

# The golden years...I've finally reached 'em

By the time this appears in print, I'll be—hold it now; don't faint; don't have a heart attack; it's not a suicide note; it's worse than that—I'll be a Senior Citizen!

What a moment. On the second of June, in the year of Our Lord 1985, in the reign of our sovereign, Elizabeth II, under the domain of a jumped-up Irishman, I shall be 65, and enter the golden years.

Oh, yes, I'll be rich. The old age pension and the Canada Pension Plan will come flowing in, and at the end of a year, I'll probably owe only \$3,000 income tax on them.

But, I'll be able to go to the movies at half-rate every second Tuesday. I'll be able to shop for groceries at five per cent off every third Thursday, as long as I have my birth certificate, passport, and driver's license handy. I'll be able to get on a bus, if there are no other passengers, at half-price.

I've been waiting enviously for this. Many of my friends are senior citizens, and have joshed me jocularly about being so young. "Why don't you become a senior citizen? It's great. Free medical care. Half price on shrouds.

The hatred of the Yuppies, who have to pay taxes to keep us going." One friend of mine has a pass that enables him to ride the transit system of his home city all day, free. He

## Bill Smiley

hasn't done it yet, but it's pretty intriguing, if you have nothing better to do than ride buses.

Mind you, I don't mind all these perks pouring in, but there's a graver side. Rather a stiff proposition, as they say around the cemetery. You've used up most of your three score and ten.

However, I have no regrets, except a few hundred. It's been a good life, and I'm ready to face my Maker, or even the President of the Senior Citizens Club, with a terrified face.

I had a remarkably happy childhood, thanks to a kind, rather inarticulate father, who slapped my ear only once, and for very good reasons. I had a wonderful, warm mother, who only beat me with a yardstick or fly-swatter when she was going out of her mind with my antics. My siblings were about as good as you come across, in the average lifetime.

I loved sports and books. And girls. Played a fair game of football and baseball, lousy hockey. Read everything in the town library by the time I was fourteen. Fell in love, deeply, at least eighteen times.

Wish I had a few of those old loves right now, to comfort me, like Kind David, and help out with their old age pensions. Wherever they are, I hope they're kissing their grandchildren, instead of me.

I was a poor student in high school. Took seven years to get through. Not stupid. Just uninterested, like most other kids. And I had a summer job, which began in April, which didn't help.

That summer job was one of the most gruelling, and happy, times of my life. Worked my way up from night porter (cleaning lavatories and polishing brass) to day porter, doing same, to linen-man, controlling all the linen on board: towels, sheets, napkins, etc. A position of great power, possibly next to the captain and chief engineer.

Went to college, thanks to my principal, who discerned some light amid the murky depths. Almost failed my first year, thanks to Sylvia, a beautiful Brazilian from Rio.

Went to war, thanks to the RCAF. Wasn't killed, as obvious. But was shot down and

spent the rest of the war behind barbed wire. It wasn't bad, in retrospect. Hungry but not hopeless.

Back to college, fairly sceptical, if not cynical. Met my true love, married her, and spent a year in the sanatorium, with suspected tuberculosis, while my wife had a bun in the oven, as we crude and licentious soldiery used to say.

Graduated, somehow, in honour English. Fell into the weekly newspaper business by accident (death of a brother-in-law). Spent eleven years there, learning the fascination of wedding and funeral reports.

Switched to high school teaching, learning the fascination of twelve jaws out of twenty, chewing gum, ruminating like cows.

Retired at 63, to the great glee of my English staff, who (a) thought I was senile; (b) thought I wasn't tough enough with the people they didn't like; (c) thought there should be a firm hand at the tiller.

Well, that's about it. By the way, this is not an obituary. That will be much grander. It's already written.

It's just a brief history of an ordinary Canadian who stumbled from one pit-hole to another: work, war, marriage, bringing up two kids during the drug days, and trying to keep his head on straight.

# The story of the three bears but with a new twist

This is a modern version of the three bears. There is no goldilocks. A house in the woods is never mentioned. No sick grandmothers, nary a one. There is a conspicuous absence of porridge, either hot, cold for just right.

