

# Interest in people important for travel agent

An interest in people, a sense of precision, a well-groomed appearance that inspires confidence - these are the qualifications of successful travel agency personnel, according to Bill Mandley, who owns and operates Huronia

Travel in Midland. You don't learn these things at school. Although some colleges offer courses for travel consultants, Bill Mandley thinks you can learn more about the business in an actual working situation. This is how he started.

He went into business shortly after high school graduation in 1957. He opened his own agency in Midland in May 1966, and today he and his staff of five spend their days smoothing the path for travellers of all descriptions. In 1976, he

opened an office in Elmvale. "The interesting thing about this business," says Mandley, "is that you never know what's coming next." In a typical day, he might perhaps discuss plans for a family vacation, or

arrange some highly organized trips for local executives. "About 40 per cent of our business is commercial," he says. There's a prodigious amount of paper work to be done as Mandley and his staff mesh schedules, confirm reservations, write up itineraries and cope with unexpected shifts in timetabling.

The telephone (Huronia Travel is connected to the world with five lines) rings constantly, and perhaps this is one reason why Mandley has had the insistent ringing muted to a soft chime.

Mandley, or one of his staff, has visited most of the places he sends other people to. He himself takes two or three familiarization trips a year, but they aren't free junkets. "We pay nominal costs, and we pay for our own meals," he adds. "These certainly aren't lie-on-the-beach vacations either. We are going twelve hours a day - looking at hotels, bus tours and other attractions."

So far, he's been almost everywhere, but there are still a few places left on Bill Mandley's "must see" list. I'd like to see the Far East, and Japan. South America attracts me - I'm an antique car nut, and I hear there are lots of old cars down there in mint condition - I'd love to have a look at them."

Bill describes himself as an easy traveller. "I don't recall a country I didn't enjoy visiting." The advice and services of a travel agent are free although Bill cautions that long distance calls or telegrams needed to change arrangements at the last minute are charged to the customer. He does most of his

reservation business by mail, or on periodic trips to Toronto. The agency is paid on a commission basis by the people it deals with - hotels, airlines and so forth. The commissions are uniform throughout. Thus recommendations are based on suitability, not on rake-offs.

Recently the Ontario Government issued travel agencies with licenses. "We apply, and give a percentage of our sales toward a million dollar bond," days Mandley. "If we don't have that license, we aren't in business."

The bond is used to protect the consumer against agency bankruptcies, and resultant sudden stranding. Conversation with Bill Mandley reveals that sometimes he thinks too many miracles are expected from a travel agent.

"For one thing," he points out "a deluxe holiday these days just isn't possible on a restricted budget. People who go on low cost charters shouldn't expect magnificently appoi-

nted dining rooms. They are more likely to find a cafeteria." Glossy advertising may mislead some travellers, but Mandley gives an honest appraisal of what lies ahead on a trip.

"If a customer is looking for deluxe arrangements, he might be better with a higher priced tour," he says.

"I also wish sometimes that people could be a little more willing to live with schedule changes," he says. "We do our best, but strikes cause trouble, and the travel agent seems to take the brunt of the criticism."

The very mention of the word "strike" clouds Mandley's usually cheerful countenance.

"It's not just domestic strikes that bother us, but overseas ones too. An air traffic controllers' strike at an airport in London means all kinds of re-routings and delay, and

people don't like that when they're on holiday." One recent over-booking snafu was resolved with dramatic speed. A local tour group arrived in Jamaica, to find that their reservations had been fouled up.

"Get me Mandley!" barked one of the travellers, and he thumped the reception desk with his fist.

The hotel staff was galvanized into instant activity, and the Midlanders found themselves well accommodated in a trice.

Bill Mandley tells this story, but he won't take any credit for the happy ending.

The name of the prime minister of Jamaica happens to be Michael Manley.

That's something else a travel agent needs to survive - a sense of humour.



Bill Manley

With more people being urged to travel in Canada this year by the federal government travel agents will no doubt be getting more queries about holidays at home.

