

Just like Big Ben, across the ocean...

Past memories can be relived,
writes **Ted Brown**



TED BROWN
Column

I have a passion for old clocks. Wall clocks, mantle clocks, cathedral clocks, or even little desk clocks, I enjoy them all.

Years ago, I was intrigued to see a collection of antique cathedral clocks lined up on a plate shelf in the dining room of an Acton home.

They almost resembled a little village sitting up on that shelf, and I viewed them with envy.

I wouldn't call myself a serious clock collector, but I have a few that are my treasures.

More sentimental value than monetary, one of them is my grandmother's mantle clock.

Purchased in 1942 from Barber's Jewelers in Georgetown, it was her pride and joy.

Every 15 minutes the Westminster chimes in it would announce the time. As kids, it was a constant source of wonderment for my sisters and I.

Nana, as we called our grandmother, would proudly tell us how her mantle clock had the same type of chimes as Big Ben in the Palace of Westminster in London, England. I figured it was one of her reasons for buying it.

When I was a little boy visiting her place, I remember having my afternoon nap on the sofa in her living room, as the clock softly ticked and chimed in the quiet of the dining room across the hall.

She always told me it had to strike four times

(one hour) before I could get up from my nap.

I'm sure she figured I'd nod off before the second chime, and many days I did.

But there were some days when I'd lay and wait for the next three chimes, until it was time to get up. I imagined old Big Ben was chiming at the same time, on the other side of the ocean, in London, England.

It's one of those wonderful, warm fuzzy little childhood memories that sticks in my mind after all those years.

After Nana died, the clock moved to Dad's house and eventually was passed down to me.

And I've been the 'keeper of Nana's mantle clock' for several decades now.

A bit like people, the older a clock gets, the more cantankerous it becomes, and Nana's mantle clock is certainly no exception.

I had it serviced and cleaned by a clock smith several years ago, but if anything, it became worse.

Now, when I attempt to start it up, it will run for a few minutes, then the 'ticks' become slower and

softer, until it stops dead.

I've repeatedly restarted the old clock, but I eventually end up walking away out of sheer frustration.

It's been one of those niggling pet peeves staring me in the face when I sit in the living room and see it on the mantel. I keep telling myself I'll get to it, sooner or later.

But the problem is, there aren't many clock-makers around anymore.

So the clock sits silently on the mantel, a soundless reminder that I have to find someone who can clean it (as that's what I've been told is likely the problem.)

I remember my grandfather used to place a little cap off a jar inside the case of the clock, and put a few drops of stove oil in it, to let the fumes of the oil soak into the mainspring, lubricating it in the process.

That's why I recall the faint smell of oil when I was around the clock as a kid.

I will get around to it one of these days, and I look forward to seeing (and hearing it) chime, every 15 minutes. I also know when I do it, I'll hear it chime in the night, taking me back to when I was a toddler at Nan's house, trying to stay awake from my nap-keeping time with Big Ben, across the ocean.

- Ted Brown is a freelance writer for the Independent and Free Press. He can be reached at tedbit@hotmail.com.

THEN & NOW



photo/Acton Town Hall

Acton's former Town Hall, located on Willow Street, opened in 1883 and was also once the headquarters for the Fire Brigade. Deemed unsafe in 1977, the Town Hall was saved from the wrecking ball by Heritage Acton. The Acton Town Hall Centre, as it is now known, is used by local agencies and can be rented for special events. The new addition, to the right of the original structure, opened in 2013.



photo/Alison Walker

OPINION

Political correctness in education

Anything to do with Christianity in the public school system has been removed by the Progressive political activists.

However it appears that religions other than Christianity are acceptable.

Wonder why that would be?

Possibly a Progressive political agenda and political correctness to enforce it?

Stephen Korn

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