

# Veteran Red Cross donor makes deposits in appreciation

Don Jackson is a survivor in the truest sense of the word. He's also a seat-of-the-pants entrepreneur, a political rabble rouser possessed of a caustic wit, and a walking advertisement for Red Cross Month.

It was the survivor-Red Cross connection I was looking to pursue when I walked into his Main St. Stouffville travel office the other day. After all, this is the month designated by the folks at the Red Cross to draw attention to the unending need for the gift of life.

And with a card in his wallet showing some 25 donations - which represent maybe half the blood Don has deposited since he started giving as a teen - he's as likely a candidate for donor sainthood as can be.

Spending an hour with Don is like watching a zany tragic-comedy in living color. He's on the phone one minute, relishing the moment as he takes a private health insurance representative to task on behalf of a customer who is experiencing difficulty collecting on a claim.

Then it's time for a momentary reflection on the bizarre accident which cost Don the lower part of his left leg. He was on a familiarization trip to Trinidad in December, 1988. Don still delights in recalling the speculation of his neighbors as to how he managed to tumble off a hotel balcony six floors to the ground, encountering a cactus tree and the side of a mountain on his way.

He grins and shakes his head while repeating the explanations awaiting him upon his return: He was drunk; he fell down a mine shaft; he was in a fight over a woman. Someone suggested it was a suicide attempt; he remembered, throwing his hands into the air.

Actually, it was a case of mistaken bathroom door identification in the pre-dawn hours.

Following an uncomfortable flight home, Don was rushed to Toronto's



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

Sunnybrook Hospital, where he was subjected to several hospital procedures and an eventual amputation.

His ability to retain his characteristic sense of humor both then and now is a delight. Especially when he pens one of his unique letters to the

editor lambasting the goings on at the local council.

In one such correspondence, he suggested council didn't have a leg to stand on regarding its position on the issue of the day. "And I know all about having a leg to stand on," he advised me with a laugh.

But when it comes to the topic of giving blood, there's nothing controversial as far as Don is concerned. It's a simple matter of banking. "I was making deposits all those years, and then I made a withdrawal," he offered, saying how he had gone through the better part of a gallon of blood in transfusions during his stay

in hospital. But his humor finds its way back into the conversation when he talks about his hospital days. "They could see the whites of my eyes. I was down a quart."

Don said he first became aware of the need to give blood during two

decades as a police officer until 1986. His own accident was before Christmas, which made him appreciate people thoughtful enough to give before holidays. "How many people want to give blood at Christmas time?" he asked. "But apparently people did because I got enough."

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