Bill Mandley, of Huronia Travel, has been planning trips at home and abroad for tourists and businessmen for the past 12 years. Staff photo

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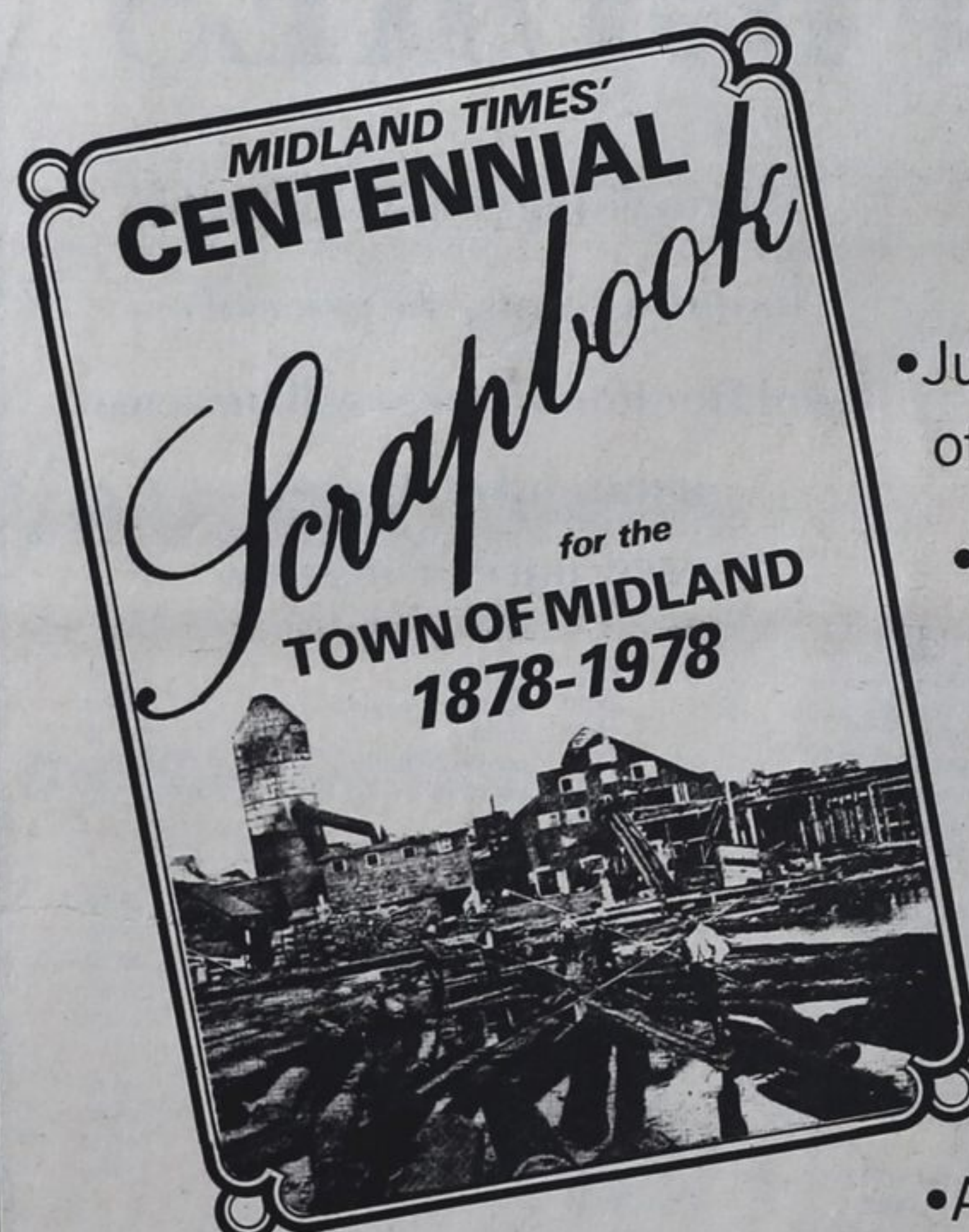
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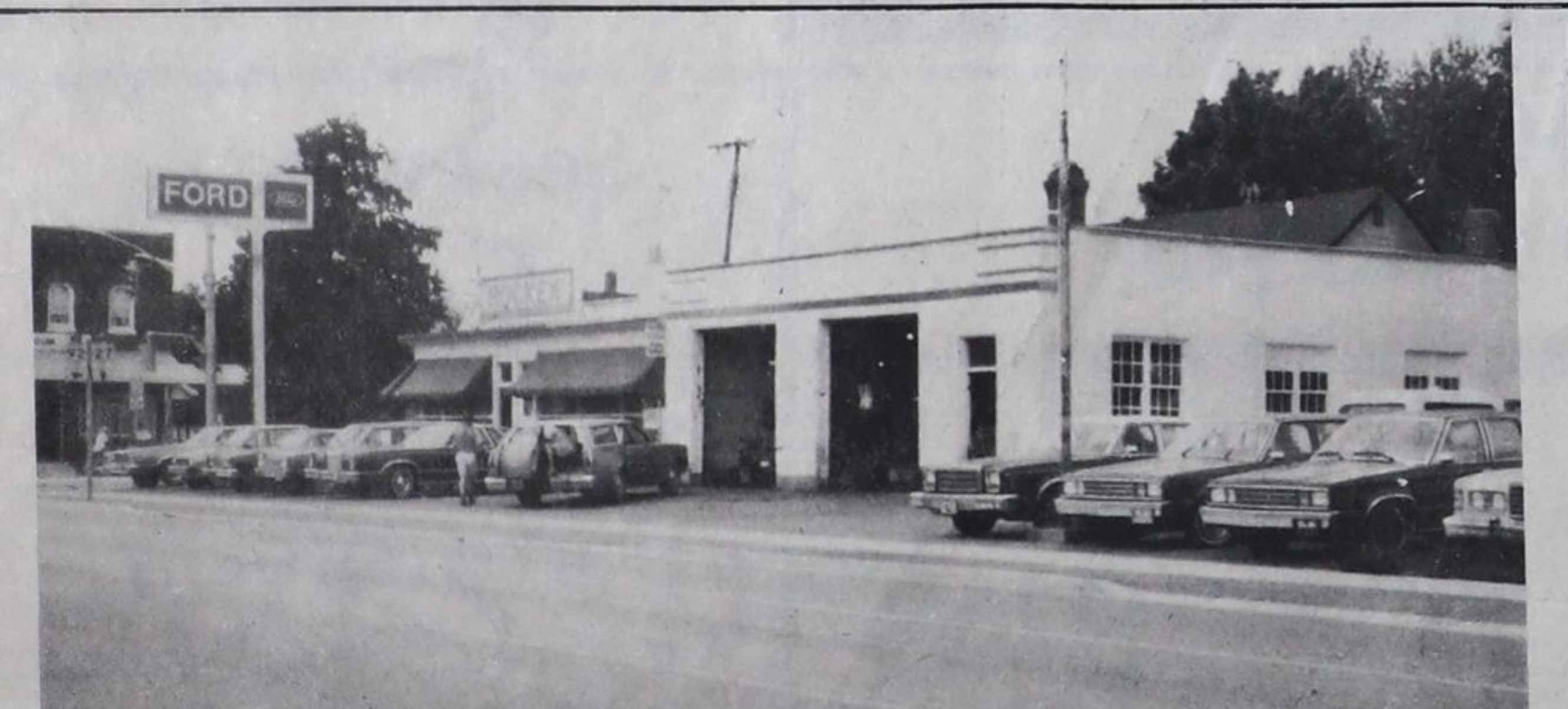
### RULES

- Judging will be on the basis of originality and appearance.
- There will be 3 judging categories -
  - under 13
  - 13 to 18
  - over 18
- Judging will take place in October
- All entries must be submitted in the Centennial Scrapbook

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