

Harry's coffee club kept pot boiling

I once was privy to one of the most exclusive, funniest, private small town coffee clubs in all the world. Bar none.

Harry Goldham, Bob's dad. Morning coffee time at Harry's found the most creative gang of practical jokers ever assembled behind a butcher's block with meat cleavers. You see Harry was a butcher. Duke Burrows, Sparky Drone, Slim Crawford were employees. Normie Lockhurst came later.

Some of the others who could be considered regulars were Vince Mountford, master of ceremonies par excellence, employed by Canada Packers, Jack Arnold (Arnold Glove Factory), Ray Whitmee (cap company), Henry Helfant, Cpl. Joe McBain of the O.P.P. who at that time policed the town, and assorted others who were non-regulars like me. A motley crew.

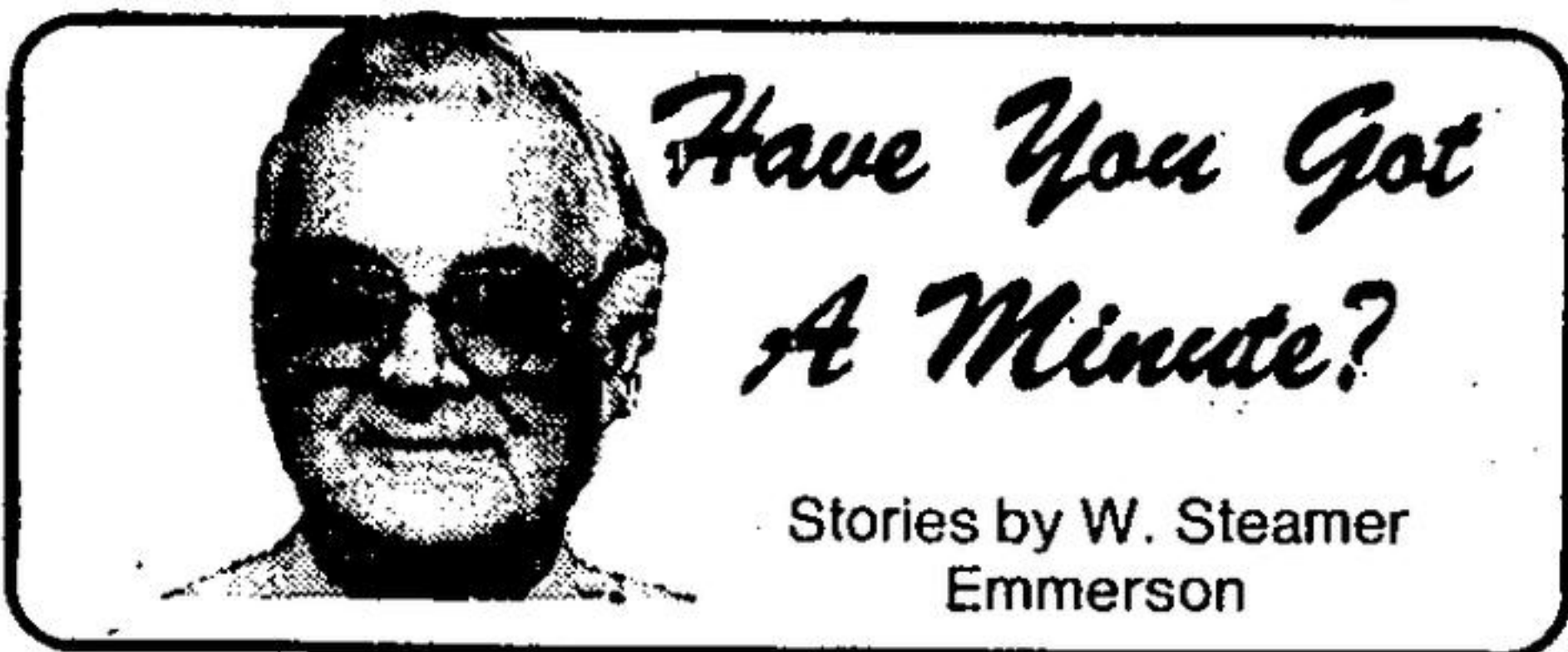
Harry's son Bob played in the bigs with Toronto, Chicago and Detroit of the NHL. It was heady stuff to have your boy described on Saturday night radio by Foster Hewitt.

The back room of the old butcher store was the hot stove lounge of today. Ballard would have been a regular.

On very cold mornings it was not uncommon to see a brace of rum or a jig of Johnny Walkers slyly slipped into the coffee. It certainly added zip to the conversation and even loosened a tongue the odd time. I liked Harry.

Why the donut places of today would do a lot better, I'm sure if they would take a leaf from Harry's book and added a little zest to their coffee.

We were all hockey fans and would hang on Harry's every word when he lowered his voice to whisper the latest inside rumor of trades at the Gardens. A hush would silently settle over us as



Have You Got A Minute?

Stories by W. Steamer Emmerson

every detail was tossed out for the boonies like me to mull over. We took small sips of coffee to make the meeting last.

But Harry had another side to him. He was a practical joker.

Ask Henry, Vince and if Ray Whitmee, Duke Burrows and Sparky Drone were alive they could roll you on the sawdust floor with colorful, funny stories of some of the tricks played on old Main St.

Get Henry, yes Henry's Clothing I'm talking about, to tell you about the little old lady who was attracted by the sign stuck on his showroom window showing a lovely fresh fish and "special" printed on it. The red arrow pointed to inside Henry's Clothing Store.

Henry was struck dumb by the little old lady's enquiry. His knowledge of suits (garments to Henry), shirts, socks, underwear and ties was unquestionable. When questioned about fresh fish he floundered.

Back at the butcher shop, they were in fits laughing. Henry had been suckered by Goldham and Co.

When you're in Henry's ask him, and he'll do a Myron Cohen fish monologue worthy of an Oscar.

When the O.P.P. took over the policing of the town, Cpl. Joe McBain eventually was posted here

and became an instant member.

Joe used to come into Harry's every morning, pull up the trap door and descend the rickety stairs to complete his morning constitutional.

The municipality's facilities were not up to Harry's standards. Before descending the stairs Joe would take off his tunic and revolver and hang them over a chair.

One morning Henry, Harry, Duke, Sparky and Ray hid his service revolver while Joe sat oblivious to the joke being concocted and carried out. In those days a single 60 watt bulb at the top of a 1/2" cast-iron conduit high over the municipal building was the beacon that signalled the police if they were not in the office at the time of the call.

As Joe emerged from the basement Harry quietly pointed out "the light was on". Joe grabbed his tunic and amid the coffee drinkers mumblings of "maybe a bank robbery, perhaps a murder," he became enraged when he discovered his sidearm had been hidden. Only the threat of arrest of everyone produced the pistol.

And finally the story about Henry and Ken Meers on a return trip to the District of Parry Sound.

The second time, to cut expenses, they didn't bother with

the Indian guide. They got lost for three days and sought refuge and shelter on a small island.

Naturally, they were pointed in the right direction and headed home.

A few hours after returning, Henry's phone rang and the Fire Marshall of the District of Parry Sound was asking if he knew the camp fire Henry and his friend had started had not been extinguished and who was your friend, asked the Fire Marshall. Henry, in his excitement, blurted out, "Ken Meers, Ken Meers."

The Fire Marshall droned on about the costs of hundreds of men fighting the forest blaze to say nothing of failing to have a fire permit in the fire season.

Henry was shaken with such disturbing news. He was devastated. His business could be reduced to ashes.

Guess what, Goldham had got him again.

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