

# Thomson Tradewinds

DAVID & MARY THOMSON C.I. ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2006

## In Praise of Nostalgia



*Munchies and memories.*

Our spring Pub Night on the evening of Friday, May 26 was a nostalgia-filled success. The decision to move east to Shoeless Joe's in Ajax was a popular one. We had a large upstairs room to ourselves, with lots of room to spread out year books or simply grab a drink and socialize with fellow Thomsonites. The fact that Hunter's Glen was holding its 50th anniversary the next day probably brought out a few extra celebrants, including Elaine Nicol, all the way from Toledo, Ohio. She even vowed to return for our fall session.

So, Elaine, and everyone else, set aside the evening of Friday, November 3. This time we're going to move north - well not too far north. Still in Scarborough at Tapps Restaurant, 5630 Finch Ave. E., just east of Markham Rd. on the north side. Parking is off Tapscott Rd. We hope this will entice grads from Markham, Stouffville, Uxbridge et al to drop by, plus anyone else within driving distance. There will be munchies available (to encourage

our thirst!) and you can also order from the menu if you wish.

**Chris Markwell**, whose remembrances about the composition of the school song were featured in our last edition, was one of the more enthusiastic old-timers at the Ajax party. He sent along a very kind letter to Tradewinds editor, **Stan (Mr.) Farrow**:

"Hard to believe it is 47 years since A10A - virtually half a century! Just being (at the pub night) unlocked memories I have not visited in decades: Mr. Evoy's hairline; Mr. Gibson, the football coach, shouting out of the side of his mouth; you (Mr. Farrow) driving my French teacher (Miss Erickson/Mrs. Canham) to school; Ted Trevelyan's band aids; the meat pies and gravy in the cafeteria; the dusty playing field at West Hill; the smells and excitement in the halls of a new school; trudging through the snow to catch the Brimley bus.

"I had only been in Canada for 7 years in 1959, and everything still had an additional newness for me: big cars, cold winters, television, trips to the States, the Bowery Boys, a new accent, no relatives, new sports, fitting in.

"We spend so much of our time in the often petty pressures of the present that we deprive ourselves of the true pleasure of walking back into memory. Friday night was a unique opportunity to look back for an hour or so and a chance for me to share some of it with (my wife) Hazel."

Join us for an hour or more at Tapps, any time after 8:00 pm on November 3.

**P.S. A special note to the Class of 1981. Consider this an invitation to make our Pub Night your 25th anniversary party. Get on the phone and put together a table of classmates to share old times.**

## Profile: Michael Allen



After graduating from Thomson in 1965, I started a General Science program at the U. of T. in the fall. I got totally dissatisfied and quit. I found a temporary job in the winter of 1966 with Ontario Lands and Forests in frigid White River and developed an interest in forestry. I returned to U. of T. that fall and entered a four-year Forestry Science

degree program.

I could not have made a better decision. I specialized in tree breeding and genetics in my fourth year and was planning to do graduate work in that area, as I had had three consecutive summer jobs working in federal tree breeding research at Chalk River, Ontario. As fate would have it, I ran into a Forestry Masters student who had worked with CUSO in Uganda. I was mesmerized by his adventures; so I spent two years after graduation, from 1970 to 1972, with CUSO as a conservator of forests in north-eastern Nigeria, managing a work force of over 600 people. Although the Biafran war was still winding down while I was there, I nevertheless had a great experience.

I also did some work for a brief time in neighbouring Cameroun. I lived very "bush-like" with virtually no modern amenities. I spent much time in African villages and thoroughly enjoyed the experiences. I had some working knowledge of one major language and one common dialect. I became, and still am, intrigued with African shamanism. After Nigeria I spent some long holiday time in great Britain, Denmark and Sweden.

In late 1972 I enrolled in the Master of Science in Forestry program at U of T in urban and environmental forestry.

While I was doing my thesis work, I was also consulting. A word to the wise: don't do that! It's a killer combination! I finally got my Master's degree in 1977.

I was married in the spring of 1973. I had known Susan for four years. She has been an elementary school teacher for some time now. We're still happily together after 33 years! In 1982 our one and only child, James, was born.

From 1981 to 1988 I worked as a regulatory and planning superintendent with Alberta Power. It was a challenging position, as I became skilled in working court rooms and regulatory tribunals. But I wanted to get back to my urban forestry interests; so I took a job as the city forestry manager in Winnipeg in late 1988. For health reasons, I retired in September, 2002. I had a remarkable history of involvement with the media, politicians and numerous organizations and was an active leader in the Scouts movement with James for 10 years.

We have travelled all over the world, visiting a good chunk of Europe, all over the USA, every country in the Caribbean, Hawaii, Fiji, Australia and South Korea. James is now a professional environmental biosystems engineer living and working in Huntington Beach, California. He has also spent a lot of time in eastern Europe and Russia.

