



King Street in Midland, always on the go

This photo flashback is of Midland main thoroughfare, King Street. The bird's eye view was snapped from a low-flying aircraft several years ago. Even in this picture you

can detect a number of changes King Street and the dock area have undergone in recent years. Always a busy place, King Street especially jumps to life during those long

days of summer when local folks and tourists alike head to town to do their shopping. July 17, 18 and 19 downtown business people will be

putting it altogether again when they host their annual downtown sidewalk sale in Midland.

Are you ready? Oh say can you saw

Shirley Whittington

The sprightlier branch of our family came to the New World pretty early — in the 1700's I think.

However, the branch from which we are most immediately descended did not arrive for another century or so.

The reason?

As the creaky wooden ship carrying the first installment of brisk Whittingtons cast off and set out to sea, the lethargic branch of the family was muddling around in a thatched hut somewhere trying to decide what to wear for the trip and who should make the lunch.

It's not that our spirit's unwilling, nor is our flesh weak. It's just that our watches are always slow and we seem to get bogged down in detail.

Our is a history of arriving at the wrong church for the wedding, of being a day late for the special sale or the discount on the hydro

bill, of getting hopelessly balled up in the annual shift from standard to daylight saving time.

We have a child who was planned as a year-end tax deduction. Typically she arrived two weeks late, well into the new year.

Another kid arrived so late we took him home from the hospital in a three-piece suit.

Being constantly tardy has one advantage. It makes everybody else look good.

This is what I mean. A couple of weekends ago, there was a violent windstorm. Some of us were in the kitchen having breakfast (while the rest of the world lunched) when suddenly a neighbour's maple thundered to the ground.

It was a dramatic moment. One second leaves and branches were swaying against leaden skies. The next, 60 feet of tree lay

prone across the lawn next door, and extended slightly into ours.

We all trooped next door and started to issue advice to our neighbour, who is a pleasant young chap, and plainly unused to having trees crash down in his backyard.

"Be some job to remove that," we said. He nodded with doleful respect.

"Have to cut her up into sections," we said. He nodded again.

"Chain saw, probably. That'd be best for the job."

Nod.

"Be glad to help you," we said. "With our chain saw. Right away."

He agreed that a chain saw was what was needed. We hustled into action.

First of all, nobody could remember where the chain saw was. We fanned out in several directions, and finally somebody remembered that it was out at the cabin.

We got into the car, and noted that the gas needle was resting on "E". Our net worth was quickly established at \$1.78, and another massive search was organized, for the

gasoline credit card.

Once we got gassed up, it was heigh-ho for the cabin where we checked a few important things like the level of water in the rain barrel, the progress of the wild asparagus and whether the beaver had rebuilt the dam down in the old railway cut.

Then we loaded up the saw and meandered home via the back roads, because they are so much more scenic. We stopped for coffee, picked up some milk for supper, and only had to backtrack once when somebody remembered that we hadn't any gas for the saw.

At home, we hustled over to the neighbour's yard. Chainsaw in hand, we stood ready to render assistance where it was needed.

The fallen tree was nowhere to be seen. There was nothing in our neighbour's yard but a tidy pile of freshly sawn logs.

As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined. There's a moral here somewhere, but I don't expect to have it figured out until next week's paper.

Deadlines, deadlines.

Ah, the life of being a celebrity!

Bill Smiley

You have no idea how tough life is for us celebrities: signing autographs, beating off groupies, phone ringing with congratulations and requests for interviews, trying to be triumphantly modest.

I'm certainly glad my celebrityness lasted only one day. Two days and I'd probably have started thinking I really was somebody worth knowing.

I did start charging students one dollar a piece for autographs, and had a fair little run there until one of them reminded the others that they could get a free signature just by reading the nasty remarks I make on their report cards. That was the end of that bonanza.

To the bewildered, your old, broken-down, favorite columnist was the subject of a profile in a national magazine called Today, and the phone has never started ringing since.

Some people thought the article was dreadful. An old colleague was disgusted because the magazine printed how much I make a year.

My wife was furious. The photographer who took my picture scrunched up the drapes he drew behind me for a background, and they

looked as though they needed ironing.

My assistant department head was annoyed about my picture, because the art department of the magazine had not used the air brush to wipe out the wrinkles, jowls, and other appurtenances of wisdom and maturity.

A bright young colleague, who writes well, expressed the opinion that the article was badly written, and was attacked furiously by other colleagues who thought he was jealous.

He wasn't. He was right. It was a bit choppy because an editor had obviously been busy with the scissors, to make the thing fit around photographs and into the space allotted, as is their wont in a magazine that caters to a typical TV audience-mentality.

But those wonderful people, my completely uncritical students, thought it was great: first, because my name was in big type; second, because it was a national magazine; third, because my picture was in it; fourth, because they got a little reflected glory.

They'd have been just as happy if I were an axe-murderer, as long as I hit the media. So, one day my Grade 9 thought I was just that snarly old grey-haired guy up front who kept

telling them that a verb has to agree with its subject.

The next, I was in the same magazine as Richard Burton, and my wife was taking on the dimensions, figuratively speaking, of Elizabeth Taylor.

Personally, I have some scores to settle about the article. For one thing, it was too innocuous and kindly. The writer, Earl McCrae, is a cracking good sports writer, who has done some fine hatchet jobs on sports figures in Canada.

Least he could have done is carve me up a bit, and let me get into a slanging match with him, via the public print. It was as though McCrae, usually as soft as a sword, had muttered to himself, "Poor old sod; he's over the hill. I'll use the butter instead of the salt."

This is the same writer whom George Chuvalo threatened to punch right through the wall of a gym when he had written a piece about George, the perennial punching bag.

Another guy I have a bone to pick with is Ray Argyle, who owns the syndicate that distributes this here now column. At one point in the article, he called me a "monument." Well, I'll think of something to call you, Mr. Argyle.

One adjective in the article is going to create endless amusement for old friends of my wife. It is the word "languid". Mind you, it's rather a neat word. Better than pudgy,

pugnacious, bubbling, feisty, or any of those other over-worked magazine-article words.

But my wife is about as languid as a Roman Candle. We were at a big wedding the weekend the article came out. About halfway through the reception, I was fairly bubbling, fairly feisty, and pleasantly pugnacious.

I drifted over to where she sat, deliberately looking languid, and observed, "Migawd, you're looking languid tonight." She marched straight to the bar and had me put on the Indian list. (Oh, yeah, somebody is going to write that that is a racist remark.)

You'll be glad to know that the wedding turned out well. I drove to the reception while she map-read. She drove home, but I couldn't see the street signs.

We drove around a strange city for an hour and a half, completely lost. Finally, I saw a car, and a place beside it that seemed to be open. "Stop!" I'll ask where we are."

I nipped out, went up to the stopped car, and demanded of the two police officers inhabiting it, "How, in the name of all that is holy, does one find the Royal Connaught Hotel in this misbegotten city with all its stupid one-way streets?"

The cop was a modicum of decorum. "If you'll just look to your right sir, you'll see that you are parked directly in front of it."

So much for being a celebrity.