Chairs are not broken, neither large, small, or oh dear me, there goes the leg of the baby one.

Beds are definitely in this version. Ranging from sleeping bags in the back of a pick up truck camper top to Holiday Inns in Maryland. From Panama City to Haworth, Yorkshire, England, home of the three Bronte sisters Anne, Emily and Charlotte.

From a trailer bunk near Gravenhurst to a single bed at our house occupied by No. 3 son. Bear One started life as the favourite bedtime companion of Brian Ratcliffe of Haworth, a stone's throw from the Bronte parsonage and museum.

Brian is my wife's brother. Grandpa bear as he is now known, is shiny with age. He is approximately 48 years old. His button eyes still retain the lustre of his original youth but with being loved, his coat has been all hugged away.

His joints are loose, his paws worn down, but he still has his original smile, and both

ears, he does not need a hearing aid or glasses.

Due to his extreme age, having been passed down a few generations of kids, he is allowed to semi-retire in the combination clothes toys closet, but does make an appearance on ceremonial occasions. Despite his lack of clothes he endures the winter remarkably well.

Known as 'Chat' which is a diminutive of Chatanooga. He came into our lives in a remarkable, you might even say a fated way, some eight years ago in unusual circumstances.

**The time:** Three a.m. on a Monday morning. **The place:** a gas station somewhere near Chatanooga, Tennessee. **The circumstances:** We were heading south to Myrtle Beach in July.

Dad was driving through the night, we stopped for gas, after filling up, a curious object appeared 200 yards down the road, upon investigation it was a 12" high teddy

bear lying at the side of the road.

It was dressed in a red bandana, and a gingham apron with red silk scarf around its neck. The road was deserted.

"Where are we" said No. 3 son in a baby voice. "In Chatanooga, go back to sleep take this bear" said dad, in a gruff voice, and so it came to pass.

Minus the apron, scarf and bandana it became a male, and at the same time an inseparable for our youngest.

It still has one ear left and its original name Chatanooga, has been shortened to a more familiar, masculine, 'Chat.'

Bear Three is only 5" high, it an albino bear, or maybe a polar bear of some remote pygmy tribe of bears from the frozen north.

Its origin is uncertain, originally it had been suspended by a thread sewn on the top of its head, hanging up some where I suppose.

The frayed remnant of this thread is still in evidence if you know the right place to look, and the light is in the right direction.

## Ray Baker

Being an albino bear with all-white fur and pink eyes it was adopted into the family, if not on the income tax return, as a dependant, and has lived happily ever after, which is a basic requirement of every good story from the three bears, right through the pied piper, to rumpelstiltskin.

However, a suitable name was required for this one when he appeared from somewhere about three years ago. The discussions ranged far and wide. It had to be short, snappy and masculine. Names came and went until a quirk of fate intervened (again).

Having been thrown carelessly down on the same chesterfield as Chat, who is about twice as big, the small white one came to rest in the crook of the big's arm, just like father and son.

**PRESTO!** An instant name 'Chat's son' shortened immediately to 'Chatson,' and they all did in fact live happily ever after.

**THIS WEEK'S QUOTE** from Ashleigh Brilliant, Description of a child—"Have Arms, Will Hug."

Ray Baker is a freelance writer. He lives with his family and the three bears in Penetanguishene.

## Another busy week

Midland OPP investigated a total of 112 general occurrences during the week ending June 10, reports OPP Const. Roy Tyo, the local detachment's acting community services officer.

Sixteen thefts, seven break-ins, six cases of wilful damage, three assaults and seven other Criminal Code investigations were included in the long list of investigations.

## The pipes and drums coming

by DON PARKER  
Don't forget the giant parade that's coming to Midland this weekend. The Ontario Massed Legion Pipes and Drums will be here in all its splendor, a full 130 strong, to thrill and entertain you with a massive parade down King Street, Saturday. Starting at the arena, the parade will move off at 1:30 p.m. to proceed through town to the docks.  
Don't miss it.

