at various intersections in town, but the crossing at George Kennedy Public School is "a classic example". He said parents are parking their cars along the streets there, when picking children up or driving them to school, and as a result, children crossing from between parked cars, and breaking other safety regulations.

Constable Swaminathan suggested that when parents take the child to school or pick him or her up, they should not let the child cross the street alone. He also said the parents should be instructing their children to cross at an intersection where there is a crossing guard if they have to cross the street, and to obey the crossing guards at all times.

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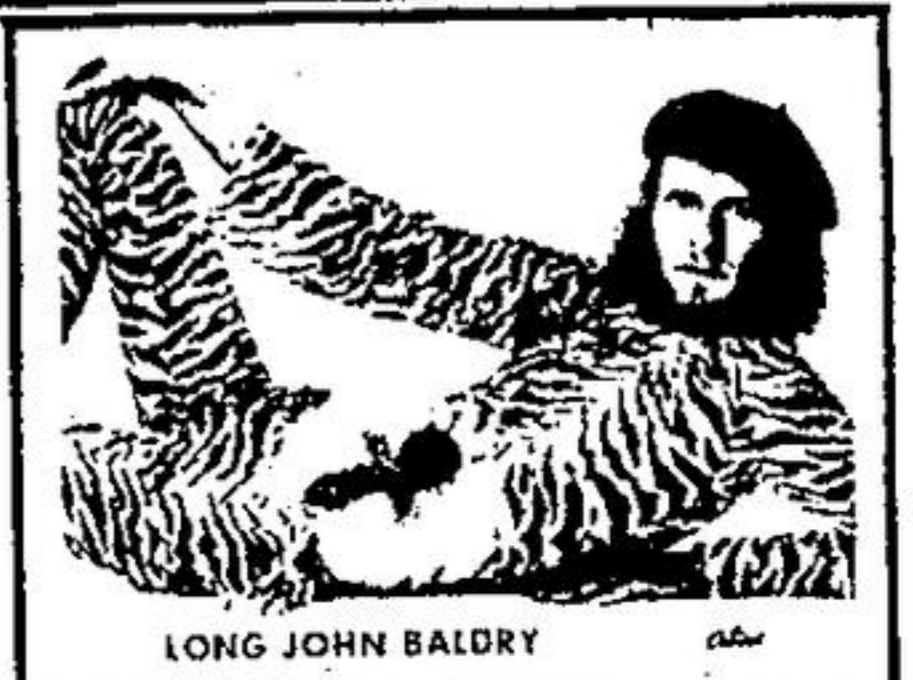
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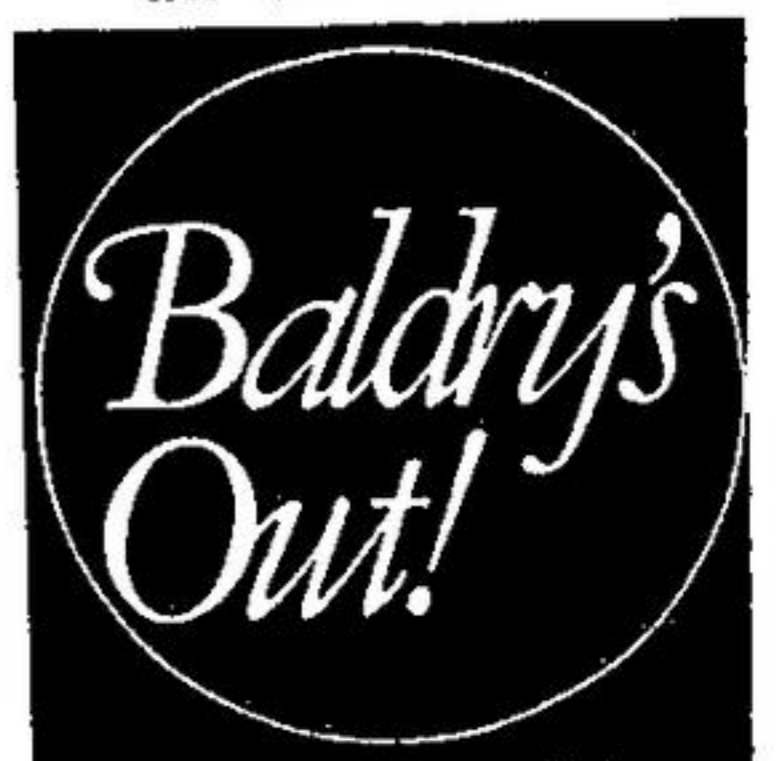
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