I now work full time in my own business, Viburnum Tree Experts, as a consulting urban forester and arborist. I work solely with myself and engage various business arborists on projects for my clients. I have also done quite a bit of writing, for popular gardening magazines, technical journals and our local newspaper in Winnipeg. I give about 40 public workshops a year on tree and shrub care techniques, including pruning, to departments of continuing education in a number of school divisions. *(continued on page 4)*



### Fore Shadowing

Do you recognize any of these grizzled veterans of the golf links? Left to right: **Phil Mascard** (Tech), **George Boyce** (Business), **Bob Bishop** (Tech), **Tom Hensley** (Science), **George Haag** (Geography), **Stan Farrow** (Classics), **Bob Carson** (Phys Ed), **Jim Myrvold** (Phys Ed), **Ron Allen** (English), and **Charlie Hawkes** (History). Each September, George Haag organizes a get-together of former Thomson staff to celebrate not being in the classroom. But any guesses how many years in Thomson's classrooms are represented by this smiling group?

# Bill Milnes

Bill Milnes, Thomson's principal from 1972 to 1975, died this past summer. We asked his son, Art, to write a reminiscence. Since he was already putting together a tribute for the *Globe and Mail*, we agreed to publish that. Art himself was Thomson's SAC President, and valedictorian, in 1984-1985. Whenever he had meetings with Al Kerr in the principal's office, he would remember playing in the front office ten years earlier with Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Forsythe while waiting to visit his dad. "I was probably a pain, but they never let on."

The whole family was touched when Thomson lowered the flag to honour Bill, and also allowed them to borrow his official portrait from the front hall for use at the funeral. Three former principals and countless former staff came by to pay their respects.

Art is a journalist, currently serving as research assistant to the Hon. Brian Mulroney on the former Prime Minister's forthcoming *Memoirs*. We hope to call upon his reminiscences again when those are published. For now, we appreciate his tribute to his father.



W.H. Milnes, teacher, principal, coach, father, friend, reader, citizen of Scarborough, Ontario. Born July 15, 1931; died August 18, 2006 of complications from diabetes.

The last words I had with my father were typical. Dad suddenly turned to me, leaned over the side of his emergency room stretcher-bed and asked: "Art, do you think Bob Rae

will win the Liberal leadership?"

I was anything but shocked at his question. W.H. Milnes, whatever the situation, even to his last day, was engaged in the affairs of the nation and the world around him. Dad and I then chatted for five minutes or so about Mr. Rae and how much we both admired and respected the former Ontario premier. We never really answered the question about Mr. Rae's future - but we had one hell of a conversation.

An hour later Dad died.

At our family home in Scarborough I discovered the day's papers and saw that he'd devoured the news and opinion sections of three of Toronto's dailies before the ambulance came to take him from 12 Abbeville Road - his home of 46 years. I could also see that he was well into three books - *The Circumnavigators: The Pioneer Voyagers Who Set Off Around the Globe*; *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans 1933-45*; and *Gestapo: The History of the German Secret Service*.

He had bought the latter two in Connecticut only three weeks before when my brother, Bill, drove him to see my sister, Margaret's new home in historic Essex. How fitting, Dad must have thought, that his daughter's first house is located in a place where sea battles raged during both the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

Dad was a history teacher above all else. He truly loved the pages of the past. Through the thousands of his books we boxed up after his death, I saw again how he'd sailed with Nelson at Trafalgar, sat through the Long Parliament in Cromwell's time, watched Roman Legions occupy his beloved Great Britain, and read the Gnostic Gospels around desert campfires after the death of a philosopher-king he admired.

He began teaching at R.H. King Collegiate in the early 1950s, later rising to the position of principal at King and

subsequently at David and Mary Thomson C.I. He then went on to serve in a supervisory role in the Scarborough Board of Education. But it was in the classroom and high school environment where his heart lay. He headed the History Club at R.H. King and spoke about it shortly before he died. We were sitting in the backyard, two steaks were sizzling on the grill and a glass of red wine was in his hand. As always, we were discussing politics and world affairs, and specifically, the war in Iraq.

I asked him where he had stood on the issue of the Vietnam War in the 1960s. "In the History Club," he said, "we debated that one night right here in this yard. I had the students over and we came down against the war."

And when he died countless former students came by the funeral home to pay their respects to their teacher. Outside the classroom Dad served as his school's football and hockey coach. My siblings and I listened in awe as one man in particular, Jack Felstead, told us story after story about Coach Milnes. Jack also told me about visiting our family home as a member of the History Club and talking about world affairs in his teacher's Scarborough yard.

After my mom died in 1995, dad began a slow withdrawal from the world. He visited the Bendale Restaurant each day and always ordered the Number 3, a special sandwich with fries that changes each day. Once the Boomers decreed that the exhaust from their SUVs and mini-vans was acceptable, but Dad's second-hand smoke a health risk, he took his food home each day - losing the one daily social contact he had - and ate by himself at our kitchen table, alone with his thoughts and his memories of teaching, and surrounded by his beloved books.

Dad especially loved visiting Gettysburg and other US Civil War battlefields on family trips. He'd read book after book beforehand so he could describe to his kids what had taken place on American hallowed ground. He also used to play hymns from that era on the record player. So when they asked what music I wanted played at his funeral service I didn't hesitate - Battle Hymn of the Republic.

I knew that John Diefenbaker, another hero of my father's from history's endless pages, had picked that hymn for his own funeral in 1979. Dad would have liked that connection. In fact, I suspect he and the Chief are up there arguing - and often agreeing - right about now.

And Dief has finally met his match.