## 350 pints of blood needed

Wednesday, June 19, is the date for the next Red Cross Blood Donor's Clinic in Midland. It's to be staged at the Yonge Street Civic Centre from 12 noon to 8 p.m.  
Goal is 350 pints of blood.

## United Church Men (and women) meet in Honey Harbour

The Delawana at Honey Harbour played host last Friday, Saturday and Sunday to the annual United Church Men's Conference. More than 100 couples attended the three-day event.

## Red Shield target topped

Last month's Red Shield Campaign conducted by the Midland Salvation Army topped its \$25,000 target.

At present the total stands at well in excess of \$27,000.

## Retirement party planned for Bayview P.S. principal

There's to be a retirement party for Bayview Public School principal Wm. Watson at the Highland on the evening of Thursday, June 20.

## Gale force winds kick up lots of dust, sand

Parts of North Simcoe looked more like a dust bowl, Sunday, after near gale force winds whipped through the district kicking up dust and sand.

## \$1 million and counting

As of yesterday, the Red Cross' Central Ontario Tornado Disaster Relief Fund had raised more than \$1 million.

The province announced last week that it would match each \$1 donation by \$3 of its own. Damage from the May 31 twisters are still being tabulated but it is expected to be in the tens of millions of dollars.

## Before the barbeque's alight, are the gas connections tight?

A family barbequeing at 82 Eighth St. in Midland, got a bad scare around 6:30 Sunday

night, when the hose from the propane tank on their gas grill burst into flames.

Fearing an explosion, they immediately alerted the fire department, who quickly doused the blaze with a hand held fire extinguisher.

Although there were no injuries, Fire Chief Hal Belfry says the incident underscores the importance of checking the gas line connections, particularly the treaded fitting at the tank, every time before barbequeing.

## Bandage One visits HDH

Bandage One, Ministry of Health's helicopter ambulance, paid a call on HDH, Friday afternoon.

The 'copter, on a mission of mercy, was called into service to transfer a local patient to a Toronto hospital.

## North Simcoe news briefs

### General Williams II on the job again

Again this week the Midland OPP motor launch is being used as a floating school for OPP divers from a number of districts in the province.

It's the third time this year that the General Williams II has been used for such exercises.

### 300 expected to attend 75th anniversary rally

It's expected as many as 300 Brownies, Guides and Pathfinders will be attending a special 75th anniversary rally at Martyrs' Shrine on June 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The year 1985 marks the 75th birthday of Scouting and Guiding in the world.

### Memorial service this Sunday at Wyebridge

There's to be a memorial service this Sunday, June 16, at Wyebridge Presbyterian Cemetery commencing at 2:30 p.m.

Proceeds from the service will go towards the care of the cemetery.

## William Barnett honoured by family and friends

Budd Watson Gallery in Midland was the setting, Sunday evening for a dinner dance in honour of William Barnett, head of guidance at MSS, who is retiring later this month.

The fete was hosted by his family and drew a host of family members and friends.

## Accidents include fatal crash

During the month of May, Midland police investigated one fatal motorcycle accident along with 18 other reportable and 13 non-reportable accidents on town streets.

## Town police on the job—charges in May on the rise

Midland police laid 28 charges last month under the Criminal Code, one under the Narcotics Control Act and 10 under the Liquor License Act.

As well there were 122 charges laid under the Highway Traffic Act including 91 for speeding on town streets.

## Fact-finder's report is to be tabled

Today's the day of a provincial fact-finder brings down his report regarding Town of Midland's plan to annex a valuable chunk of Tiny Township just west of the town.

The report is to be tabled at a meeting planned for Baymoorings at 9 a.m.

## Huronia's firefighters pass a quiet summer weekend

With the region's population temporarily swollen by cottagers and tourists, the six local fire chiefs normally expect an increased risk of fire over the summer weekends.

But, with the exception of a minor barbeque fire in Midland Sunday night, no emergencies were reported all weekend from the 10 Huronia fire halls between Waubaushene and Penetang.

## Most of the injured out of hospital

Of the hundreds who were injured May 31 as a result of six twisters that slammed into central Ontario, only 11 victims of the tornadoes still remain in hospital.

A total of 12 people were killed.