

MEDIA RELEASE:

For Immediate Release

February 21, 2020

On behalf of The Volunteer Association to Norfolk General Hospital and Norfolk Hospital Nursing Home:

Fred's Tower

Last Spring, Iris Smith, a Norfolk General Hospital Volunteer was planning her computed tomography scanner (CT Scanner) fundraising climb. With the CN Tower in their sites, she and her climbing partner, Belinda Gyori, were not aware of the serendipitous event that was quietly unfolding in the Norfolk General Hospital Nursing Home in Fred Bigelow's room.

Fred always wanted to be an auto mechanic like his Dad. He admired his Dad's skills and ability to make things work again or to bring an engine back to life. As he watched his Dad, Fred knew that his dream wouldn't be easy since he came into the world as WWII was being fought and life everywhere was difficult. To his disappointment, his Dad discouraged young Fred from becoming a mechanic and left him to make his own choices and that he would not to be a mechanic according to his Dad.

Born in Kirkland Lake to Irish/Scottish parents Fred, as a young man, headed south to London, Ontario and spent five years in the Canadian Military servicing trucks. With only a grade three education, Fred's choices were limited. His parents expected that Fred would find his own way in life, and he did. His grandfather had been a blacksmith, so it seems working with his hands came quite naturally to Fred.

While raising a family he decided to open his own auto repair shop in London in 1966. A brave man was Fred, with no formal education, no Mechanic's Papers but he had excellent diagnostic and problem-solving skills and a general knowledge of the electrical and computer components in an automobile, he opened his bay doors for business.

The National Institute for Automotive Excellence, who certify professionals and shops that meet their criteria were not pleased with Fred. He did not meet their standards of certification, so he was fined. During his career he was fined three times. The third time in front of a judge was the clincher. Fred was ordered to go to school to earn his Mechanic's Papers! Not a bad sentence.

The five-year government funded program offered through Fanshawe College in London did present a challenge for Fred. As a self-educated man, he brought many transferrable skills into the classroom. As a result, he was only required to take the first and second year of the program.



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By that time, Fred had plenty of hands-on experience. An important year for him, 1977, he had earned his 'papers'. Fred also had a shop on Highway 24 which measured 45' X 1000' and he worked it on his own.

Five years ago, it was time to retire and now Fred lives in the Norfolk General Hospital Nursing Home, Simcoe, ON. Never one to be idle, his hands are always busy building model airplanes, firetrucks, buildings and a replica of the Port Dover Lighthouse. His son bought him a CN Tower Kit trying to keep his Dad's active brain and working hands busy.

One of the staff members of the Nursing Home showed Fred the article in the Tuesday Report about Iris' and Belinda's successful climb. As soon as Iris found out about Fred's Tower it was just too much of a coincidence to let Fred's Tower go unnoticed. Iris jumped into action, which is how she does everything, and arranged to meet Fred and see his CN Tower replica, complete with the rotating restaurant. Fred has generously donated his Tower to the Norfolk General Hospital Volunteer Association. As a result of Iris' and Belinda's 49.9-minute climb. To date \$16,696 has been raised to help with the \$1.5 million purchase price as a result of Iris' and Belinda's CN Tower climb.

What will Fred's next project be? Maybe he will build his own CT Scanner.

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